

# Return to Nature

## – Farming Experience in Yamanashi –

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采菊东篱下，  
悠然见南山。



While picking asters'neath the Eastern fence, my gaze upon the Southern mountain rests.  
– Tao Yuanming, *Selected Poems*, trans. Gladys Yang

*This is a sentence from a poem by Tao Yuanming, one of the greatest poets in China's history, known to Chinese people all around the world, which describes a lifestyle of returning to nature – farming land, growing plants, feeding fowls, escaping the hustle and bustle of daily life. Written about 1,600 years ago, this sentence has influenced generations of Chinese on their pursuit of an old rural way of life.*

N owadays, the fact is that not everyone living in a modern society really wants to give up living in city, but occasionally we do need a chance to enjoy the happiness of farming and the peace of being in nature. That's why a new type of tourism, agricultural experience tourism, is becoming more and more popular.

For those who are dreaming of experiencing farm life, a travel agency named Breath Tokyo has created the perfect tour in Yamanashi.

Inoue Farm, located on the Kiyosato Highland, stretching out across the foot of Mt. Yatsugatake, whose peaks range from an altitude of 800m to 1,500m was the place chosen as the base of the tour. The Kiyosato Highland is an area of stunning nature that changes in various ways throughout the seasons, where you can enjoy a magnificent mountain view and the night sky full of stars, which cannot be seen in urban areas. The reason they chose Inoue Farm is not only for its location, but also because it is an organic farm. Only 0.2% of farms around Japan have been recognized as organic by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, and Inoue Farm is one of them, which means you can eat the healthiest agricultural products there without any worries.

One day in late August, we followed Taiwanese visitors of totally different ages, ranging from three years old to

in their sixties, and in units of family, couples or friends, to join their "farmer for a day" experience on Kiyosato Highland. The tour itself lasted for three days and two nights, but we only took part in the first day. Even so, we experienced and captured the joys of returning to nature.

## Camping

The first assignment of being a farmer is to "build a house." Well, it's a cute way to say "decorate your home." As soon as we arrived at the farm, we were all impressed by these huge white tents that the staff of Inoue Farm had already set up for us on the grassy field. The biggest one—a frame tent in the middle with colorful sofas under it, is used as the public space—the living room; the others are luxury bell tents which are private spaces for staying.

When each unit of visitors had decided their bell tent, they were given a wooden board to write down the name of their "home," as well as a mosquito-repelling plant to put in front of the door. Non-organic products are prohibited in the camping area since they might do harm to the soil and plants.

"Feifei, what's the name of our home?" a dad asked his 9-year old daughter.

"Happiness Farm."

"Isn't it too common?"

"But I feel so happy staying here. Oh, dad, let me draw a smiling face."



## Fruit Picking, Egg Gathering

After a picnic lunch of food all grown on the farm, we were taken to pick farm products - tomatoes, corn, and eggs. I'd like to describe tomatoes and corn as fruits here, because they were so sweet, juicy and delicious beyond my expectation.

There are three kinds of tomatoes in each greenhouse, which could be easily distinguished by color—red, orange and yellow. Men were busy with picking to fill their basket; women were taking pictures in different poses with those lovely fruits. In the meantime, kids competed on a game called "who







can find the biggest tomato” ... It's hard for me to say which one tasted best. At that time, I only wished that I had a bigger stomach so I could have more.

However, when we got to the corn field, I regretted eating too many tomatoes. Mr. Inoue showed us how to recognize a sweet corn at milk stage, at which the corn is ready to be harvested. Then he demonstrated how to pick the corn without harming the plant and picked one for the youngest kid in the group. “Yummy!” Seemed the little girl was completely satisfied with the sweetness. After her, we all rushed to start “hunting” and enjoying the sugary corn, which I bet is the best corn I have ever had during my whole life.

As the last stop, we were led to an organic chicken farm run by a young man. This is a really rare occurrence, since many young people brought up in a rural areas are eager to run away to look for job opportunities in modern cities. It might be the first time for these kids to meet a live chicken. A boy stepped forward timidly to touch the feather of a hen, but immediately cried out when it turned back. The twin sisters were encouraged by their parents to take eggs from a nest, which made them look so nervous. Oh, yes, they made it! Ladies were all good at this job. They acted so quickly that the hen nearby even didn't notice its eggs had been “stolen.”

## Tractor Riding

Probably we all know what a tractor looks like, but have you ever ridden one? Here is the chance to give it a try.

Mr. Inoue was nice enough to invite visitors to take turns getting on his tractor for a ride. Not only the kids were excited when sitting on the tractor, but also adults, especially male visitors. Perhaps the little boy's soul hidden in their body was awakened by the sound of the machine's engine, and the feeling of freedom riding on the endless field.

## Outdoor Dinning

Three years ago, Chef Suzuki Shinsaku was running a popular French restaurant in Tokyo. But he and his wife decided to

move to Yamanashi when they realized the advantages of changing the urban life for a slow paced one in a place surround by nature, and reopened their restaurant, “Ai to Ibukuro”, at the foot of Mt. Yatsugatake. In their menu, local meat and vegetables are the main ingredients, and we got to taste it at Inoue Farm.

In the evening, Chef Suzuki set his kitchen beside the camp field to prepare an outdoor French dinner for the guests from afar. When night fell, tables were covered with white cloth, the tent was decorated with flowers and lights, red wine was poured into glasses, scrumptious-looking food was served on the table... After a one-day farming experience, hardworking “farmers” deserve a romantic dinner of delicacies, from which they could get energy for their activities the next day.

With the bonfire blazing, the coldness of night was kept away. Adults toasted each other; kids played around. The joyful scene made me wonder if tonight they would have a dream of the world described by poet Tao Yuanming of returning to nature.

### Information

For more information and for reservations of the farming experience trip in Yamanashi please visit:  
<https://www.breathetokyo.jp/camping/yamanashi2019>

