

Visiting Yeosu Expo in Korea

I visited the Oceanic Expo that was held in Yeosu in the southern part of Korea. It was held from May 12 to August 12 in 2012. 104 countries and 10 international organizations including the United Nations participated in the Expo and the visitor number was estimated to be around 8 million. The theme of the Yeosu Expo was “The Living Ocean and Coast”, with the sub-theme “diverse resources and sustainable actions.” The Expo aimed at exploring responses to global oceanic challenges such as ever worsening oceanic pollution, marine biodiversity loss and sea level rises.

Classification of Expos: According to the BIE (Bureau International des Exhibition) Convention, expos are largely categorized into two: International Registered Exhibitions (or World Expos) with general and comprehensive contents; and International Recognized Exhibitions (or International Expos) with specialized and technical contents. The former is usually held at 5-year intervals and the duration is limited to 6 months maximum. The latter is held with a duration of within 3 months between registered expos. Yeosu expo is a recognized expo with a specialized theme; oceans. The Shanghai Expo by contrast which was held in 2010 was a registered expo.

Although the main theme of the Yeosu expo was marine conservation, an emphasis was also placed on utilization of oceans as sources of energy and as a resource base. The words “technology and innovation” and “solutions” were often used in relation to counter measures for global warming, sea level rise and resource depletion.

Main exhibit facilities included Korea’s largest mega-aquarium that harbors many rare species from around the world, and the Sky Tower that includes a pipe organ made of recycled cement silos. Another symbolic facility was Big-O, as well as the marine park with a variety of events, international pavilions and corporate pavilions, and many restaurants serving dishes from Korea, as well as Japanese, Chinese and western foods.



Large tunnel shaped water tank in the aquarium



Expo mascots Suny and Yeony

My main reasons for visiting the Yeosu Expo were to learn exhibition methods of various pavilions and visit the Oman pavilion with its mangrove exhibit. There were many interesting exhibits. At the Germany pavilion, the visitors could listen to calls of whales and other marine species. The Ocean Best Pavilion provided an opportunity for learning using a quiz and interactive hands on experiences. At the Oceanic Life Pavilion, a variety of exhibits were seen including a diorama of artificial tidal flats. In the Oman Pavilion, there were sea turtle and mangrove exhibits. Visitors were attracted by the exhibit of mangrove seeds and leaves in plastic display boxes.



Hearing animal calls (Germany Pavilion)



Quiz style exhibit (Ocean Best Pavilion)



Artificial tidal flats (Oceanic Life Pavilion)



Mangrove exhibit (Oman Pavilion)

The significance of this kind of expo is that it exhibits newly developed technologies and ideas that may be put into practice in future. In addition, expos provide opportunities for many people to present their thoughts on common themes through a “playground” of different events. This time, it was a little worrying that the number of foreign visitors was rather small at around 400,000. However, many Korean children were visiting the expo. This expo is expected to have provided a good opportunity for them to think about the ocean and the environment. (By Koto July 2012)

How to get to Yeosu: By air, fly to Yeosu Airport from Seoul Ginpo airport. By land, the Korean bullet train (KTX) was extended to Yeosu at the occasion of the Expo. During the Expo, there was also a high speed boat from Hakata Seaport.