



The tour of Natto factory and Making local hot pot

Date :2016.02.26 - 2016.02.28

Overview

Date	2016.02.26 (Fri) - 2016.02.28 (Sun)		
Participant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wenny Ly (Australia/Female)• Tomasz Mikolajewski (Poland/Male)• Edyta (Poland/Female)• Rudy (Netherlands/Male)		
Schedule	<p>02.26 (Fri) 13:30 Kakunodate Sta. 14:00 Kariho Sake brewery 17:00 Shohoen Ryokan</p>	<p>02.27 (Sat) 10:00 Hongo residence -Tea Ceremony- 12:00 Kakumagawa hall -Making Hanabi Sushi roll- 14:00 Polmeat factory 15:30 Komatsu factory -Making Hanabi Exp.- 18:30 Yupopo Ryokan</p>	<p>02.28 (Sun) 10:30 Warabi-za -Theater appreciation- 15:00 Kakunodate Sta. 18:00 Ueno Sta.</p>

1. Samurai village

I enjoyed my experience at the Ishiguro Samurai House. Our guide, Ishiguro-san, was polite and enthusiastic. He explained the history of the house and aspects of Japanese culture to us in English. We were pleasantly surprised that he is a descendent from the Ishiguro Samurai Family - it enhanced our experience. The Ishiguro Samurai House had old artefacts on display that weren't concealed behind glass windows. This is uncommon in Japan, and I appreciated it as I could examine the artefacts in closer detail. The room with the artefacts was very cold, so I spent less time there. I quickly returned to the other room with the heater. I wanted to stay longer to look at the artefacts and read the descriptions, but it was too cold for me. It might be good to have a heater in that room during the colder months.

I would pay 800 yen for entry to this Samurai house with a tour explanation in English.

The samurai village and the house was beautiful experience. The guide in English was very helpful. The museum was also very interesting. I wish we had a little bit more time to walk around the town.

I would pay 2,000 yen for it.

I would pay 2,000 yen for it if the tour is long enough and explains history well not only about one house.



2. Green Hotel Omagari

The location was very convenient and close to the station, and it was easy to spot the hotel from afar. The staff was polite, and the room was clean. The breakfast food was quite delicious. The equipment was a bit old (like the boiler) but it was kept in excellent condition. It was actually interesting to see old equipment kept in excellent condition!

I would pay 9,000yen per room for one night at this hotel.

The hotel room was a smoking room. For people who don't smoke the smell was a little unpleasant. The location was very convenient, the food was very good, and the staff friendly.

3. Tea Ceremony

This was my first tea ceremony and I enjoyed the experience. The explanations were all done before the ceremony, so we remained quiet during the ceremony. The ceremony was formal with lots of rules to follow (e.g. bowing before entering, turning the cup before drinking). The staff were very polite and graceful, and they tried to accommodate us and ensure that we felt comfortable. We wanted to keep kneeling out of respect, yet they reassured us and encouraged us to change our seating position. They also offered us seconds for the tea and snacks.
I would pay 1,000 yen for the tea ceremony experience.

A chance to see a traditional Japanese household was very interesting. Also, the tea ceremony was very professional. I really enjoyed the experience. It was the first time for me to participate in a tea ceremony. However, I wish the explanations were in English. I understand that the staff may not be able to speak English, but it would be good to have at least a translated pamphlet in English.

I would pay 500 yen for the tea ceremony experience.

I would pay 3,000 yen for the tea ceremony experience.



4. Hanabi Sushi Roll

The ladies did their best to explain how to make the hanabi sushi. I noticed that we weren't giving her our full attention and we tend to get distracted. Perhaps if there were some explanation in English at the same time, then people would give their full attention to making the sushi instead of chatting about other things.

I would pay 1,000 yen for the hanabi sushi experience.

It was a lot of fun to make the Hanabi Sushi. However, it was too much food. I would also like to learn about the building and the purpose of it.

I would pay 3,000 yen for the program.

I would pay 1,500 yen for the program.



5. Kakumagawa Sweets

My favorite snack was the “Omagari no Hanabi - Shineido”. The cookie was crumbly and tasty.

I would pay 600 yen for the set (i.e. 100 yen per snack)

My favorite snack was the “Omagari no Hanabi”.

6. Hanabi factory

This was my favourite activity on the tour. It was really unique and interesting to see the entire process of making the fireworks. We were taken to each area to witness how each firework was made. Our guide kindly answered our questions and we were very interested in knowing the size of the firework and the logistics. We made our own fake fireworks as well as a nice memento of the tour and finally about ten fireworks were launched just for us. Had a really amazing time, even if I was freezing in the snow! It would be better to have a translator accompanying people on this tour. Luckily a few of us could understand Japanese, but it would attract more foreign tourists if there was a translator available. I would pay 3,000 yen for this fireworks factory tour.

This was my most favorite experience. The tour was very detailed and I very appreciated that we could see people working, and see the entire process.

I would pay 1,000 yen for the program.

I would pay 4,000 yen for the program.



安全

顧客



演出

効率

禁煙

二尺玉
黄金しだれ菊
友禅浮模

7. Onsen stay (Yupopo)

The hotel was beautifully decorated with a wooden and natural theme. The staff were really helpful and kind. The food at the restaurant was really tasty and presented well, but it was too much for us to eat (we ate the hanabi sushi earlier and we were still really full)! The rooms were very large, and comfortable to stay in. The onsen was beautiful - I loved watching the scenic view of heavy snow whilst bathing in the hot bath. Water was really hot so I couldn't stay as long as I wanted to! It would've been amazing to have a rotenburo bath experience whilst watching the snow. Ohshida-san was very kind and personally checking on us. He even gave us a tour of the art exhibition in the hotel. I would pay 15,000 yen per room for one night's stay, the dinner, and the onsen.

The hotel was very good, but I wish we could chose a Tatami room. The onsen was very good. Breakfast was simple, but OK.

I would pay 8,000 yen for the hotel.

I would pay 7,500 yen for the hotel.

8. Can you recommend the program to your friends?

I definitely will recommend this tour to my friends and colleagues, although I would choose the foreigners who are able to understand some Japanese (JLPT N2 Level). Throughout the tour, there wasn't much explanation in English, but I didn't find it a huge problem since we could understand Japanese. This kind of tour may be difficult to attract foreigners who don't comprehend Japanese. But it would still be an attractive option to foreigners with at least JLPT N2 level, or if they attended the tour together with someone who understood Japanese and can translate for them. I've already told a few of my foreign colleagues about the tour, and they are interested in participating. However, they have Japanese partners and they wonder if their partners can still attend the tour.

Most of my friends are foreigners. I would recommend this tour only to those who can speak good Japanese. Also, depends on the final price.

The tour was nice and the people great. It's quite far from Tokyo. I liked that everything was nearby (no long car rides). Good food. I really liked the Sake Brewery.



9. How much did you pay during the program?

I paid 34,000 yen for the shinkansen tickets (return) and I was reimbursed 14,000 yen. I paid 20,000 yen for the whole tour which was a really good deal. I bought about 1,500 yen worth of omiyage at the souvenir store in Yupopo Onsen.

- Shinkansen ticket : 34,260 Yen
- Some foods at a convenient store : 1,000 Yen
- Drinking party : 2,000 Yen

I paid 5,000 yen for some souvenirs.

I paid 8,000 yen for some souvenirs.



10. Please write some advices and suggestions about the program.

Prior to beginning the tour, it would be good if the tour group could receive an outline of the different activity options with the estimated duration time so that they can choose what kind of activities to participate in. The schedule and plan kept changing throughout the tour this time, but in the future it would be better if tour group participants can choose before hand what activities to participate in. When there's an estimated duration time for each activity, the tour group participants can decide whether they have enough time in a day to do the things they would like to do. The original tour missed some sightseeing with nature. The tour had a lot of activities to experience, but it would be good to include some nature sightseeing as one of the activity options. I am really thankful to Terui-san for taking us to see the Kakunodate Samurai House and the Tazawako on our last day. He was really accommodating to us and fulfilled our wishes. My apologies for not attending the Fireworks Play, but after coming a long way I wanted to marvel at Akita's beautiful nature. Tazawako was truly breathtaking, especially when the lake created a mirror image of the mountains.

1. Share the schedule about the program beforehand
2. Go out more earlier to go some places more
3. Stay a room with Tatami in order to feel "Japan" more
4. Decrease the quantity of cuisines
5. Don't forget to Add the tour of Tazawa lake because The lake is very famous place.
6. Accompany a English translator

English explanation if this tour is directed into foreigners coming from abroad. Besides the places that are mentioned I would add Tazawa lake. Since I am interested in cooking I would like to see where the local products are coming from, how are they made (sweets, tsukemono etc.)

More in English, More clarity about the schedule. Some nice omiyage from the places we visited. Places that show how Japanese food and craft items were made: Rice fields, Wasabi, Shochu brewery, Green tea fields. Places were we can try these foods. Interesting hikes or nature spots (we went to the lake which was great)

