Muroran Study Tour 2007
Anna Hyde

Every aspect of this experience has been fantastic, from meal times, meeting new people and practicing the Japanese we had studied in class at RMIT.

In particular I really enjoyed the Home Stay experience. Although I had lived in Japan for 2 years previously and worked as an English Instructor, I had never stayed in a Japanese household. Many aspects of daily Japanese life were unfamiliar to me, like how to flush the toilet using a remote control, the Japanese bathing procedure, and Japanese hospitality in general. For example, my host family served a selection of around ten different and delicious dishes at every mealtime, even breakfast. Some other students told me that they were even given brand new chopsticks and bowls, bought especially for their stay. Not long before the study tour, my 2B class had been practicing using the language spoken when visiting a household in Japan, in the form of role plays, so it was great to be able to apply that to a real life setting!

Beef Tongue and Pickled Myoga

An amazing aspect of this study tour was the location. Muroran is surrounded by pristine mountains and the sea. Every day we dined on local produce, such as fresh seafood and Hokkaido dairy. Coming from drought stricken Australia we could not believe the color and flavor of the pumpkin and corn. I was lucky enough to be taken mountain climbing by my host father, where we climbed to the highest point of Muroran Dake. Along the way we walked through white birch forests, stepped over a crystal clear creek and saw huge stretches of prostrate bamboo (knee high when mature). At the top we prepared our own instant ramen using a portable stove, followed by hot tea and onigiri (rice balls).

Lunch time at Muroran Dake
Another highlight was the indigo dying at Reimeikan in Date Rekishi no Mori Park. Although I didn't have a prior interest in fabric dying, it was very rewarding to produce my own “hanabi” style cotton scarf. We were shown how to twist the fabric around into bunches using a chopstick. The final result really did look like a night sky filled with fireworks. It was also an interesting Japanese experience to see how our Indigo dying Master gave us the option of combining this traditional craft with newer Japanese culture, for example using stencils in the shapes of anime characters like Doraemon and Hello Kitty as motifs.

Meeting the other home stay families was also great and it really felt like we had become part of the Muroran community. Soon we couldn't go anywhere in town without running into a new friend. The students, teachers and staff at the University all contributed immensely to the quality of this study tour.

A Demonstration of the Official Muroran Dance
By Staff and Students in the Front Office