

A Showa-modern bank building in the port city is reborn as a hotel HakoBA Hakodate in Hakodate, Hokkaido

HakoBA Hakodate—the Share Hotels has opened its doors in the nostalgic port city of Hakodate, Hokkaido. An 85-year-old and a 31-year-old building were integrally refurbished to be reborn as the hotel. Based on the novel concept of a shared-complex hotel, the lodging features the modern bank architecture in the Showa era (1926 - 1989), where visitors can enjoy local crafts, artworks, and foods.

Hakodate, Hokkaido, attracts many tourists from inside and outside Japan. The stunning view of the urban area and the ocean from Mt. Hakodate was given three stars in the famous Michelin Green Guide Japan travel guidebook. The Hachiman-zaka slope, stretching straight northward from Mt. Hakodate to the Port of Hakodate, is also a popular sightseeing spot.



HakoBA Hakodate—the Share Hotels, located on a corner of the famous Hachiman-zaka slope (Photo credit: ReBITA)

HakoBA Hakodate—the Share Hotels, located on a corner down the Hachiman-zaka slope, opened its doors on May 26, 2017. The redbrick-tiled building on the ocean side and the former bank building on the mountain side were connected, and the unified facility now serves as a hotel.

The building on the ocean side was built in 1986 and used as the Teddy Bear Museum, which closed its doors in 2012. The building was created in the motif of a ship, probably because the designer was inspired by the Port of Hakodate. At the new hotel, this building was named “Dock.”



Dock viewed from the ocean side. The first floor has a restaurant, Pier H Table. (Photo credit: ReBITA)

The facility on the mountain side was originally constructed as the Hakodate Branch of Yasuda Bank in 1932 and designated as a historical building by the City of Hakodate. In 1968, it was converted into Hotel New Hakodate, which operated until 2010. Popular as a classic hotel, the lodging had many celebrity patrons. This building is now called “Bank” at the new hotel.



An 85-old-year building, Bank, where you can find the unique design of the former bank building. The building at left is Dock. (Photo credit: ReBITA)

Developed by ReBITA, a professional in renovation work

The two buildings at HakoBA Hakodate were integrally developed by ReBITA (based in Meguro, Tokyo), a company of the Keio Group. The company has extensive experience in renovating used condominiums and developing shared houses. Utilizing its accumulated renovation know-how, ReBITA successfully converted the two old buildings into a new hotel after inspecting them for architectural safety.



The two buildings are located close to each other, which made the connecting construction easier. (Photo credit: ReBITA)

“The hotel has around a hundred visitors every day. We tried to make the hotel open even to people in the community as a place to transmit information,” says Mr. Keita Kaneko, who is in charge of project promotion, belongs to the ReBITA Hotel Project Division, and is an original participant in planning the hotel.

The ReBITA's concept for the hotel is a “shared-complex hotel.” The lodging has shops selling the local crafts of southern Hokkaido, and works by artists from Hakodate are displayed in the stairway. Going forward, the hotel facilities are expected to be used to hold various events jointly with community residents.



Shop selling the local crafts of southern Hokkaido, in the corner of the lobby on the first floor (Photo credit: ReBITA)



Work by an artist from Hakodate displayed in the stairway that portrays the scenery of the Port of Hakodate viewed from the Hachiman-zaka slope (Photo credit: ReBITA)

A shared kitchen, which is open to all guests, is available on the top floor of Dock. Guests can enjoy cooking and eating with their friends and even other guests. Ingredients can be purchased at the early-morning market at the fishing port near the hotel.



Shared kitchen on the top floor of Dock (Photo credit: ReBITA)

In addition, the rooftop terrace can be accessed from the window of the shared kitchen, so guests can have a pleasant breakfast while enjoying the view of the Port of Hakodate. “No other hotel has this kind of open-air terrace,” says Mr. Futoshi Ito confidently. He was in charge of architectural direction and is the leader of ReBITA Construction Management Department’s 1st Group. The shared kitchen can be used not only by guests but also by local residents to provide cooking classes.



Rooftop terrace on Dock, where the Port of Hakodate can be viewed (Photo credit: Nikkei Architecture)

“Conventional hotels usually serve food using local ingredients, while at HakoBA Hakodate you can choose and cook ingredients to experience the local culture. That’s why we introduced the shared kitchen,” explains Mr. Kaneko.

Guest rooms designed to emphasize the charm of the two buildings

Because Dock and Bank have different histories and spatial features, guest rooms in each building were designed in a creative way. Dock, for example, has bunk bed style guest rooms, where a group of people can stay in one room, which is suitable for family trips and women-only gatherings. The color patterns and lighting of the rooms remind you of a cabin.



Bunk bed style guest room in Dock (Photo credit: ReBITA)

Placing cushions turned the low-ceilinged loft into a comfortable free space where guests can do their work or just relax.



Free space in the loft in Dock (Photo credit: ReBITA)

The interior of Bank was drastically changed from the original plan. When the old walls and ceilings from the time of Hotel New Hakodate were removed during construction work, huge beams and wooden window frames that were designed for the former bank appeared, surprising everyone.



Bank under construction. Huge beams and wooden window frames emerged from the ceiling. (Photo credit: ReBITA)



After remodeling the area shown in the previous picture. The area was converted into a library with books on Hakodate and travel. Not only hotel guests but also community members can use the library for various events. (Photo credit: ReBITA)

Mr. Kaneko and other designers significantly modified the design plan to preserve the design of the former bank. “The structure was reexamined and the project cost swelled beyond expectations. However, we successfully made the design more attractive by taking advantage of the architectural history,” says Mr. Kaneko.

Unlike Dock, with dormitory-style guest rooms for families and groups, Bank has classical and tranquil guest rooms. In the stairway, the sign for Hotel New Hakodate is reused as indoor monument lighting. The furniture was also maintained for reuse.



Guest room in Bank that utilizes the beams and window frames designed for the former bank (Photo credit: ReBITA)



Stairway in Bank. The sign of Hotel New Hakodate is reused as lighting. (Photo credit: ReBITA)



Connection point between Bank and Dock. The circular stone steps, which had been used in the time of the former hotel, were refurbished for reuse in the new facility. (Photo credit: Nikkei Architecture)

ReBITA CEO Mr. Satoshi Tsumura says, “Some are concerned about the Japanese tourism industry after the Tokyo Olympic Games in 2020, but I believe that the industry still has hidden potential. There are many valuable unused buildings across the country. We would like to continue to focus on hotel business to expand our business and sphere of activities.”



“I want HakoBA Hakodate to become a place to connect tourists and community people,” says ReBITA CEO Mr. Satoshi Tsumura. (Photo credit: Nikkei Architecture)

(Text by Yuiko Sugawara of *Nikkei Architecture*)

Nikkei Architecture

Launched in 1976, *Nikkei Architecture* is a general architectural magazine that carries wide-ranging information from social and economic trends surrounding the architectural world to practical management, including specialized areas like design, structure, and construction. The magazine has about 30,000 readers involved in architecture, including qualified first-class architects, architecture companies, and government officials. As well as the magazine, the Nikkei Architecture Web site (<http://na.nikkeibp.co.jp/>) provides timely information on the latest trends too.