

61st JASC: 2009

Orientation: July 24-27

The 61st Japan-America Student Conference kicked off with orientations in Seattle and Tokyo on July 24th. The American delegates met their fellow participants at the University of Washington. Energy filled the air as delegates explored Seattle on a scavenger hunt, met local alumni and enjoyed a send-off reception at the Japanese Consulate.

The 61st JASC American delegation enjoyed a friendly reception at Seattle Consul General Namba's beautiful residence before their departure for Japan. In Japan the delegates look forward to commemorating the 75th anniversary of JASC and exploring Tokyo, Hakodate, Nagano and Kyoto.

American Executive Committee Chair Colin Moreshead
presents Consul General Namba with a Certificate of Appreciation.

AEC Member Karen Jung presents
Dylan Tracy with a JASC Essay Award

American delegates prepare for the presentation of cultural skits by decorating a classroom (left). JASC delegations prepare and perform skits to introduce themselves and their culture to one another. This year skits portrayed Americana and a portrait of Japanese family life. Delegates get to know each other at American Orientation (center). And the American Executive Committee poses for a group shot (right).

Tokyo Site: July 28 - Aug 4

The American delegates arrived at the National Olympic Memorial Youth Center in Tokyo on July 28th and were warmly greeted by the Japanese delegates. The Tokyo site was full of formal events, including the Opening Ceremony, the U.S. Embassy visit, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reception, the commemorative photo & discussion event at Aoyama Gakuin University, and many more, which gave the delegates numerous opportunities to meet and interact with JASC alumni and supporters. Also, through cultural field trips to places like Akihabara and the Yasukuni Shrine, the delegates spent casual time together getting to know each other better and exchanging knowledge.

61st JASC Opening Ceremony

Celebrating 75 Years of JASC!

Hakodate Site: August 4-9

After an event-filled Tokyo site, the 61st JASC delegation cooled off in beautiful Hokkaido from August 4th to August 8th. This year the port city of Hakodate in Hokkaido celebrates its 150th Anniversary and on August 4th JASCers took in the sights and sounds of the Hakodate Port Festival! Enjoying performances with friends, JASCers were able to celebrate the history of Hakodate while bonding over shared treats like round takoyaki octopus dumplings, okonomiyaki pancakes and cotton candy! We went to sleep early the night of the festival so we'd be ready for an early morning fish auction!

Most would agree that JASC has a rigorous schedule and that its delegates never have less than a full day, and August 5th was no exception. Everyone was up by 5:30 am, and as the sun climbed over Mt. Hakodate, we headed down into town to visit the fish market. Upon arrival, we were taken through the auction, where fishermen and market owners haggled over several varieties of

fish that had all been brought in less than an hour before.

It was made clear to us how important seafood and its trade are to the city of Hakodate. As we learned, Hakodate accounts for a disproportionately large percentage of Japanese seafood production. Leaving the market after an enjoyable tour, we made our way through the local streets where we saw the next stage of commerce. The alleys and store fronts were all lined with all sorts of seafood, from squid to giant crabs. We tried to resist our temptation until we arrived at the other end of the markets where we were welcomed into a traditional local restaurant. We had a delicious sashimi breakfast, and all of us were well aware that the food in our bowls had been swimming around the bay only hours prior. Our morning ended with some free time in the fish market's neighborhood, where most delegates took the opportunity to try a local treat: squid-ink ice cream!

After a lecture on the squid industry, JASCers visited the Japan Self-Defense Force for an afternoon of exercise and activity. After a few days of round table discussions and travel, many delegates were happy to have a work out together! We closed the night with a view from the Mt. Hakodate Ropeway for a spectacular view of Hakodate at night. Hakodate is one of the three famed nightscapes in the world, and we could see why!

On August 6th we invited a panel for the Hakodate Forum where we explored the history of US-Japan diplomacy and looked to the future of our relationship. We spent August 7th enjoying outdoor activities at Oonuma where we shared canoes, tandem bicycles and finally a reception at the famed Goto-Ken restaurant. On August 8th we enjoyed the cool Hakodate morning before heading to the airport and on to Nagano!

Delegates enjoy our reception at Goto-Ken
Hakodate Port Festival dance competition groups

Nagano Site: August 9-14

The 61st delegation visited Nagano from August 9th until the 14th. Our first stop was the town of Obuse, where we enjoyed a home stay and lots of delicious food. Obuse citizens were very warm and receptive, our home stay families pulled together to provide a delicious meal for our reception at the Flower Garden after our forum with the Obuse Mayor and town leaders.

On August 11th we visited Matsushiro in Nagano. Early in the day we learned about samurai culture and walked past ancient samurai gates on our way to a War and Peace Discussion with local university and high school students. We visited the work site for the Underground Imperial Palace that was being built at the end of WWII; among the laborers were many Koreans who lost their lives during this dangerous and arduous construction. A local school group studying the history of the site gave us a speech about its history and their reflections on the war period. It was an important day for reflection and we were happy to share it with local students.

A special highlight of our time in Nagano was the American Lead Project: Cook Out on August 13th. We all went camping together at a beautiful mountain tent camping site. American delegates prepared BBQ chicken, grilled cheese and introduced our Japanese delegation to S'mores. We spent the night together playing games, telling stories and relaxing before our bus ride to Kyoto where we'll prepare for the Final Forum and 62nd EC Elections.

Delegates learning about Samurai culture at Matsushiro

Kyoto Site: August 14-21

JASC 61 spent their final days in Kyoto from August 14th to the 21st. Highlights included a rare private Noh lecture and performance, viewing of the Gozan no Okuribi, tour of the Monju fast breeder nuclear reactor facility, Final Forum and EC elections!

On Saturday, August 15th delegates were invited to the Kongou Noh Theater where leading performers from a 26 generation family of Noh actors taught us how to sing classical Japanese drama. The lecture ended with a performance that was enjoyed by all!

During August the mountains around Kyoto are literally on fire! The iconic Gozan no Okuribi festival, where bonfires are lit on the mountains to form kanji characters, was a special nighttime view for delegates as they took a break from Final Forum preparations.

American delegate Emily Rath served as a panelist during our trip to the Monju fast breeder nuclear facility. Our special private tour ended with a forum on peaceful uses for nuclear energy with leading experts.

We were joined at the Final Forum by an impressive audience of alumni, local university and high school students. After our formal presentations, we set up booths in an adjoining room and encouraged our audience to come and ask questions about our projects.

We ended the conference with EC elections on August 19th to usher in the 62nd JASC and a final Talent Show and special dinner at Ninnaji Temple on August 20th to celebrate the end of our time together and to form some final memories.

Audience members anticipate roundtable presentations
at the Final Forum

JASC delegates exchange business cards with local community
members at the Final
Forum

JASCers enjoy a Talent Show and Final Reflection
at Ninnanji Temple