



A Field Trip to Chichibu

By ETSUKO HIGASHIDE

The Chichibu Night Festival attracted about 300,000 people on 2 nights this year. We were welcomed by staff from local tourism public corporation at Seibu Chichibu Station where we still could feel the excitement of festival held until last night. Chichibu is in Saitama Prefecture and is only 79 minutes by limited express train from Tokyo.

First, we visited Miyamotoke, a local inn which was renovated from traditional farmhouse mansion. Its interior decorations of sumo-related items and antiques including Japanese dolls, all create good Japanese atmosphere. At Furusato-mura, the facility next to Miyamotoke, people could experience buckwheat noodles making, farming, bamboo crafts making, etc. The inn is not only a place to stay, but also to have nice experiences.

We enjoyed local cuisine made from local ingredients at Dada. Then, observed Matsuri-no-Yu, the new hot springs facility, and walked around shopping street and saw shops by both young and old generations. It was impressive to see the cooperation to revitalize the town.

We also observed the "yabusame" (horseback archery), visited the Chichibu Festival Hall which introduces 300 festivals held throughout the year in Chichibu and the Chichibu Shrine which was founded 2100 years ago. At the shrine, we observed a masterpiece carving work by Hidari Jingoro donated by Shogun Ieyasu Tokugawa back in 1592.

The tour finished with a visit to the Bukou Shuzou sake brewery. We tasted "Bukou Masamune" made using groundwater.

The networking party followed and we exchanged opinions over the future of the Chichibu tourism with staff from the tourism corporation, tourism association and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry while we were served the delicious Italian cuisine by famous chef.

Many local areas in Japan are aggressive to attract inbound travelers. However, we know that mere momentum will not give enough success. We wish to see the promotion of city development and education of people emphasizing in introduction of the Japanese life, culture and way of thinking, in a way that is different from the urban style. At the same time, the hotel concierges should understand the wonderfulness of the local areas and must actively carry out the role of connecting customers with those who work hard in each area. Now, let's study and have more experience!



December Monthly Meeting

On December 20th, the monthly meeting was held at the Louis Vuitton Hall in Tokyo with attendance of 33 members. After the reports from the committee, we invited Mr. Hashino the Director of the Vespa, and listened to his presentation on their restaurant reservation and management system that may ease the concierges' task of restaurant bookings.



A Field Trip to Towada-Hachimantai

By NAOYUKI YOSHIMURA

Day1: Horseback riding experience at Umakko Park Iwate / cooking local dishes at Shizukuishimachi Public Hall / Snow shoe trekking at Lodge Clubman / Staying at Goshogake Onsen

Day2: Early morning snow shoe trekking / Visiting Korakukan Theatre and Mining office at Kosakamachi / Cooking *tampo* at antler in Kazuno / Akita excursion at Towada Shrine / Oirase night tour / Staying at Himemasu-Sanso, in Towada city

Day3: Oirase Gorge trekking / bathing at Sukayu Onsen (hot springs)

The main purpose of this project is to evaluate and promote Japan's National Parks and culture of the people in the region as our touristic resources.

In the country side, people are leaving for cities to work. However, almost none of the natures are remained untouched in our nation. If there's no one to relate to the nature, they won't last that long.

Born and raised in the West, North-East Japan is literary, beyond the imagination and all the places we visited were very new and precious to me. Hot springs were great, but most of them need little more efforts to be promoted.



However, amongst of all, I would like to share the experience at two places, Snow-shoe trekking at Goshogake Onsen and Oirase Gorge trekking.

Starting approximately 6:30 a.m. before sunrise, we went up and down the hills for 30 minutes to see the "boiling mud"! Two guides watched over and cared for every one of us very well. Walking in snow itself was fun and we also enjoyed the landscape of Goshogake. We were so close to fumaroles and boiling-mud. According to the guide, it's only possible to go close in winter. Usually, the ropes prohibit people from entering, but last summer. There was a case of a tourist went over the rope and ground collapsed. His legs were in the boiling-mud, but he walked 30 minutes to his inn and asked for help.

Trekking at Oirase Gorge was more than we expected. Yass-san, the guide, loves Oirase Gorge and was eager to share his knowledge on the area. He showed us precious beautiful features which were available only in winter. These two are exceptional winter touristic resources and I would like to share with my colleagues throughout the globe!!

January Monthly Meeting

On January 17th, the monthly meeting held at the Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo with attendance of 26 members. After the reports from the committee, all members prepared for the "Forbes Travel Guide Seminar" hosted by Les Clefs d'Or Japan held in the afternoon on the day. Detailed report on the seminar will be shared in the next issue.

