

Phil Cargill



Winter in Hokkaido

Foreword

This work was conceived and produced while in self-isolation at home in Sydney during the Coronavirus Pandemic that swept the globe in 2020.

My Hokkaido winter experience commenced when I arrived at Kushiro Airport on 6 February 2020 with my fellow Sydney photographers Fujiko Watt, Les Atkins and Peter West. We spent the next eight days immersing ourselves in the extreme weather conditions of an unfamiliar northern winter.

Our journey took us through remote areas of eastern and central Hokkaido. We passed through the village of Tsurui in the Kushiro-Shitsugen National Park, a breeding ground for the red-crowned crane, the fishing port of Rausu with its visiting winter sea eagles, and then to Hama-Koshizimu on the Sea of Okhotsk, Abashiri and Lake Kussharo. From Lake Kussharo we headed to Lake Akan then to Obihiro on the Tokachi Plain. After spending time around Obihiro we headed to Furano and Biei. On the last day of our journey we visited Mt Asahidake in the Daisetsuzan National Park and then travelled to Asahikawa for our departure to Tokyo.

The selection of images depicts my interpretation of the beauty of the harsh environment endured by the local farmers, fishermen and wildlife in the northernmost part of Japan. It is my view that monochrome portrays the white landscape and the solitary environment in the best possible way; an environment comprising vast areas of snow-covered fields and mountains, frozen sea and lakes.

During this time in Hokkaido I was constantly aware of the remoteness and feeling of isolation. There were few people venturing out during the day, and traffic on the backroads was almost non-existent. I have included photographs of wind-swept roads which were a constant reminder of man's only way of escaping the isolation. The absence of people in the photographs further emphasises the remoteness and feeling of isolation.

I hope this work provides readers with a glimpse of the conditions and the beauty of the winter landscape in Hokkaido.



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'Seasonal road closures lead to lengthy detours on snow-covered roads. These detours result in the discovery of magical unexpected scenes'





