

Pre-recovery planning from natural disasters

Mr. Hasan Coban (Expert, Ministry of Development, Social Sectors and Coordination General Directorate, Republic of Turkey)

~ “Simple is the best”, Japanese life style is calm~

For majority of JICA participants who are from tropical and semi-tropical countries, freezing outdoor activities over the weekend in Japan are not as charming as warm indoor activities. But there is a participant who is actively joining outdoor groups almost every weekend in JICA Kansai. Mr. Hasan Coban from Turkey arrived on January 6th, told us about his experiences.

Q) I heard that you had been climbing mountains over the weekends in Kansai area, is climbing your routine activities?

Yes, I've been jogging for the past 20 years to keep myself healthy. I've been hiking once or twice in a months for about 7 years. I climbed a few mountains over 3000 m, and last August, I climbed Mt. Agri (5,165m), with my friends. When I was preparing for the trip to Japan, I searched for outdoor activities in Kansai area. I found some groups of outdoor sport and sent them email. I was not able to receive their reply before my departure. However I packed necessary outdoor sport equipment in my luggage just in case.

Q) Did you enjoy outdoor activities after arriving to Japan?

Yes. I joined a few group's hiking activities. My program officer and his colleague gave me information about a hiking group named Kansai Ramblers. I looked at their internet page and found their hiking activity to Mt. Rokko over the weekend. Sunday, Jan. 13th, I went Hankyu Line Ashiyagawa Station early in the morning, but there were so many people gathering, I had a hard time finding the group. I asked every gathering group to find Kansai Rambler. Finally I found the group. They were about 25 people climbing up through the Rock Garden. On the way, I took many photos of interesting places for me (shrines, temples, small status etc.) and I talked to the people who joined the hiking. After 13-14 km of hiking we reached Arima Onsen. I liked there and I enjoyed foot bath. Having finished the hiking we returned to Kobe with a few friends from hiking and went to a “Robata”

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Style Japanese restaurant and tried “Nabe” in Kobe.

On 15 January, I received a mail message from hiking coordinator from the International Outdoor Club (IOC) for the reply to my mail I sent in Turkey before my trip to Japan. The message was related to some information about hiking on January 20th (Sun) and informed that meeting point was Hankyu Minoo station at 10 AM. I got a map of Hankyu Line at Sannomiya station. It's very helpful to move around. I went to Minoo station at 10 a.m. IOC members are various nationality people with different profession. We walked to the Minoh falls, I think about 25 people joined to hike. We enjoyed “Nabe” cuisine with variety of vegetables and chicken. People also shared food they brought. It was really enjoyable outdoor lunch. Afterwards, we climbed up to Katsuo-ji temple. I saw a lot of statue shape offerings (DARUMA). A friend from hiking group told me that many politicians donate money, visit this temple and offer them. After hiking, the group visited to Minoh local beer factory.

Q) It really sounds fun. Did you go somewhere afterwards?

Yes I joined another hiking group on February 3rd. A lady whom I met during my previous hiking gave me information about this hiking program. I met with new hiking group at Hankyu Nigawa Station. We visited “Land slide museum” first, then we continued to hike. I actually visited this museum with the participants who attend same program organized by JICA. When I said “I came here a few weeks ago” to the people of the group, they were surprised and said “this was our first time to come here, how did you come here as a foreigner?” I explained my primary purpose of being in Japan is to attend a program related to natural disaster organized by JICA. Everyone was really surprised. That day, some hiker brought roasted soy beans. They threw beans and ate them, I also tasted some.

Q) Wow it was the day of “Setsubun” and we celebrate the seasonal change by throwing beans. It sounds like you really had a great experience in Japan. After walking around mountains in Japan, did you find something unique?

Yes, forestation on Rokko Mountain was very interesting for me. From one of the lecture, I learned that Mt. Rokko was a bald mountain 100 years ago and people

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planted trees to prevent erosion and prevent land sliding. For the disaster prevention, I think tree planting is a really effective method. After climbing Mt. Rokko, I really appreciate the endeavor of the Japanese people through the continuous tree planting activities. At home, most of mountains around our capital city Ankara are bald. People think that forestation of those bold mountains is too difficult. After seeing Rokko Mountain, I recognize that forestation of any bald mountain is possible. I hope we can do same thing as Japan did. The mountains I go for hiking takes 2 or 3 hours from Ankara by bus. Those mountains are natural forest with no public access. Our hiking leader has GPS, maps and compass to find our way, we have difficulty to reach summit without knowing the way. Mountains in Japan around Osaka and Kobe are accessible with public transportation. There are paths and signposts well maintained on mountain and people can do hiking easily.

Q) Lastly, do you have any comment about Japan through the training program?

There is something that I found interesting during the training program. We visited Tohoku earthquake disaster area, Miyagi Prefecture and Niigata Prefecture. We stayed overnight with the Japanese family in Wakatochi village, Niigata. There was 3 m deep snow in the village. Our host family treated us with warm hospitality. It was really a precious experience to feel relaxed and calm space and time. Time flows calmly and soundless in small village. People are very friendly. I think cold weather makes people really friendly. My working condition in Turkey is really stressful, sometimes I think that we are making things too complicated and giving ourselves much more stress. The time that I stayed in the snowy country gave me a chance to reconsider the importance of "living simple" without any anxiety about the future.