

The SSGS Hokkaido Tour 2017

As the plane whistled down the Sapporo Airport on Sunday 24 September 2017 before coming to a stop, the SSGS members who made up the 2017 Hokkaido/Tokyo Tour breathed a sigh of relief. It had been a long ride consisting of two plane trips, the first one starting from Singapore to Haneda Airport in Tokyo. Then a three hour wait to take the connecting flight to Sapporo.

But with the adrenalin coursing through the blood stream, there wasn't much time to contemplate the niceties of the trip. The coach ride to the Sapporo Grand Hotel was uneventful and soon our members were exploring the city which was celebrating the Oktoberfest! This meant that the nearby Odori Park was the scene for great Japanese street food including freshly shucked plump oysters from the surrounding frigid seas, yakitori and lots of beer.

The next day, Monday 25 September, we set off for the highly rated Clark Country Club. Greeted with blue skies and comfortable temperatures throughout our stay in Hokkaido, we took the kind weather in our stride as we had expected a few rain clouds to mar our play. That evening we went to Suntory Restaurant across from our hotel for a group dinner where we had tempura, sushi, shabu shabu and grilled beef – a complete Japanese repast with a free flow of beer and of course the famous whiskies from Suntory.

Tuesday, Day 2, saw us at the Eniwa Course of Zuien Country Club. The clubs we played were mainly private clubs and special permission had to be granted for our members to use them so we were a privileged lot. Free and Easy was the order of the rest of the day.

Wednesday was our chance to see a bit of Sapporo and we stopped at the popular tourist town of Otaru for a sushi lunch. There was a fire in one of the restaurants we walked past in the pedestrian area of the town which added a bit of excitement but other than that, we mainly contented ourselves with window shopping. The next stop at the Nikka Whiskey Factory was more to our taste. We had samples of their apple laced whiskey and two other offerings which assured most of us were slightly high after the experience.

Thursday was golf day at the famous Terumae Country Club – certainly one of the better courses around. We had to leave extra early as we were transferring to another hotel, this time with an onsen and thus had to load up the bus before that. That afternoon we checked into the Chateraise Gateaux Kingdom Spa and Hotel. A family oriented lodging, there were many restaurants available ranging from Chinese to Tempura, Teppanyaki and western. Their famous cakes and pastries were also available, many stuffed with the famous cream from Hokkaido milk.

Friday was very special for golfers as we had the opportunity to play at the North Country Golf Club. Designed by Isao Aoki and boasting fully vented greens, the views were magnificent and the playing surfaces, pristine. What a way to end our golfing trip in Hokkaido!

Saturday 30 September was another travel day for us as we transferred from Sapporo to Tokyo staying at the Keikyu EX Inn in Shinagawa. Within easy walking distance of the Shinagawa Station and a Singapore-based restaurant, the Singapore Seafood Republic, this allowed some of the more home-sick members to get their fill of Singapore food like Chilly Crab, Chicken Rice, Fried Rice with Crab and the like. The rest of the weekend was free and easy with some opting to head to Ueno Park and the nearby pedestrian market.

Monday 2 October was the highlight of our trip with a meet up with our friends from Japan Singapore Association to have a friendly golf game and get-together. We had to leave extra early in the morning to get to Hon Atsugi Country Club but without heavy traffic, we arrived with plenty of time to spare. After the golf, we were hosted to a party by JSA which was enjoyed by everybody. Tiger Beer was sponsored by the Singapore Embassy and we had Japanese snacks to line our stomachs. The competitive part of the match saw us defeated by a very narrow margin of three points by the JSA team – competing with the combined total of the top eight scores from either side. The winner was the continuing friendship between SSGS and JSA and we were bid sayonara by the JSA members as our bus departed back to Tokyo!

Sayonara to Japan came the next day, Tuesday 3 October. I must admit that some of us were not too unhappy to be going back after a lengthy trip to Japan. Memories of delicious meals, great golf courses and the warm thanks of JSA members for our trip to Japan made up our most endearing recollections.

And we are already thinking of our next trip to Japan in a couple of years! This will most probably be to the Shizuoka area where we will have fantastic view of Mt Fuji and have an opportunity to stay in the onsen area of the Izu Peninsula.

Terence Ng
Captain
SSGS



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