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HOME-STAY IN JAPAN ARE WE READY TO LEARN?

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CHOOSING a home-stay in Japan is an opportunity to experience the lifestyle and culture by living with a safe host family. In a home-stay, international students or tourists can also learn Japanese language, traditions and culture while practicing them in a safe home abroad.

Some farmers are licensed to operate guesthouses utilizing empty rooms or other spaces. They also allow guests to experience agricultural work on the farms.

Our team of 17 journalists from 13 APO member countries involved in the Multicountry Observational Study Mission on Best Practices in Promoting Innovation and Productivity in Agriculture for Mass Media Practitioners organized and sponsored by the Asian Productivity Organization (APO) Tokyo Japan left Hachinohe Daiwa Roynet Hotel in Hachinohe by chartered bus on day 3 of the field visit to observe Agro-tourism sites in Nambucho. Nambu Town is a comfortable and pleasant town where people are full of life. The first in our itinerary was to visit a farm household for interview.

The path to the home-stay was carefully arranged and grown. Houses and premises on both sides of the road narrated a picturesque story of a tranquil village life in Nambucho. At one end in closer proximity to the home-stay we were about to visit was a well grown pear farm. High-class pear fruits grown here is a luxury fruit loved for its melting texture, sophisticated, taste and distinctive scent. It is also popular as an ingredient in ice-cream, wine and juice.

"We offer very reasonable rates that make home-stay in Japan an affordable short-term housing alternative compared to guest houses or apartments. Therefore, home-stay in Japan is always an attractive form of accommodation for stays from a few days to several months," says the lady who is also the land lord of the farm household we visited. In her home garden there were pears and peaches grown for the visitor and for home consumption as well. She allowed the team to pick as much as they can eat. After her brief explanation and answers to many a question asked by the journalists while enjoying the home grown pears and peach fruits she took us inside her home to show what awaited the visitor to Japanese Homestay.



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It was a beautiful spacious home. Inside was a separate section, especially constructed with Tatami mats, exclusively for the guest to stay. It had every utensil needed for the guest in Japanese way. She also showed the living area, the common bathroom that could be shared both by the guest and the host family, the traditional oven that burnt wood to boil water and the other areas inside the home the guest could share. The way things were presented inside this beautiful farmhouse offered a warmly welcome for the guest to feel at home. A guest at the home-stay can also engage in various stages of farming activities that take place at the farm yards nearby. These experiences bring a firsthand experience for the guest on traditions of agriculture in Japan.

She was so generous, and as I remembered, when we were about to leave her place she took a lot of effort to pick a ripe pear fruit that I showed her

high on a pear tree in her compound. Thanking her for all her generosity at her household we had already left her home, when suddenly I realized that she had hurriedly come running after us to offer the ripe pear she picked for me. She was so happy that she could pick it for her guest at last.

A guest who visits for a home-stay here can also prepare a delicious soba noodle lunch using soba (buckwheat) flour produced in Nambucho at the nearby Keyagu Restaurant in the spirit of local production and local consumption. Our

team also had this unique opportunity to experience soba making ourselves and also to have them for lunch.

Nambu Town located in the southeast of Aomori prefecture in Japan has made agriculture its key industry. A wide variety of fresh agricultural products and livestock are produced in the town. The main products are fruits, vegetables and paddy-field rice.

At the same time, the town administration is also making a town-wide effort to promote interactions between rural and urban areas, for example through the Tassya-mura Project and acceptance of students on farm-stay programmes organized as part of their school-trips, as well as endeavors to develop a green tourism industry in the town with a view to attracting medium and long-stay visitors.

Apparently, Tassya-mura is a virtual agriculture village at Nambu town in Aomori Prefecture, for the purpose of facilitating exchanges between visitors and villagers by taking advantage of local resources for communication, such as traditional rural landscapes, local history and culture, in addition to the hospitality that one can only expect in the countryside. Under the slogan, "Nice, Slow and Relaxing", a town-wide community development effort is underway to take the concept of green tourism to the next level in order to attract long-stay visitors and even new residents.



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The initial goal is to transform people who visit the village as tourists into Tassya-mura fans, so that they may come back to the village in the future to have long-stays or settle in the village. Another objective is to make effective use of different kinds of local resources. This allows locals to review and rediscover their own community and accordingly plan and implement voluntary community development initiatives and so on.

In addition to the above, the town also promotes resource management-oriented inland water fisheries by taking advantage of the clean streams of the Mabechi River, Nyoraido River and Sarube River to implement activities for fishery ecosystem protection and works to develop systems for experience-based and other types of tours using local fishery resources.

To attract visitors, the Shiki Matsuri (Four Season Festival) event is also held throughout the year, featuring cherries, peaches, pears, apples, grapes, strawberries, ume plums, blueberries and so on.



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The online details reveal that the Japanese home-stay prices for the guests in many parts located in Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, Nara, Yokohama, Saitama, Nagoya, Sapporo, Fukuoka, Hiroshima, Narita, Chiba or in the countryside Miyazaki, Hyogo, Ehime, etc range between 4000 and 5000 yen per night including breakfast and dinner depending on location for less than 30 nights. According to same sources price per month depending on location for 30 nights and more including breakfast and dinner will be between 75000 and 95000 yen. Many host families provide guests with meals.

The home-stay option in Japan, has been developed over a long period of time and it is now known around the world. Today, staying with a family in Japan or at one individual's home has become very popular among international visitors. The concept is also becoming more and more popular in Japan, for several reasons

such as Japanese people want visitors to discover their country, it is a better alternative to live with a host family to avoid high expenditure at hotels and Japan is one of the most beautiful countries in the world.

Japanese home-stay families always help the guest discover and understand the beauty and richness of Japanese culture for an unforgettable stay in Japan. These families are carefully selected as the programme requires from all of them the capability to have interesting exchanges with their guest, who is considered as a friend of the family.



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01. The home-stay we visited

02. The lady who owns a home-stay briefing of the home-stay programme to the journalists

03. Journalists engage in soba noodle making for lunch with the help of Japanese experts for soba making

04. Visiting journalists from left Evi Syariefa Firstantinovi from Indonesia, Pacita Uybocho Juan from Philippines, Joo Youb Lee from the Republic of Korea, Baatar Oyun from Mongolia and Seetha Sirimallee Alahakoon from Sri Lanka pause for a pic with their make of Soba Noodles. Mutsumi Nojima - Former Project Coordinator, Agriculture Department of APO looks on.

05. Hachinohe Daiwa Roynet Hotel in Hachinohe

06. Paddy-fields systematically grown on the way

07. A cultivation on the way to the home-stay

08. Serenity and tranquility around the home-stay

09. A pear fruit cultivation in close proximity to the home-stay. Journalists pause for pics and picks.

10. An employee carefully packing the picked pears for export

11. The pear fruits are covered with brown paper bags to minimize the harm to them

12. The traditional oven that burns wood to boil water

13. A silent yet beautifully kept village grave-yard in the vicinity

14. The spacious living area of the home-stay

15. A separate section, especially constructed with Tatami mats, exclusively for the guest to stay

16. Sports equipment at the entrance to the home-stay

17. Journalists observing the guest area while listening to the explanations by the land lady. Joselito C. Bernardo - Director, Agriculture Department of APO is also in the picture.

18. The common bathroom that can be shared both by the guest and the host family

19. Journalists returning from the home-stay through tranquil and serene village surrounding



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