

MPMA FIELD-TRIP WINTER 2024



Our trip began with our departure from Haneda Airport and landing at Asahikawa Airport. As we looked out the airplane window, we were mesmerized by the surreal landscape below—everything was covered in a blanket of white snow that we could not see in Tokyo. This was truly an unforgettable sight.

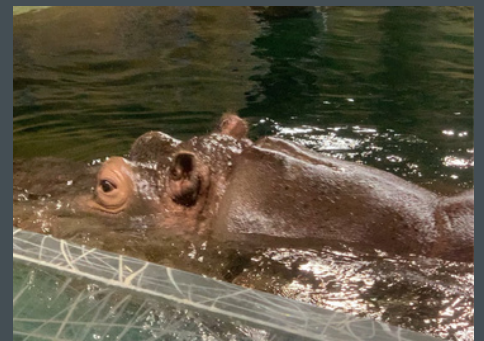


After landing, we headed to our first stop—the **Hokuchin Museum**. This is an important military museum in Hokkaido, showcasing numerous historical artifacts related to the Japan Self-Defense Forces. The museum features collections of military equipment, combat vehicles, and historical documents, giving us a deeper understanding of the military's role in protecting this cold region. The moment we arrived, snow began to fall, creating an incredibly romantic atmosphere and making our visit even more memorable.



We continued our journey to **Asahiya Zoo**—one of the most famous zoos in Japan. This zoo's unique design makes it special, allowing visitors to observe animals in an environment that closely resembles their natural habitats.

We were excited to see the animals here, especially the cold-weather ones like polar bears, penguins, and wolves. It was also the first time I could see how a hippo walked in the water at such a close distance. It was amazing.



One of the most unforgettable moments was witnessing the famous big penguin parade. These adorable penguins waddled in a line, occasionally glancing at visitors as if greeting us. It was an experience that left all of us delighted and in awe.





In the evening, we checked in at **Shirogane Park Hills**, a cozy hotel nestled in a snow-covered landscape. After a long day of traveling and exploring, nothing felt better than indulging in Hokkaido's delicious local cuisine and then soaking in the hot spring onsen. The sensation of immersing ourselves in warm water while watching the snow fall outside in -10°C weather was absolutely unforgettable.



The second day of our trip started with an exciting activity right outside the hotel—snow sledding. We couldn't stop laughing as we took turns sliding down the hill and eagerly climbing back up for another round. These fun activities not only brought us joy but also strengthened our bonds with each other.



After breakfast, we set off for Biei Hill, where the highlight of our trip awaited: **snow trekking**. Luckily the weather was nice that day. Each of us was equipped with a special pair of shoes for walking in the snow. Then, forming a long line, we climbed up the slope step by step. The steep path was challenging at times, making us momentarily hesitate, but we encouraged each other to keep going. Perhaps our sensei wanted to train us to never give up in the face of difficulty. When we finally reached the top, we were overwhelmed by the breathtaking view from above. Indeed, after great effort, the reward was truly magnificent. Our journey ended with a spectacular heavy snowfall, leaving us in awe of nature's beauty.



Kataoka sensei with Vietnamese team

I always look forward to each field trip because it brings unique and invaluable experiences. Our professor and support team are incredibly dedicated and meticulous in selecting destinations that showcase Japan's rich cultural heritage. In winter, we visited Hokkaido, learning about the culture of the frigid northern region blanketed in snow—an experience we could hardly have in our home countries or even in Tokyo. It allows us to witness the resilience and development of this region as it adapts to harsh conditions. In the summer, we traveled to the southern regions to learn about environmental issues, wartime history, and Japan's rapid economic growth.

I am truly grateful to Kataoka sensei, Orihara-san, and Uehara-san for organizing such enriching field trips. I feel truly grateful and fortunate to be part of the MPMA family. These will always be cherished and unforgettable memories for me.

