

Monitor Tours Conducted in 2019

This year, we conducted five monitor tours. Let us introduce each of them.

(1) Chikugo River Heritage Tours in Hita. July 25.

20 participants. Tour Price 7,000 yen.

Partnership with Asia Fukuoka Partners Co. Ltd.

The location of this tour is The Grand Park of Chikugo River Zone 4 “The River Side District and History Zone”. This Zone is blessed with the attractions of the river and tourism resources cultivated in history. We enjoyed the famous sweetfish at lunch at the Yanaba^{*1} opened from May to October, strolled in the town of Mameda, where traditional buildings are lined up, and visited the shochu(distilled spirits) factory. In the evening, we went to JR Hita Statio where the eight Yamaboko ^{*2} were in line.

Hita is blessed with water, so the brewing industry of Japanese sake, soy sauce and so on is flourishing. There are a Sapporo Beer Factory and Iichiko Hita Distillery. Iichiko is a famous shochu for its “Downtown Napoleon” brand. Here was a blending factory for Nikka Whisky, but it was withdrawn and Iichiko Hita Distillery took over.

In the evening, we visited the Gion Festival of Hita, which is registered as a UNESCO Intangible Heritage. There are four Yamaboko in each of Mameda and Kuma towns, and they are routed in each town. This day, specially, all of the Yamaboko were lined up in the front of JR Hita Station. When it gets dark, lanterns are displayed on Yamaboko. The lantern sways each time the Yamaboko moves, and the light coming from swaying lanterns created a wonderful scene.

*1 A garden with a device for catching sweetfish in the river

*2 A car with decorations drawn to the Gion Festival



Grilled sweetfish at the



The shochu factory





Yamaboko

Yamaboko lined up

(2) Appreciate the Chikugo River Fireworks of Kuereme on the boat. August 5.

Boarding fee 4,000 yen. 45 participants.

The location of this tour is The Grand Park of Chikugo River Zone 9 “The Boating Trip down the River and Wood Craft Zone”. It is a fireworks display with a history about 300 years related to the shrine, Suitengu, and it is said to be largest in the western Japan. Suitengu in Kurume is the head shrine of Suitengu nationwide and enshrine Emperor Antoku who entered the water at Dnanoura in 1185. *1 We saw this fireworks from the boat. In the boat, you can enjoy the presence of the burnt debris of the fireworks falling on your head.

*1 The battle of Dannoura on the sea is the final battle of Genpei.



Sunset over Chikugo Weir from the fireworks place



A distant view of the fireworks

(3) Luxury day tour in Yanagawa. September 16.

Tour price 22,000 yen. 8 participants.

Partnership with Asia Fukuoka Partners Co. Ltd.

The location of this tour is The Grand Park of Chikugo River Zone 10 “Yabe River and the Canal of Yanagawa Zone”. The price of a usual day tour is probably from 5,000 yen to 10,000 yen, so this tour is a tour with an extra charge. Why we plan this kind of tour? We consider that usual tours will not be possible to fully enjoy the attractiveness of the visited destinations because of the price, and especially cheap tours will lead to the devastation of tourism resources. It is also considered that the tourists who seek the extraordinary can grasp the taste of the local area and return home with a luxurious feeling.

This plan is necessary for inbound guests who are deeply interested in Japanese culture and history.

Meeting together at Nishitets Yanagawa Railway Station, we visit the shrine, Mihashirajinnjya, which is not far from the station. This enshrines the founder of the Yanagawa clan, Munesige Tachibana, and is crowded with autumn “Onigie” festival. After receiving an explanation from the priest of the shrine, we headed for Okinohata district. In this district, there are several spots for sightseeing such as the fisherman’s port where boats that go out to Ariake Sea hang out, the villa of Ynagawa clan’s ancestors called “Ohana”, the Kitahara Hakushu^{*1} Birth Memorial House and so on.

The garden in Ohana, called “Shotoen”, is very famous and it is said that the garden reflects Matsushima in Sendai. Facing this garden, there is a formal room called “The Room of Lords” that has been favored by the feudal lords for generations. We had lunch here. The delicacies of the Ariake Sea, such as miso-boiled anemones, boiled tongue, which is locally known as “Kutsuzoko (shoe sole)”, and the fish “Warasubo”, which has a nickname of aliens and only inhabits the Ariake Sea, and famous steamed eel with special sauce are served. It seemed that liquor such as beer, wine, sake and so on had advanced.

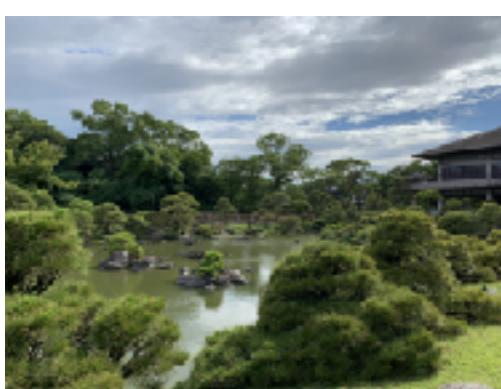
After lunch, one of the Tachibana family kindly guided us to Ohana and we listened some stories that only the Tachibana family know. We were very impressed. Leaving Ohana, we took a walk through the Kitahara Hakusyuu Birth Memorial House, Toshima House (a samurai residence), Yanagawa Ariake Aquarium, and Rokki Shrine Park. In this park, there is a poetry monument in which the poem of Hakusyuu with a feeling of nostalgia for Yanagawa is engraved. From there, we passed through the canal over Ohana and reached the footbath of the “Kanpo no Yado” ^{*2}. Soaking in the footbath, we waited for the arrival of the donko boat ^{*3} chartered for moon watching.

The donko boat was packed with bento and drinks. We enjoy it very much. The performance of Shinobue (a bamboo flute) added more fun. The player was the best master in the contest all over the country, and he came to Ynagawa as the Regional Development Cooperation Team. For a full two hours, we watched the moon while listening to the sound of the Shinobue and took a boat around the moonlight. The tour participants were very satisfied after spending an extravagant afternoon and evening that they could not expect any more.

*1 Kitahara Hakusyuu is a famous poet born in Ynagawa.

*2 Kanpo noYado is a hotel created by the Ministry of Post and Telecommunication.

*3 Yanagawa’ own, operated by a pole without a turret.



Shotoen



The Room of Lords



A scenery of Okinohata



A commemorative photo in Ohana

(4) A tour visiting producers of “Chikugo River Brand” in Okawa. October 13.

Tour price 8,800 yen. 20 participants.

Partnership with Asia Fukuoka Partners Co., Ltd.

The zone for this tour is Zone 9 “The Boating Trip down the River and Wood Crafts Zoon”. Okawa is widely known as a town for woodworking. It is located at the mouth of the Chikugo River, which is connected to the Ariake Sea, and has been a popular land for boating since ancient times. The wooden shipbuilding industry was also active. The Japanese cedar wood was transported from the upstream Hita in a raft. The raft was once a feature of the Chikugo River, but can no longer be seen.

From late Meiji era to Taisho and early Showa era, the ship became larger and replaces with a steel ship, then the shipbuilding business of wood ship died, However, the technique was put to good use in furniture making and passed on as a town for woodworking. The “Okawa Woodworking Festival” is held in spring and autumn, attracting many people from all over the country. In this tour, from morning, we cruised the mouth of the Chikugo River, saw from the river the Ruin of Mietsu Navy Site, which is registered as a World Heritage Site of Japan’s Modernization Heritage, and the Okawa Shokai Bridge, a Japanese Civil Engineering and Architectural Heritage site. Lunch was taken on board. From the afternoon, we visited the Okawa Woodworking Festival and experienced to make “Kumiko”, a traditional craft of Okawa.



Shokai Bridge



Delicacies on board, karasum of Etsu fish

(5) The Journey around Kuju. March 22-23.

Tour price 30,000 yen. 12 participants.

The zone for this tour is mainly the zone 1 “The Sources of Chikugo River and Hot Spring Villages

Zone” of the Grand Park. Departing from Kurume city, the first place we headed for was Takenoyu hot spring, which is located in the eastern foot of Mt. Waita. The hot springs are gushing above the ground here, and steam is escaping everywhere. It was once introduced with the catchphrase “Heaven named Hell”. There is the “Geothermal Food Research Center” that researches and develops cooking and processed foods using steam.

After lunch, we headed for Miyabaru in Oguni Town, following the traces of the Miyabaru Line of the old National Railway and stop at U-Station, a roadside station. We heard that this roadside station was built on the site of abandoned Miyabaru Station and it is the first roadside station in the country. After worshiping at Oguni Ryo Shrine, we visited the museum of Zennzou Sakamoto, a painter born in Oguni Town. This museum of art is a wooden building modeled on an old folk house with tatami mats laid inside, making it a unique museum.

Departing the museum, we headed for Nabegataki, a water fall. There are many water falls in this zone. These days, this water fall has become popular due to the fact that visitors can go behind the waterhole and have a lot of rainbows. There are hot springs everywhere in this zone. Then we decided to use them at Ukenokuchi hot spring. The hot spring water is a pink color that contain iron, and it has a nice spring quality that is warm and looks good on the skin. Nobel Prize writer Yasunari Kawabata was once staying here. After bathing, we went to Jizobaru Villa where we stayed. Dinner was prepared by the staff at the Geothermal Food Research Center.

The next morning, we had a sumptuous breakfast prepared with spring in the villa. We were planning to visit a geothermal power plant in Htchobaru, however it was canceled due to the new Corona Virus. So we headed for Oyama Town. Ohyama Town, which has now been merged with Hita City, is known for its unique town development. In particular, the development of specialty products that started with the catchphrase “Plant plums and chestnuts, and go to Hawaii” is a model of the “One Village, One Product Campaign”. Oyama Town is a mecca for this campaign. In addition, Konohana Garden, where we had lunch, was the first direct sales floor of agricultural product from farmers. There is also the “Umeboshi Museum”. Lunches with plenty of local vegetables are very popular and reservations are required on weekends.

After this we headed for Hita and returned to Kurume. Hita was just in the middle of Hinamatsuri. We saw 100-year-old dolls displayed in a 200-year-old house in Kuma-machi.



Hell of Takenoyu



Steamed Foods



Oguni Ryo Shrine



Jizoubaru Villa



Umeboshi Museum



100-year-old dolls displayed in a 200-year-old house