

Our Tour to Fascinating OGA of Akita Prefecture

Wondrous and inspiring travel experiences make people happy. A gorgeous sunset scenery on a foreign beach, an exotic cultural tourist attraction, a well reserved natural park, or a valley of adventure in a deep mountain. There are such magical places of interest that every one of us would dream of going. Oga in west of Akita Prefecture of Japan is definitely one of them. It is a wonderful place of culture, joy and fun on a shore of the Sea of Japan.



Before I came to Akita, I had this aspiration to see the Sea of Japan. Many friends told me that the best scenery spot to enjoy the sea view is Oga. That's the first expression I got on Oga. So when I heard that the International Exchange Center of Akita University will arrange a trip to Oga for me, I was so happy and thrilled. So I, together with Miss. Masaki and Miss. Miyazaki from the International Exchange Division and Mr.

Ono from the Planning –Public Relations Section, started the exciting trip to Oga.

Our first stop is Oogatafuji, the well-known lowest mountain in Japan. It was built based on the shape the Fuji Mountain in Ogata village, hence the name. It is only 3.776 meters high, one thousandth of Fuji Mountain's height. The altitude of its top is zero meter. It was completed in 1995 by the Survey and Design Association of Akita Prefecture as a commemoration. Many years ago, this place was the second largest lake Hachirogata in Japan after Lake Biwa. But extensive reclamation began in 1950s for crop production, and Ogata village was established on the reclaimed land in 1964. The remaining lake has an area of 48.3 km² (18th largest in Japan). This area is 4 meters below the sea level, which is now the lowest point in Japan.



Oogatafuji



Here we go. It took us 30 seconds to climb.

Oga is in the west of Akita Prefecture. The shape of Oga-peninsula is like an axe reaching out into the Sea of Japan. On the way, we were enjoying the stunning and unique seaside spectacles. I was deeply impressed by the picturesque scenery of bizarre rock formations, huge waves hitting the cliffs, the sweeping coastline and the amazing landscape stretching endlessly. We also drove by the Mt. Kanpu-zan located in the center of the peninsula. From where, we can see 360-degree panorama of the peninsula.

The next stop is the exciting Namahage Museum. The Namahage folklore is originated in Oga Peninsula Akita Prefecture. It is a ritual for cleansing people's souls, and for blessing the new year.



Namahage show



Me and Ono-san

We watched the Namahage show in the museum so I got to know the whole story. Before the new year, the Namahage deities went door-to-door to search the spoiled disobedient children or lazy adults and threaten to drag them into the snow covered mountains. The kids got so scared while the Namahage was searching the room with loud roars. The Namahage then encouraged the children to behave, as a result the kids made the promise. Namahage also carried a notebook recording the behavior of each one in the family from that year. The head of the family in formal dress offered Namahage deities with sake and food. Appeased by the hospitality of the householder, Namahage deities were satisfied and took leave, promising that the family would be blessed with health and harvest in the New Year.

The Namahage event takes place on 31st of December every year. Young single men in Akita Prefecture dress like the Namahage, wearing an eerie mask, a straw raincoat and waistband and carries a scary tool made of wood depicting a knife, stick or some other weapon, and a pail. They march around the village and reenact the folklore. The Namahage show is available in Shinzan Shrine, and tourists can participate at this event.

By lunch time, we came to this cozy and unique style restaurant with a big lovely Namahage mold in front of the house. We had delicious Sashimi there.



After lunch, we headed to the exciting Oga Aquarium GAO. This is my first time to see a aquarium. I was so excited. The aquarium is located by the ocean on the Oga peninsula, so we could enjoy the amazing view of the sea which makes the exhibits more vivid and attractive.



Masaki-san, me and Miyazaki-san

We took a tour about the facilities and got to know some background knowledge. While we came into the exhibition hall, I was amazed by so many varied fishes swimming in the huge tank. It was so beautiful. We also saw Gota, the popular polar bear, and lots of Gentoo Penguins. They are so lovely. I wish I could have more time to get a closer watch, but the aquarium was about time to close then. I guess time just flied in the aquarium because it was so fun and amazing.

It is better to see once than hear a hundred times. So why not start planning? Akita welcomes you!

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