

IOC NEWSLETTER

March 2005

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Greeting

Hey everyone,

Huge apologies for the delay in getting out this newsletter. I was away for a month, travelling through Vietnam and Cambodia, and various parts of Japan. Still, better late than never, as they say. Without future ado, let's get to it!

Well March was a great month for the IOC. With winter finally over for another year, everyone seems only too delighted to get back out in the fresh air. March began with a day hike in the Suma Alps, organised by Yoshimi. Next up was a trip to Osaka Pool for some ice-skating. That evening, the monthly meeting was held in the usual place in Umeda, where a new IOC committee was voted in. Exciting stuff! We had a ski trip to Hakodate at the beginning of the month, and marched up and down the streets of Kyoto decked out in green for St Patrick's Day.

Election Results

As mentioned earlier, March was election month.

Thank you to everyone who volunteered to help the IOC continue being such a great club in the coming year. The following is a list of your new committee for the 2005/2006 year. All the old email addresses still apply. For example, Jeremy and Minhao can be reached at president@iockansai.com etc. Check the website for further contact details.

President: Jeremy David Bricker and Minhao Wong

Activities Coordinator: Yoshimi Suzuki

Special Activities Coordinator: Ruth Goodridge

Special Events Coordinator: Fiona Charnley

Treasurer: Junko Abe

Secretary: Keiko Yamaguchi

Newsletter & Backup Webmaster: Ronan Dunlea

Webmaster: Koji Otani

Suma Alps Hike by Fumie

The weather was beautiful. We saw plum blossoms blooming early on the mountain. It was a nice view and we could see Akashi bridge. That day was Damian's birthday. So we gave a toast to his birthday at a Kushiage restaurant after hike. We ate as much as we wanted. We enjoyed Kushiage by ourselves, meat, seafood, rice, curry, vegetable, cakes etc. We were all so full. It was a great day!

St Patrick's Festival by Claire

Being from Ireland, there was no way I could let this event take place and not attend. I was delighted when Yuka decided to make it into an official IOC event.

We all gathered in Kyoto in the afternoon, decked out in any kind of green we could lay our hands on. Shamrock stickers were being distributed and it wasn't long before we looked like leprechauns chasing our Lucky Charms. Many people put a lot of effort into looking the part for the day, some going as far as to dress up their dogs in traditional Irish fare.

Out of blue, an IOC banner appeared and it was time to start the parade. It was then that the temperature dropped and it started snowing. Just like the real Paddy's Day parade back in Ireland, so! We shivered along the streets, waving Baileys bottles and flags left right and centre. The camaraderie was fantastic, with jokes and laughter being exchanged with everyone, despite the inclement weather.

It was at this point that I was forcibly removed from the parade by my non-IOC friends, so I have no idea if everyone made it to the end of the route. However, most people managed to join us in the pub later on where the drinking, dancing and eating began in earnest!

After a while, we (my visiting friend from Ireland, my Kiwi neighbour and I) decided to check out the Irish festival being held in the underground shopping centre. There was an all-Japanese band playing traditional Irish music. They were fantastic! More impressive, however, were the lovely ladies giving out free samples of Baileys, a famous Irish liqueur. After happily accepting a little cup of the creamy goodness, it came to our attention that very few other shoppers were accepting the free drink. The ladies were having trouble getting rid of their samples. There was only one thing we could do under those circumstances. We decided to help them out by drinking as much Baileys as we could. We drank for Ireland!



Illuminated temple in Higashiyama

Once we'd drunk them dry, it was time to venture towards Higashiyama. Koji was leading the way. Higashiyama is a beautiful area in Kyoto replete with ancient temples and shrines. There was a special festival being held during this time, involving all the temples and streets being illuminated with lanterns. It looked spectacular. We meandered through the streets, taking in the modern ikebana and student art projects, in between marvelling at the fantastic temples.



Kyoto at night

It was a thoroughly enjoyable day and I'd like to thank Yuka and Koji for organising it. A big "go raibh mìle maith agaibh" to everyone who came out and made the day a roaring success.

Hakodate Ski Trip – IOC on the Slopes! by various people (you know who you are!)

A group of nine from the Kansai International Outdoor Club caught the last weekend of the skiing season at Hakodateyama, Shiga on 5-6th March. Members from Japan, Ireland, Malaysia, Russia, and the UK joined forces to tackle and terrorise the slopes during the two day trip.



Look – there really is snow in March!

Yee Chin from Malaysia tells us:

“As the name of the club suggests, we are outdoor enthusiasts. Although none of us are regular or skilful skiers, many had managed ski tracks of all levels by the end of first day.”

Ronan’s initial cynicism gave way to amusement:

“This was my first trip with the KIOC so I wasn't expecting much. In fact, I was even doubtful that there was going to be any snow! Fortunately, I was proved wrong on both accounts! I had skied before, but my friend Matteo was a first-timer to the slopes. He spent the most part of Saturday falling over (much to Ruth’s amusement!). Fiona kindly offered to be the beginner instructor, with Shinobu and Yeechin also helping out. Meanwhile, the rest of us continued to take on more and more challenging slopes and before too long we were the ones falling over!”

On Saturday night we stayed in a lodge at the foot of the mountain, and our oishii meal was complemented by stimulating conversation. Everything from personal relationships to solving Third World debt was discussed, with no holds barred! The girls impressed us by staying up late to watch Korean drama before getting a good rest.

After an ample breakfast, we hit the slopes again for the second day. The group's competitive spirit showed in the races we had on the different slopes.

As Fiona tells us, "5-4-3-2-1 and they're off. With a complete disregard for other people skiing or snowboarding the slopes, we tore down the mountain. Some of us were absolute beginners, some of us more advanced. But we all shared a love for skiing, and a sense of fearlessness."

The real superstar of the weekend was undoubtedly 'Kamikaze Tim'! Most memorable of all was his near miss with a long unsuspecting queue that could have been disastrous instead of hilariously entertaining.

Hakodateyama is a good place for the beginner skier, because there are several slopes to choose from, and some reasonably long runs. The food at the resort's restaurants is really good, and our minshuku accommodation was excellent. Let's enjoy skiing again next season! Only ten long months to wait until we can go back!



The Gang

Upcoming Events

April is promising to be as much fun as March for the IOC. Unfortunately, the lateness of this newsletter (sorry everyone!) means that I'm not in time to tell you about a lot of the cool stuff which has already happened., such as Rolfs cycle on the Christian Trail, the Hanami Party on April 10th, the beginners tennis even led by Koji and Jeremy's Mt Hiei hike. Major apologies everyone! I am, however, still in time to tell you about Yoshimi's hike and barbeque next Saturday, April 23rd. I reckon this one is not to be missed.

And Finally

Ronan will be taking over as newsletter editor for the following year. I'd like to wish him all the best, I have no doubt that he'll do an outstanding job.

Thank you to everyone who contributed articles and photos over the past year. I really appreciated your input. Best of luck in the coming year. I look forward to seeing you all on a mountaintop very soon!