

## A Winter Adventure in Hokkaido

When I first heard that MPMA was organizing a winter field trip to Asahikawa, **Hokkaido**, I was thrilled! It was my first time seeing snow and visiting Hokkaido. But more than that, I was looking forward to spending time with sensei, staff, and fellow MPMA students outside of the classroom. Some of us had never even met in person before, so this was a great opportunity to connect, socialize, and build friendships. From the moment the plane started descending and I saw the entire landscape covered in a thick, white blanket of snow, I knew this trip was going to be something special.



Our first stop right after landing was the **Hokuchin Memorial Museum**, which showcases the history of the Japanese military, particularly the 7th Division of the Imperial Army that has a close connection to *Golden Kamuy*. As someone who had read parts of the manga and watched the anime, this was such a cool discovery. *Golden Kamuy* portrays the 7th Division as an ambitious and ruthless force seeking the Ainu people's hidden treasure. I even rewatched the live-action adaptation before the trip just to refresh my memory. On top of that, we also discussed the Ainu people in the Asian Economic Development course, so seeing this historical connection firsthand made it all the more relevant. Learning the historical context of the military's presence in the region helped me understand broader themes of economic and political development, topics we often cover in class. It reminded me that history is not just about

dates and events, but also about power dynamics, territorial control, and the livelihoods of indigenous groups, all of which continue to shape policy today.

Next, we visited **Asahiyama Zoo**, one of the most unique zoos in Japan. Unlike typical zoos, this one is designed to let visitors see the animals up close in ways that mimic their natural habitats. The experience was nothing like what I'd seen back home in Indonesia, where we mostly have tropical animals. Here, I got to see polar bears through a special glass dome, watch Japanese macaques jump around on high bridges, and a little parade of penguins waddling around in the snow. Aside from the fun, the visit also made me reflect on the importance of wildlife conservation, especially in the midst of a rapidly changing climate, as a sustainable endeavor in line with environmental policy. Conservation is not just about protecting individual species but also about maintaining biodiversity and ensuring that human activities do not disrupt ecosystems.





Our hotel stay was another unforgettable cultural experience. I finally got to live out my anime/dorama dreams by staying in a traditional Japanese-style room with tatami mats and futons. We also got to wear yukata and relax in an onsen, which felt like the ultimate Japanese cultural immersion. Dinner and breakfast were served in a big dining hall with our entire group, making every meal a fun and lively gathering.



On the second day, we went **snowshoe trekking in the hills of Biei**. This was easily one of the most breathtaking experiences of the trip. Walking across thick snow with special snowshoes, breathing in the crisp winter air, and taking in the endless white landscape. Our guide was super friendly and even pointed out fox tracks along the way. Sadly, we didn't see an actual fox, but just knowing they were around was exciting enough. The most thrilling part was when we got to the top of the hill, the guide told us to run and jump down like snow bunnies. More than just a fun adventure, it also highlights Hokkaido's unique ecosystems and the adaptations needed to live and work in deep snow. It's a hands-on lesson in geography and climate resilience, reinforcing how the environment shapes human activity and the local economy. The ability to adapt to climate extremes is not only an issue for wildlife, but also for people, industry and infrastructure planning.

This field trip was not just about traveling, but also about learning outside the classroom. It gave me a deeper understanding of Hokkaido's history, indigenous culture, and environment, while having fun with my MPMA friends. Sometimes, the best lessons aren't learned from books or lectures but from real-life experiences like this.

A massive **thank you** to sensei and the MPMA staff for organizing such an incredible trip! The planning, the itinerary, and the experiences were all beyond expectations. This field trip will definitely be one of my most cherished memories from my time in this program, and I hope future MPMA students get to experience the same magic.

