

FOLENS SEMINAR
Field Trip Report of Nagano Prefecture
28~29 October, 2011 • Kamikochi • Matsumoto

- Rai Kumar BANJARA

Field Trip Overview

FOLENS conducted a student field trip to Kamikochi and Matsumoto area of Nagano Prefecture on 28th and 29th October 2011.

The field trip has been coordinated in conjunction with “Practical Exercise for International Environmental and Agricultural Research” organized by IEAS Department.

FOLENS students were highly encouraged to attend this trip which included discussions, lectures and opportunities to visit the most exciting Kamakochi regions and a llegendry Matsumoto area. Seventeen students from FOLENS, several students from IEAS and some teaching and coordinating staffs seems to be so friendly and cooperative among each others.



Japan Alps National Park Resort - Lies at Kamikochi Mountains in Nagano Prefecture, Japan. It is reported as one of the most scenic spot in Japan featuring vast virgin forests of birch trees and Japanese larch trees. More info about this place is available at <http://www.kamikochi.or.jp/english/index.php>

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The primary goals of the field trip were to provide students with an overview of several interesting and ecologically important field sites; expose students to observe the human impact to Alpine Ecosystem & the exploitation of natural resources in Kamikochi region.



Kappa Bridge from which the famous brand “Kappa” coined its brand name. The term ‘Kappa’ was introduced by Ryunosuke Akutagawa, a prominent novelist in his well known novel “Kappa” published in March 1927.
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Day I - Around Kamikochi Mountain

The first day of the field trip was spent at the Japan Alps National Park Resort, Konashi Forest Resort, Kamikochi where participants hiked through Azusa river from Kappa Bridge for about an hour to reach the amazing Taisho pond and Meijin Pond which actually consists of a bigger pond & a smaller pond joined together. Crystal clear water is always spring out from under ground. The scenery is reminded of Japanese Zen garden with Hotaka Shrine.

Day II - Around Daio Wasabi Farm

On 29th October- students were taken to visit one of the largest Wasabi Farm in Japan. Established in 1915 and located in Azumino, Nagano Prefecture near the center of Honshū, the main island of Japan, it is a popular tourist spot due to its beautiful watermills and for the river that runs through the farm.

Daiō Wasabi Farm is the Japan's largest wasabi farm covering 15 hectares of land.

The site is best known for its appearance in the 1990 film 'Dreams' by world famous director Akira Kurosawa in the segment called "Village of the Watermills".

Near the farm, some of us tried traditional staples such as wasabi soba (buckwheat noodles, a local speciality) and wasabi tempura (deep-fried prawns and vegetables) and some others tried wasabi ice-cream and wasabi beer which they said 'surprisingly delicious, despite their rather strange sounding taste!'



An artist at the Daio Wasabi Farm painting the beautiful watermills and the river that runs through it.

Day II - Around Matsumoto Castle

On the 2nd day, 29th October - we visited Matsumoto Castle (Matsumoto-jō) in Matsumoto City, Japan. It is one of Japan's premier historic castles listed as a National Treasure of Japan. Completed in the late 16th century, it still maintains its original wooden interiors and external stonework.



The backward view of Matsumoto Castle

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Field Trip Evaluation / Summary

Overall, the feedback on the evaluation was extremely positive. The field trip was described as "wonderful, one-in-million, educational, inspirational and the best experience ever had." When asked what accomplishments were achieved, responses included: being pushed to new levels, knowledge of Japanese culture, making friendships and connections with other students interested in environmental issues. Moreover, this trip was extremely beneficial for the students to share their career goals and aspirations, clarify themselves with environmental issues and human impacts on ecology. The trip was a great motivation for all the student of graduate school.

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Wasabi farm through which clean running water has to pass for its natural cultivation.