

The Association of Supporting Organizations for Students from Abroad in Yamagata

Activity Name	Eco-tourism Experience in Nagai, the city of water, greenery, and flowers			
Dates	August 20, 2009 to August 21, 2009			
Location	Nagai City, Yamagata Prefecture			
Participants	International Students	Local Residents, Corporations, etc.	Other	Total
	24	13	11	48

<Activity Details>

○ Experiencing Farm Work

The participants were divided into 4 separate groups, and under the supervision of each instructor, they dug for potatoes, put bags over bunches of grapes, did maintenance work on a watermelon patch, and listened to explanations by the instructor about agriculture and agritourism in Nagai City.

○ Greetings from the mayor of Nagai City.

○ A talk about Nagai City by city officials

Representatives from the Planning and Coordinating Division and the Tourism and Commerce Division Nagai City gave talks on the history and the industries of Nagai.



In front of the Flower Nagai Railway Line

○ Socializing with local residents

A get-together was held with the local residents, including Nagai City employees and farm experience instructors. The participants played games organized by the city employees, and local farm produce was given out as prizes.

○ Group discussions

Group discussions were held regarding agrotourism, based on the the farm experience, the lectures about Nagai City, and conversations with local residents at the get-together.

○ Visiting historic sites

The group visited Marudai-Ogiya (a top merchant house during the Edo period) and the Kozo Naganuma Sculpture Gallery.

○ *Mukashi katari* (telling of old stories) by the Nagai Komachi Society citizens group

○ Riding the Flower Nagai Line

The group rode on the Flower Nagai Railway Line (chartered), which as also the setting for the hit movie *Swing Girls*, and listened to lectures on the history of the line as well as the future prospects. A luncheon was held inside the carpeted car.

○ Visiting a Factory

The group visited TNI Industries, then after listening to a talk on camera lenses, toured the lens manufacturing process.

○ A talk on the NAGAI Robot Project

A talk was held on the NAGAI Robot Project, which has been attracting attention even on TV.

<Comments from The Participants>

Bogdanova Krista (Latvia)

“I was very happy to visit Nagai City. The two days I spent in Nagai was an excellent experience.

The most interesting experience in Nagai was working on a watermelon patch. Latvia only imports watermelons, and this was the first time I had seen a watermelon patch. Not only did I get to see a watermelon patch, but I got to work on the patch, and I got to eat the watermelons too. It was very fun, and deeply impressive. I took many photos to show to my family and Latvian friends.

The get-together in the evening was very fun too. I was very happy to talk, eat, and play fun games with my group members. I also tried some food I'd never had before. Everyone was kind, and it was very fun.

I had a good experience during those two days. I gained new information on Japan and Nagai City, and made new Japanese and international friends. Also, because we were speaking Japanese, it was a great opportunity to practice my Japanese.”

Jin Lian Jin (China)

“The first thing I tried was the farming experience, which was at the heart of this activity. My group helped dig potatoes. A farmer, Mr. Kaneko, led us to the potato field right away. I felt great standing in the potato field and looking at the green color of nature under the blue sky. When I started working, I was thrilled to see the big, beautiful fresh potatoes. That made time pass so quickly. They gave us many potatoes as gifts on our way home. Mr. Kaneko, thank you very much.

There was a get-together after working at the farm. The mayor of Nagai and other city officials explained the city's history and its development. That was followed by a roundtable, and we discussed and ate yummy food...A game called Nagai Bingo was interesting. It was very fun.

The next day, we toured the city, visited the Flower Nagai Line, and toured a factory. I was glad to be able to ride the Flower Nagai Line, which is the sole railway in the area, for the first time. I was especially touched by the stories of the people of the Nagai Line who have been fighting to keep the line open. I hope to visit the Nagai Line again. I'd like to tell everyone in Nagai City thank you very much for these 2 days and your hospitality.”



Experiencing farm work 1 (vineyard)



Experiencing farm work 2 (digging potatoes)



Lecture in a train on the Flower Nagai Line



Get-together with local residents