



Nara JETNet 53rd event 「A Spring Walk through the Yamato Folkore Park」

On April 23rd, 2016, Nara JETNet held its 53rd event, “A Spring Walk through the Yamato Folklore Park” in Yamato-Koriyama City. Nara JETNet is an organization which plans events to promote cultural exchange and understanding between the members of the JET programme and the citizens of Nara Prefecture. The organizers of JETNet events are the 5 Coordinators for International Relations (CIRs) working at the Nara Prefectural Government. The members of JETNet are the rest of the JET programme participants located throughout Nara Prefecture. This event was put on by 30 JETs and saw 38 people from the prefecture come out to enjoy the park’s traditional Japanese atmosphere and activities held in the afternoon.

The event began at 9:30am at the park’s ‘Open Space’ with the opening speech followed by stretching and an ice-breaker - based on an April Fool’s prank - led by three of the CIRs. Next, participants split up into 8 groups and set off to the Yamato Folklore Museum. From 10 to 11, JETs and Japanese participants were given the opportunity to visit the museum and discover how the people of Nara lived from the Yamato period up to the 1950’s. Japanese participants and JETs learnt a lot!

After we finished, we moved to the north of the Park, passing through reconstructions of old Japanese houses, which offered a great opportunity to learn about Japanese History. We arrived at the park’s ‘Kids Plaza’ at noon and had our lunch break.

At 13:00, we started our afternoon activities with the Dollar Game. In this game, several people secretly receive Sento-kun badges. The aim is to obtain the badges by shaking hands with as many people as possible, at the same time encouraging conversation. The children participating were very happy to receive Sento-kun badges as a gift!

After the Dollar Game, participants were grouped into 4 teams for the afternoon’s activities (see below for details).

- Ddakji: Korean game where square paper cards are thrown at other cards on the ground in an attempt to flip them over.
- Beanbag-throwing: A traditional Chinese form of dodgeball using beanbags.
- Smaug’s Jewels: Players form a circle and one player, the ‘dragon’, stands in the center. Players who are called aim to steal a handkerchief from the ‘dragon’ and return to the circle.
- Free Talk: Our number one request from participants: a corner to sit down, relax and chat.

At 15:30, it was time to leave and we headed back to the south side of the park via a scenic path to the east. We then we held the closing speech at the ‘Open Space’ and the day’s events ended. The day was a great success and enjoyed by all the Japanese participants according to the survey we conducted: 92% of the 27 people who answered said they really enjoyed the event, while all participants responded that their communication with the JET participants was good, even if their own English was not perfect. They appreciated the kindness and organisation of the JETs as it made the event easy to follow and enjoyable for all. Japanese people enjoyed the exchange with the JETs, as they were very enthusiastic and also due to the fact they themselves do not usually interact with foreign cultures or play foreign games. As a result, most of them told us they would like to come to JETNet events in the future.

We plan to continue to promote international exchange at the grass roots level. Thank you everyone for your input and participation! See you next time.

