

## **MPMA Field Trip to ASAHIKAWA HOKKAIDO**

I recently embarked on a two-day trip to Asahikawa, Hokkaido, filled with gratitude for the historical and beautiful natural areas in the snowy winter landscape. Those moments had many places to visit, such as Hokuchin Museum, Asahiyama Zoo, and snowshoe trekking (the hills of Bie) in Asahikawa. Japan actively developed Hokkaido during the Meiji Era, from 1868 to 1912, as part of its modernization and expansion. From the 1950s onwards, Hokkaido diversified into dairy farming and large-scale crop production, becoming Japan's agricultural hub while tourism emerged as a significant sector. Based on these factors, which include historical, cultural, and economic aspects, the MPMA program selected this prefecture for their field trip. This choice not only facilitates education but also allows for relaxation with the MPMA family, creating a memorable experience. I really enjoyed the activity and experience with the nature of the hot spring (onsen), tasting the delicious local foods, and activities with my classmates under the guidance of our dedicated teacher.

The first day, we visited the *Hokuchin Museum*, located in Asahikawa, Hokkaido, and founded in August 1963. The museum showcased approximately 2,500 valuable materials. The museum has historical significance, as the Japanese Imperial Army played a key role in protecting Hokkaido, and it showcases artefacts, documents, and exhibits that detail the division's activities, particularly during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including its involvement in the Russo-Japanese War and other military campaigns. In addition, the exhibition features items such as the uniforms, weapons, and other equipment used by the soldiers; documents and photographs that provide insights into the division's operations and life during wartime; and war memorials that commemorate the soldiers who served and sacrificed during various conflicts. Visiting the Hokuchin Museum provides a great experience for understanding the culture and historical items used during those periods.

The next exploration destination is the *Asahiyama Zoo*, one of Japan's most popular and innovative zoos, offering visitors a unique opportunity to observe the animals in habitats designed to showcase their natural beauty. I really enjoyed those moments visiting the many kinds of animals in the zoo, such as the spotted seal, Steller's sea eagle, Humboldt penguin, king penguin, rockhopper penguin, African lion, Amur leopard, Amur tiger, snow leopard, timberwolf, Yezo sika deer, capybara, crested porcupine, great white pelican, wild duck, Eurasian eagle-owl, Hokkaido Ural Owl, red panda, and others that I couldn't find out of them. I was so lucky to have seen the capybara because many of the visitors cannot see her, and she is really shy; she just stays in the house. Additionally, during the winter, there were penguin walk shows through the snow, where we could see the emperor penguin in his role as group leader. Moreover, my favorite animal was

the red panda, and it was so pretty when it played around the house. Visiting Asahiyama Zoo was not just about learning about the animals; it was also deeply committed to conservation and education, offering programs that highlight the importance of preserving biodiversity.

After finishing for a day, I had the opportunity to wear the traditional Japanese clothes and play with the snow falling, which was so attractive I didn't get it before. We had dinner together, enjoying the local cuisine, which was so meaningful. Another memorable experience was the time we spent relaxing in the hot springs; it was a great way to enjoy the outdoors, especially when the snow was falling.



The second day, the destination was *snowshoe trekking in Biei*, located between the cities of Asahikawa and Furano, Hokkaido. Biei offers an unforgettable experience amidst stunning winter landscapes. The hills of Biei were breathtakingly beautiful during the winter season; the landscape was as white as the clouds in the sky, and the temperature is low

enough to enjoy the surrounding snow views. We embarked on a guided tour to a snow-covered historical site. Spending time on Biei's snow peak made us feel cold, but we weren't. Snowshoe trekking in Biei is not only a great way to experience the beauty of Hokkaido's winter but also an opportunity to connect with nature in a way that is both active and peaceful.

The two-day trip to Asahikawa, Hokkaido, was the time when we could learn new information that we never knew before: we could deeply understand the culture, education, history, modernizations, and economy. In addition, it was not just educational learning, but we could relax and network with MPMA classmates by asking questions and playing games on the field trip. Last but not least, deeply thank Kataoka-sensei and the support of Orihara-san and Uehara-san for spending the time and making this opportunity.