

MPMA Nagasaki Expedition: Indulgence in History, Nature, and Friendship

The MPMA 2024 field trip landed us in Nagasaki prefecture one of the famous destinations in Japan. As MPMA family including our professor, staff and students, we set out from Tokyo excitedly ready to explore the natural, cultural and historical heritage that Nagasaki offers. The journey managed to blend history, nature, and friendship into a splendid unforgettable experience.

Our two days adventure began with a visit to Shimabara Castle, an architectural sight full of historical pieces that showcase Japan's feudal past. We experienced historical events through a collection of artifacts, antiques and many more archeological objects while enjoying a beautiful view from the fifth floor of the building. We got to see real objects (like Katana) from the images we are used to seeing in manga and anime.



Gamadasu Dome was the next stop of adventure, an educational museum serving as a reminder of how powerful nature is. The dome commemorates the devastating volcanic eruption of Mount Unzen in early 1990s. We learned about the impact brought by the disaster and how resilient local people were through their incredible efforts to rebuild and recover from the catastrophe. An experience that solidified our respect for the people of Shimabara especially

after visiting nearby memorial park of houses destroyed by the debris flow.

Our journey took us around Mount Unzen to find a nice community surrounded by natural hot springs that are boiling endlessly while leaving a scent of minerals making it a perfect setting for reflection and relaxation as we indulged in the therapeutic waters. The area shows proof of how amazing nature is with its beautiful breathtaking landscapes. As the evening approached, we delighted in the local cuisine, savoring dishes that were rich in flavor from steaming bowls of famous *Champon* to tempura and so many other Japanese dishes.



Atomic Bomb Museum: A Lesson in Peace

A visit to the Atomic Bomb Museum and Peace Memorial Park was another deeply moving part of our trip. The museum which houses a collection of artifacts, was a jarring reminder of the atomic bomb on August 9, 1945. A detailed series of tragic events and their aftermath in the historical site left a mark on us and it was a significant lesson on the importance of peace and a world free of nuclear weapons.

Nagasaki exploration continued with an eventful and exciting boat trip to Hashima island famously known as Gunkanjima (battleship) Island due to its long shape that looks like a battleship. Luck was on our side



as we successfully landed on the peculiar, abandoned structures of the half man-made island which used to be a thriving coal mining community. Walking through the ghostly ruins of the island, we vividly imagined the bustling activities that took place in this important aspect of Japan industrialization and economic development. The visit to this UNESCO World Heritage Site was an unforgettable experience and it was a dream come true for one member of our beautiful MPMA family and for movie fanatics, we got the chance to reminisce scenes in the movie *Skyfall, 2012* fictionalized based on this island.

Before we started off to the airport, we stopped by Nagasaki station and leisurely strolled around this modernized area which is a complete opposite of Mount Unzen area. We wandered through the bustling streets sampling local treats and shopping for souvenirs (*o miyage*). The vibrant atmosphere of Nagasaki Station was a perfect finale to our journey, leaving us with lasting memories and a longing to return.

As we boarded the plane back to Tokyo, we carried with us not only souvenirs, but a deep appreciation for the beauty and history of Nagasaki. This field trip was a comprehensive class away from Rikkyo as well as an enjoyable adventure that brought us together and solidified our friendship while fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose among us MPMA members.

