

The first geotour consisted of activity programs for overseas student in Shikoku Seiyo Geopark.

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In Geopark, the sights called “Geosite” designate high natural science, humanities and social science values among the certified areas. On the tourism of geopark in Japan, we have performed the sightseeing (Geotourism) with explanation of local geoguides. Concerning for the tours for foreigners, it was suggested that the issues: (1) there are few guides speaking English, (2) Guide’s telling tends to be one-sided information transmission from the guide to the participants, making it difficult to provide a place for interactive communication, and (3) they cannot enjoy the unique cultural experience in the locals that foreign tourists expected. In Shikoku Seiyo Geopark, we have never conduct the geotour about foreign tourists. There has been no improvement of facilities for foreigners visiting sightseeing, and no training of English speaking guides. On the other hand, the figure of domestic tourists has decreased to the half of 2017 affecting by the 2018 Japan Floods. Seiyo City need the recovery of tourists and the development tours.

In order to expand the range of target tourists and enhance sustainable development of tourism in Seiyo City, we planned the first geotour consisted of activity programs for overseas student in Shikoku Seiyo Geopark. The program was scheduled from December 22 to 23 (an overnight stay) to ten visitors, overseas students and the families. The planners considered that the tourists can enjoy even if Japanese guides who are not fluent in English, therefore the program was mainly consisted of experiential activities. The tour participants tried to harvest oranges in terraced farms made of stone walls and experienced Japanese traditional event in the historic street developed by rice cultivation in the vast basin. The guides told as little as possible about the sights by using the tour pamphlet distributed in advance or when we arrived at the sight.

We conducted the questionnaire after the tour was finished. As the result, six of the seven respondents said “I didn’t know the geopark” or “I heard it for the first time.” On the other hand, three answered “very well known” and four said “known” about the geopark after the tour. As for the degree of satisfaction, 5 participants were “very satisfied” and 2 persons were “satisfied”. On the other hand, there was an opinion that tourists wanted the geological and geographical interpretation about the sights of Shikoku Seiyo Geopark because of the bias toward experiential activities. With this initiative alone, it is not possible to evaluate the satisfaction of the tour for all foreign tourists or to evaluate whether it has led to an increase in the profits of the accepting side. We would like to evaluate quantitatively whether the tour will result in sustainable development of the region by conducting tours in the future.

Keywords: Geopark, Seiyo City, tourism, foreign tourist, sustainable development