

1 Sea Gate

During the inspection before Siebold's entry into Dejima, a Japanese interpreter, hearing the way Siebold talked, asked: "This man is not from the Netherlands, is he?"

Chief Factor Johan Willem de Sturler interpreter answered quick-wittedly: "He's from the mountains in the Netherlands so he has an accent," and Siebold was allowed entry.

Siebold in Dejima



Image of Nagasaki's Dejima by Kawahara Keiga (courtesy of the Economics Branch of the Nagasaki University Library)

Head Clerk's Quarters

Exhibits about Siebold and Rangaku, or Western learning are located here.

Sea Gate

2 Site of Flagpole

3 Physician's Quarters

This was where Siebold stayed in Dejima. It used to be where the New Stone Warehouse (theater) is today.

The flag of the Netherlands will be flown where the flagpole used to stand in 2023.

4 Flagpole

When Siebold was at Dejima, there was a large flagpole that was 30 meters long located in the northwest section of the trading post.

4 Kaempfer and Thunberg Memorial Monument

This monument was erected by Siebold out of respect toward Kaempfer and Thunberg. It was buried after the Siebold Incident, but was excavated and designated a Prefectural Historic Site.

5 Botanical Garden

In this garden, there are plants that Siebold and his pupils planted. It was not only used for research, but was also used for growing and acclimating plants for transplantation as they waited for boats to the Netherlands. Descendants of five plants that made it to the Netherlands (wisteria, akaki, Japanese ivy, Japanese zelkova, Japanese maple) were received and planted here.

Siebold's Tree & the Memorial for the 150th Anniversary of Siebold's Arrival in Japan

A tree within the family Rhamnaceae. Since the tree was found at the Narutaki Juku it is referred to as "Siebold's Tree" in Japanese.

Siebold Repatriated Plant Garden

Siebold Repatriated Plant Garden

The 200th Anniversary of Philipp Franz von Siebold's Arrival in Japan!



Portrait of von Siebold by Kawahara Keiga (courtesy of the Nagasaki Museum of History and Culture)

In August of 1823, the Drie Gezusters (Three Sisters) came into Nagasaki Port and Philipp Franz von Siebold made his landing on Dejima. This year, 2023, marks 200 years since Siebold's arrival on Dejima.

Who was Siebold?

In 1796, Philipp Franz von Siebold was born to a family of medical professors in Würzburg, a city in southern Germany. He attended Würzburg University where he studied medicine in addition to botany, zoology, geography, and ethnology. After graduating, he became a physician for the Dutch military in order to learn about the plants of other countries.

Siebold and Dejima

After Siebold became a doctor for the Dutch army in 1822, he was appointed as a natural science investigator of the Dutch East Indies and, in 1823, he became a physician at the trading post on Dejima.

Historical Background

At this time, the Netherlands was in conflict with Britain. The British captured Batavia, a Dutch colony, which caused Dutch-Japanese trade to be disrupted and business to fall into a deep slump. Siebold was then dispatched to Dejima in order to revitalize trade and conduct investigations in order to find new trade goods.

A Big Project

Governor General of the Dutch East Indies at the time, Van der Capellen, understood the importance of encouraging investigation into the natural sciences, and gave Siebold the large sum of funds necessary for his investigation and also appointed an artist and pharmacist to aid him.



Siebold Memorial Hall

Go here to learn more about Siebold!



This museum was built next to the site of Siebold's former home which was designated as a national historic site. It was built in order to showcase Siebold's feats. Siebold's life and achievements are explained here and many valuable articles from all over the country are exhibited here.

[Address]

2 Narutaki, Nagasaki City

[Transportation]

Tram – 10 minute walk from [Shinnakagawa-machi]
Bus – 9 minute walk from [Nakagawa-machi]



Banished from Japan!

The Siebold Incident

Portrait of Philipp Franz von Siebold by Edoardo Chiosone (courtesy of the Siebold Memorial Hall)

In 1828, Siebold ended five years of service and went back to the Netherlands. Among the things that Siebold brought with him from Japan for study, it was found that there were articles (including maps and a kimono on which the crest of a shogun's family was printed) he was prohibited to take from Japan, which led to a major scandal. After a long investigation, those involved were punished and Siebold himself was banished from Japan, forbidden to ever return.

Siebold Timeline

A Life Dedicated to Researching Japan

- 1796 Birth
- 1815 [19] • Enrolled in Würzburg University Department of Philosophy
• Changed to Department of Medicine the following year
- 1820 [24] • Passed physician certification exam
• Graduated from Würzburg with Doctorate in Internal Medicine, External Medicine, and Obstetrics
- 1822 [26] • Appointed Surgeon General in Royal Netherlands East Indies Army

First Visit to Japan

- 1823 [27] Feb • Appointed Natural Science Investigator of the Dutch East Indies
Apr • Appointed physician at the trading post on Dejima
Jun • Departed Batavia for Japan
Aug • Arrival in Nagasaki Port, Landed at Dejima
Sep • Met Sonogi (Kusumoto Taki)
- 1824 [28] Mar • Used the homes of the interpreters Narabayashi and Yoshio in order to treat patients and teach medicine.
Jun • A school and botanical garden established at Narutaki
- 1825 [29] Apr • Botanical garden established at Dejima
- 1826 [30] • Accompanied Chief Factor on court journey to Edo (February - July)
• Erected monument to Engelbert Kaempfer and Carl Peter Thunberg on Dejima
- 1827 [31] May • Has daughter with Sonogi
- 1828 [32] • Siebold Incident occurred
- 1829 [33] Oct • Banished from Japan, forbidden to enter again
Dec • Left Dejima

Researching Japan in Europe

- 1832 [36] • Established Japan Museum in Leiden
• Published first volume of Nippon
- 1833 [37] • Published first volume of Fauna Japonica
- 1835 [39] • Published first volume of Flora Japonica

Second Trip to Japan

- 1859 [63] Feb • Received orders to bring revisions to the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between the Netherlands and Japan
Apr • Departed together with eldest son Alexander
Aug • Arrived in Nagasaki and entered Dejima
- 1860 [64] • In summer, repurchased old house in Narutaki and replanted botanical garden
- 1862 [66] • Left Nagasaki
- 1866 [70] • Passed away in Munich

After Death

- 1922 • The site of Siebold's residence designated as Nationally Designated Historic Site in Japan
- 1923 • 100th Anniversary of Arrival in Japan
- 1973 • 150th Anniversary of Arrival in Japan
- 2023 • 200th Anniversary of Arrival in Japan



Siebold wrote many other books related to Japan afterward. Continued to study Japan after returning to the Netherlands.

I wanted to stay in Japan longer!

Reproduction of Keiga's Folding Screen Finally Viewable by the Public!

In 2017, a folding screen by Kawahara Keiga called "View of Deshima in Nagasaki Bay" was discovered in a house in the Netherlands. The screen has been repaired and has been on display in the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden. Reproduction of this screen on display in the Netherlands is to be completed in 2023.

The folding screen repaired in Leiden



Retracing Siebold's Steps during his Five-year Stay in Japan

Kawahara Keiga was a Nagasaki artist from the Edo Period (1603-1867). He acted as Siebold's camera as he faithfully recorded Edo-period culture, manners, customs, and plants.

His photorealistic paintings of plants were skillfully colored and enough to satisfy Siebold with their quality.



"Hydrangea Otaka" from Siebold's Flora Japonica (courtesy of the Nagasaki Museum of History and Culture)

When Siebold went on a court journey to Edo in 1826, Keiga went together with him as one of his attendants. He was a prolific artist and most of them are preserved abroad.

Kawahara Keiga

In 1824, with the permission of the Nagasaki Magistrate, Takahashi Shigekata, a medical clinic and small private school was established at Narutaki in Nagasaki City. There were hospital rooms to house the sick, classrooms to hold lectures, and a library. A botanical garden surrounded the school.

Siebold received special permission to come here once a week to care for patients and hold lectures.

The garden is filled with plants that were picked by Siebold's pupils! Some of the plants here might have even been used in Siebold's medicines!



Picture of the Site of Siebold's Residence (courtesy of the Nagasaki Museum of History and Culture)

The Narutaki Juku

A Great Chance to Study Japan

In order to study Japan as scientifically as possible, accurate data needed to be collected from a wide range of regions and across various specialties, so the court journey to Edo was an ideal chance for Siebold.

The palanquins were mobile laboratories.



The Dutch Delegation on a Court Journey to Edo from Siebold's Nippon (cropped) (courtesy of the Siebold Memorial Hall)

Siebold used the things and data that he collected on the court journeys to Edo to write his books and, through his works, the world came to know Japan. After leaving Japan and returning to the Netherlands, Siebold spared no time in organizing the data he collected and went about getting ready to write about the information and knowledge he gathered from Japan.

His formal study of Japan was put together in three books: Nippon (1832 and onward), Fauna Japonica (1833 and onward), and Flora Japonica (1835 and onward). These are known as his three great works.



View of Nagasaki Harbor and Bay from Siebold's Nippon (courtesy of the Siebold Memorial Hall)

Three Great Works

The Chief Factor of the Dutch Trading Post would go on court journeys to the shogun in Edo once a year. This was an important event where he would go to have an audience with the shogun and also give his thanks for trade. From 1790 onward, it changed to one visit every four years.

Siebold accompanied Chief Factor Johan Willem de Sturler on his trips to Edo between February to July 1826. In order to conduct research on many things like the environment and customs of Japan while on the way to Edo, the artist Kawahara Keiga, Siebold's pupils, and a secretary were added to the retinue.

They brought many different kinds of things to give to government officials, to trade for various Japanese goods, and to make the envoy appear more legitimate.



The Court Journey to Edo