

Research Trip to Noto: A Journey of Learning, Volunteering, and Community Engagement

From the 7th to the 9th of March 2025, nine students from the Ori Seminar class, led by Professor Ori Akemi, embarked on a transformative three-day research trip to Noto in Kanazawa Prefecture. Representing a diverse group of countries namely China, Azerbaijan, Kenya, Germany, and Zimbabwe, the students participated in a unique program focused on waste management, community engagement, and disaster recovery following the devastating earthquake that struck the region.

The trip began with a journey by Shinkansen, generously funded by the university. Upon arrival at Kanazawa Station, the group visited the Noto Temporary Waste Management Site, where local officials explained the waste separation processes. This system, crucial for post-disaster recovery, follows a one-way route: recyclables, soil separation, garbage separation, combustible materials, broken tiles (known in Japanese as kawara), concrete pieces, and wooden debris from damaged structures. As of now, roughly 200-300 households have undergone disassembly, with a projected 4,000 households targeted for dismantling by October 2025. The accumulated amount of waste generated mirrors the output from two months of disassembly efforts. This incremental progress in waste management signifies a tangible step towards achieving the envisioned sustainability goals within the specified timeframe.

Notably, many of the workers at the site are retirees, showcasing the community's resilience and collective effort.

Later, the group visited the Noto Municipal Offices, where officials shared insights into the earthquake's impact on the region, particularly on environmental issues and waste management. This session highlighted the challenges faced by the community and the innovative solutions being implemented to rebuild and restore the area.

The students volunteered at the Noto Volunteer Centre on the second day, actively participating in waste separation tasks. Equipped with helmets and gloves, the group worked diligently to classify concrete, wood, plastic, broken tiles, and paper materials. The day concluded with a visit to a local restaurant, where students enjoyed traditional dishes like tempura and fresh seafood, followed by a relaxing visit to an onsen. Along the way, the group stopped at scenic spots to admire the breathtaking ocean views and natural beauty of Noto.

The final day was a highlight of the trip, as students had the opportunity to cook and interact with local residents. Not only was this an enriching culinary and social endeavour, but it was also a valuable lesson in the art of cooking with minimal resources. The occasion was graced by Naoko Nagisa San, a distinguished food educator, disaster preparedness chef, and culinary instructor hailing from Hachinohe, Aomori Prefecture. Naoko traverses the nation as a chef with a specialization in straightforward and

accessible culinary practices, providing students and local residents with the invaluable opportunity to glean from her expertise. This hands-on experience allowed the group to bond with the community, sharing laughter and stories while preparing various dishes together. For the locals, still recovering from the earthquake, this interaction brought a sense of joy and connection during a challenging time.

Throughout the trip, students gained valuable insights into disaster recovery, waste management, and the importance of community resilience. The locals expressed deep appreciation for the visit, and the students left with a profound understanding of the region's challenges and the strength of its people.

This research trip was not only an academic endeavour but also a heartfelt experience of cultural exchange and solidarity. The Ori Seminar class extends its gratitude to Professor Ori Akemi, the university, and the people of Noto for making this unforgettable journey possible.

Gallery:

Day 1



Meeting with Noto Municipal Officials





Day 2



Students volunteering in the community with the help of Noto Volunteer Centre





Day 3



Cooking and mingling with the local people of Noto



