

Geo-tour program for children during summer vacation in Choshi Geopark

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1.Purpose

Choshi Geopark Promotion Council organized geo-tour for children during summer vacation last year, which is in collaboration with the Association of Chiba Institute of Science (hereafter CIS), Choshi Ryokan union Choshi Inn union, Choshi GeoParty. The purpose of this geo-tour is to provide unique experiences for the children that can also be used as part of their summer homework, and to create a model of overnight package tour.

2.Schedule of geo-tour

The geo-tour was held four times. The first (Jul 24 to 25), the second (Jul 31 to Aug 1) and the fourth round (Aug 27 to 28) have activities such as "biological observation at rocky shore, touch the nature fun". The third round (Aug 8) was one day trip with "observation of the stratum, that can also be submitted to the children's school as their summer homework.

For the overnight program, we first gathered at Choshi Station at 9:30am, according to the arrival time of the JR limited express. After giving an orientation in CIS, the next event was biological observation at the rocky shore in Nagasaki coast. Then there was plant observation in Kimigahama followed by lunch break in the Culture Center for Youth and Children. In the afternoon, we made star plates and watched a planetarium show. Next, we explored at Inubosaki in the late afternoon. On the next day, there were observation of the landscape at the top of the Mt. Atago-yama, moved to climax forest and had summary of the experiences learned during the programs. The last event was a closing ceremony that all the children were given a participation certificate.

For the one day trip, after giving an orientation in CIS, there were interpretation of layers and sampling of tephra at By-obugaura, and lunch time at CIS. In the afternoon, we observed the sampling using stereoscopic microscope.

3.Advance preparation

Preparation of this geo-tour was started around late April. The events were organized primarily by exchanging information using e-mails. A Working Group meeting was carried out about once a month.

Application of this geo-tour was started from Jun 10 through the "Jaran" internet version, that reservation was received at each accommodation.

We posted advertisement on the web site of the Choshi Tourism Association and the Choshi Geopark Promotion Council. In addition, we made flyers and sent to each museum and Secretariat of Geopark Promotion Council in Kanto region on July 9. Also, an article was published to the local newspaper on July 20.

The number of participants did not increase as expected. Thus, we changed the program to accept participants from the local people who do not need accommodation.

4.On geo-tour days

The numbers of children for round one to four were 6, 2, 2 and 21, respectively. Many of them were delighted to join the tour. According to the questionnaire results, many children enjoyed playing at rocky shore. A mother of participants who is born and raised in Choshi commented that she can feel the enjoyable part of Choshi again and another mother would like to learn more about Geopark.

5.Evaluation meeting

Evaluation meeting was held on Sep 19 with a total of 16 participants. The discussion was held by dividing the participants into groups in a workshop format with sticky notes.

The positive comments raised in the meeting were "The children have fun", "Various organizations have cooperate", "Various projects could be introduced", "Overall framework was constructed", "Accident-free" and so on.

On the other hand, the problems are "Difficult to understand how to apply", "Necessary to devise PR activities", "The program was too packed", "Setting of dates", "Few participants", "Consideration for participants", "Difficult to understand the interpretation".

In addition, the solutions suggested are "Take action as soon as possible", "Separate geo-tour from accommodation", "Learn from other Geoparks", "Consider the situation of the day" and "Have a better contact system and role-sharing".