

2. Gotemba Minami High School

Thinking About the Ecological Culture of the Edo Period Through 'Indigo Dyeing' and 'The Making of Azuma Bags'

Gotemba Minami High School students and various junior high school students from the city took part in two experiences in July where they learned about traditional crafts from the local area. The purpose of this experience was twofold. The first was to deepen their understanding and appreciation to the local area by engaging with the region's traditional industries through hands-on crafting experiences. The second was to learn about Japan's eco-culture and increase their interest in modern social issues.

In the first session, students experienced 'Mikuriya Dyeing and Weaving', a local craft of Shizuoka Prefecture, at Kohara-ya (the only dyeing shop in Gotemba City). By experiencing the traditional methods that have been used since the Edo period, they were able to deepen their understanding of the history and culture of the local area. In the second session, held at Gotemba High School, students experienced making bags called 'Azuma Bags' using the tenugui (Japanese hand towels) they made in the first session.

The 'Azuma Bag', which originated in the Edo period, is a bag made from a single piece of cloth and is a modern eco-bag. Through the experience of making bags using the tenugui that they had dyed themselves, participants learned about both the culture of common people living during the Edo period and the ecological concepts and methods that are used in modern times.

The high school students, who participated in the two courses, set up an experience corner where participants could try out 'making indigo-dyed Azuma Bags' at the event Eco Action 2023, organized by the nonprofit organization Eco House Gotemba in August. There, the high school students taught local elementary and junior high school students, as well as working adults, how to make Azuma Bags using Mikuriya Dyeing and Weaving fabric. The students not only presented the results of their regional studies, but also deepened their feelings for their hometown by interacting with the local children.

In addition, the students worked with a cameraman to create a video project of the process of indigo dyeing, and used the video project to convey the appeal of indigo dyeing.

