

# Experiencing Yamanashi through the eyes of a local

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## JET Globalisation Seminar

In November, I had the chance to experience Yamanashi through the eyes of a local, thanks to the JET Globalisation seminar, which was held for three days in our prefecture. This seminar aimed to promote revitalisation and internationalisation in local communities, and after learning about the area by speaking to locals in the area, participants would present in groups and suggest ideas on how to better promote the region.

Every year the seminar is held in different prefectures, however I was lucky enough to experience this in my first year of working in Yamanashi Prefecture. In simple terms, there were four courses, which explored different regions in Yamanashi: Mt. Fuji, Kofu, Koshu and Kyonan.

### **Beyond the Clouds - Where Mt. Fuji and Retro Streets Collide**

You may not have heard of Fujiyoshida Honcho Street, but chances are, you've probably

come across the iconic photo of Mt. Fuji overlooking a retro shopping district circulating social media before. I must confess, like many others, I chose the Mt. Fuji course with the hope of witnessing Mt. Fuji in all its glory, and I was not disappointed. While Mt. Fuji may play a bit of hide-and-seek in the clouds at times, we were fortunate enough to enjoy a splendid view on a rather cloudy day.

Fujiyoshida City boasts a rich history of textiles dating back to 1000 years ago. Although its textiles industry declined since the 1960s due to imported cheaper textiles, today local factories and young people have moved into the city to launch their own businesses and brands. Speaking of which, we had a splendid tour guide – Ms. Kataoka, a young textile designer from Tokyo, who came to Fujiyoshida City as a local vitalisation co-operator and opened her own shop “Good Old Market”.

As an enthusiast of arts and

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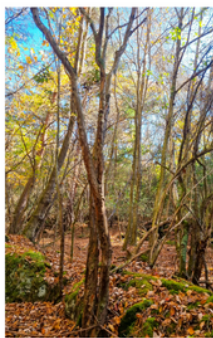
Aokigahara - A Sea of Trees

Goshuin-cho - A Book of Memories





KANPAI STREET



AOKIGAHARA



KANPAI STREET

creative design, I was captivated by the aesthetics of the shop, stationary and art pieces alike. I decided to purchase a set of postcards, and each participant received a tote bag, washi tape and a sticker as souvenirs at the end of the event. Of course, all of these were adorned with the iconic illustration of Mt. Fuji. If you feel like you've bought more than enough local specialties and want to try something new - why not give Good Old Market a chance?

The retro streets of Fujiyoshida transported us back in time to the Showa era of Japan, with vintage-looking signs and lanterns lining the streets. I felt a sense of nostalgia and reflected on what life might have been like during that bygone era.

### Aokigahara – A Sea of Trees

You may have heard of Aokigahara, the forest at the foot of Mt. Fuji, which has garnered considerable negative attention, particularly in the English-speaking world. However, in Japanese, it has what you could say, a more poetic name, meaning a “Sea of Trees”. The forest emerged after an eruption on an ancient lava flow of Mt Fuji, resulting in rough and bumpy soil often covered in moss.

Initially, I thought I would never visit this place because of its haunting reputation. Nevertheless, when we explored the forest with an experienced tour guide, Mr. Chishiro, who shared insights into its significance, flora and fauna, my initial fears were quelled. Sharing this experience alongside fellow JET participants made the forest feel much less daunting.

## Goshuin-cho - A Book of Memories

What is a Goshuin book? If you've visited shrines or temples before, you might have seen it in passing. First of all, a Goshuin is a red seal calligraphy that one can receive at Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples. As evidence of one's pilgrimage, for a small fee of 300-500 yen, a priest or monk can inscribe the date and name of the shrine or temple into your book.

A Goshuin-cho is a special book to record these red seals. During our visit to Hikari Orimono, a family-owned textile company, we had the chance to make our own Goshuin-cho. Various designs were available, and you could either choose the same or different designs for the front and back of the book.

I opted for a black cherry blossom and a purple dragon pattern. If you are a regular visitor to shrines and temples alike, a Goshuin-cho offers a meaningful record of your experiences. I would definitely recommend creating your own unique Goshuin-cho at Hikari Orimono.



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