

IFEAT 2016 USA STUDY TOUR

9TH ANNUAL IFEAT STUDY TOUR AMERICA

Is this the best so far?

The 9th Annual IFEAT Study Tour took place in the USA from August 13th to 21st 2016, visiting Texas, the Pacific Northwest and the Midwest. It was a hectic schedule, involving some 47 IFEAT members from 20 countries including two from the Ultra Team.

Below are some of our reflections on the StuWdy Tour, which we considered the best so far – but every Study Tour seems to be better than the previous one! All the companies that we visited were well prepared and shared a wealth of information. The presentations made by each company were professional and to the point and delegates were impressed not only by the detailed data provided and the excellent presentation skills but also the willingness to show delegates around their processing operations, laboratories and other facilities. Equally impressive was the warmth of the welcome as well as the hospitality showed by each of the companies visited

Most of the companies visited were involved in the mint industry and IFEAT members and each of them shared with the group their in-depth knowledge of the US mint industry. It soon became apparent to the delegates how very well organised is the American mint industry. The acreage of farms is huge, particularly in contrast to the Indian mint industry, while the farming practices, irrigation and distillation techniques are highly commendable. Throughout the visit delegates often compared US mint operations with those of India and recognised that the Indian mint industry, as well as the essential oil industry in many other countries, could learn much from US practices.



*Photo left:
Group photo - 47 IFEAT
Members from 20 countries
attended this year's Study Tour*

The opening cocktails, sponsored by Eucaforest Pty. Ltd, and dinner in San Antonio on Saturday evening went off well. Some registered delegates were unable to join the Study Tour due to US visa issues, health reasons or pressing engagements, while some arrivals were delayed by adverse weather conditions. During the day some delegates toured the town and were impressed by San Antonio's River Walk and the Alamo.

Sunday saw the first visit of the Tour with a long drive to the cedar wood plantations and distillation facilities of Texarome Inc. The expanse of cedar wood forest and the sustainable practice of cultivation being practiced was amazing with vast stretches of complete mountains covered with the cedar trees. The company owners, Mr. Gueric Bouchard and his son Rick, were very open and showed us the way cedar wood was being collected, the various qualities of wood and possible yields from different qualities. The unique thing to see in their production facilities was the indigenously developed continuous steam distillation facilities, which was unique to most delegates, as one generally does not find this process being followed in any other industry, as batch steam distillation is the norm in most of the natural essential oil industry. The detailed presentation and documents provided, especially on distillation techniques, was very much appreciated by all.

After this visit, the group returned to San Antonio to catch the flight to Seattle, reaching our hotel by about 10 PM. Indeed a feature of the Tour was the hectic schedule, usually involving a new hotel each day and late check-ins and early check-outs. Fortunately we were able to catch up on sleep in the coach!

The second day was another great day with the complete professional way the Cochran family and colleagues from Norwest Ingredients showed their complete facilities for mint oil production, explaining with the help of video presentations their storage and production facilities, fractional distillation

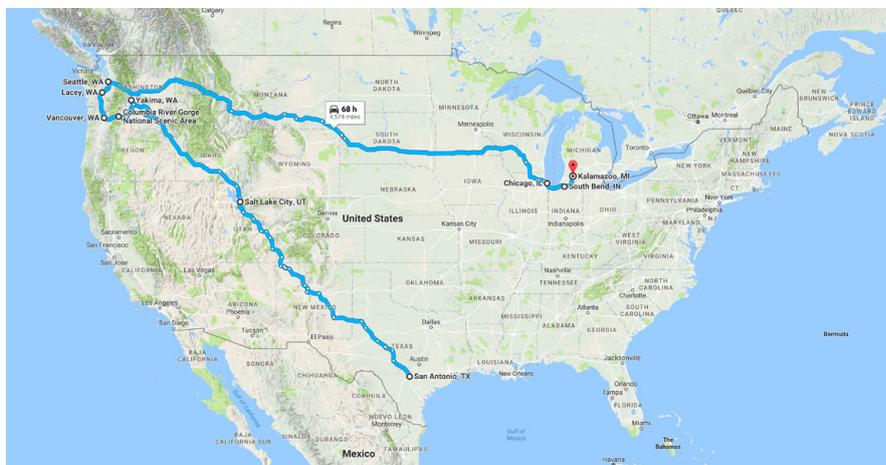


Photos from top to bottom:

Texarome's distillation facilities was visited along with a tour of the plantation areas

Norwest showed their complete facilities with the delegates getting the chance to have a extensive odour evaluation on various mint qualities

The map shows the area travelled during the tour - thankfully it wasn't all by road!



equipment etc. Another feature was the immaculate timing kept when taking a tour of the complete facilities. After the tour, the Cochran family farmhouse, surrounded by mint fields, was opened for an excellent lunch and odour session of the different varieties of mint oils from various regions around the world and the specific characteristics of these individual qualities. Having got to sniff so many different qualities was a real education. In our careers, each spanning over 25 years, we have never had the opportunity to sniff so many qualities. The session was

organised with various members of the management team sitting with each group of delegates explaining and clarifying every question. In addition, the company shared a wealth of information in booklet form. (Photo 6).

Over lunch there was a presentation from Norwest Ingredients as well as an expert from the MIRC (Mint Industry Research Council). The latter explained the MIRC's role in assisting stakeholders - farmers, distillers and traders - to overcome the various challenges being faced by the

“ another great day WEALTH OF INFORMATION
A REAL EDUCATION *guided tour* very impressive
very lively and friendly *nice souvenir* **BEST SO FAR**
WELL ORGANISED **very professional** **”**

industry, including verticillium wilt. In the evening Norwest entertained us to dinner at the beautiful Apple Tree Golf Course Resort. Prior to dinner, people relaxed on the green lawns, some doing Tai Chi exercises led by Winnie Yeung and others sipping wine and cocktails.

Day Four saw a visit to Labeemint Inc., again a passionate family company with great values. Following an introductory presentation by the new President the delegates were treated to a detailed tour of the company's operations. The highlight was the fractional distillation unit designed by Tyler Labee, who had trained as an aeronautical engineer and had designed and constructed this excellent unit. Fractional distillation gives Labee the ability to process their mint oils with a light top and bottom cut to terpeneless qualities. Other processing equipment includes a short path horizontal distillation unit as well as a state of the art one-metre diameter, continuous wiped film evaporator.

Delegates were also shown the rigorous quality assurance process as well as the field to drum traceability and the odour grading and analytical profiling and grouping that allows for the creation of consistent blends. Delegates were presented with an impressive box of sample of various mint oils from different regions, and did some olfactory testing. This was a nice souvenir to take back home. Another highlight of the Tour was meeting up with various family members





Photo left

Callisons have one of the most modern laboratory facilities in the mint industry

Photo right

Alan Brown lectured us on various aspects of peppermint and spearmint production

Photos left page top to bottom

Dan Labee, President and Managing Director of Labeermint addresses the tour

Shinn Family Farms Inc. who produce 11 different hop varieties



including Dan Labee, the President and Managing Director of the company, as well as Jack Labee, age 92 the company's founder and spirit of the company. Jack still comes into the office most days and was very enthusiastic in welcoming the group.

Following an excellent lunch in the company grounds we visited Phil Sealock's Farms where mint was being distilled. We were treated to a guided tour of the distillery operations by John Cheatham, Lebermuth's Manager of Field Operation, who had spent many years developing and installing such equipment.

Then followed a visit to Shinn Family Farms Inc. a 2,200-acre farm now being farmed by the fourth generation of the family. A variety of products are produced but hops predominate. Using an open-sided train the delegates toured the farm sampling local beers as we travelled. Ryan, a family member, provided a detailed tour of the very well organised hop operations. This proved of great interest to the delegates, the vast majority of whom were totally

unfamiliar with the growing, drip irrigation and processing of hops. Currently Shinn produce 11 different hop varieties, and we had samples of some of the varieties to smell. Ryan outlined some of the differences between varieties i.e., more bitter, sweet, herbaceous, better for dark beer or light beer etc. Unfortunately picking and processing was not being undertaken at the time of the visit, but we visited the distillery and saw the destemming equipment.

The following day delegates travelled to White Swan, Washington to visit Green Acre Farms, who are operating one of the industry's new stills. Spread over 2,000 acres of Indian lands, the farm grows apples, peaches, pears, hops and mint. Again the visit was very well organised and they were very proud of their food safety programmes and having their farm accredited with various certifications.

Then we continued to the Columbia River Gorge and enjoyed RCB International's sponsored lunch over the Hood River. After lunch, we travelled down the scenic

Columbia River, during which we visited the Bonneville Dam, the fish ladders and the fish hatchery, as well as some delegates climbing the magnificent Multnomah Falls, almost 200 metres high.

The following day we drove north to Callisons for a tour of their facilities and exposure to one of the most modern laboratory facilities in the mint industry. Three different aspects of the company's operations were highlighted, quality control and analytical services, the applications laboratory and the marketing aspects. The visit to the facility again was very professional and tightly monitored and scheduled. The odour evaluation facilities, assisted by software and GCMS identification of mint oils on a big charts on the walls was very impressive. (Photo 9)

After lunch on the Callisons campus, we drove to Seattle Airport, for dinner and an evening flight to Chicago. It will be a late arrival at O'Hare Field, followed by a 2-hour coach journey to St. Joseph's Michigan for a 3AM check-in.



After a mid-morning check out we took a short 40-mile drive to Kalamazoo and Kalsec Inc. impressive campus. There followed a tour of their spice and hop extract facilities and very impressive laboratory and flavour creation facilities. Then followed lunch in the woods on the campus where several company members spoke on various aspects of this family-owned operation.

In the afternoon, after a short 90-minute drive to South Bend, Indiana for a tour of The Lebermuth Company and its fragrance production. Rob Brown and his colleagues, several of whom had played an important role in organising the Study Tour, warmly welcomed us. A brief presentation was made on the company, including showing 3 company related facility. Then followed a plant visit of their relatively new facilities, the highlight of which was the new impressive Fricke Concordia, automatic dosing machine. In the evening a special dinner, sponsored by Lebermuth, was arranged in South Bend at the historic Studebaker Museum, which included tours of the magnificent Oliver Museum.

The last visit of the Tour was to Shady Lane Farms, where we experienced Midwest mint production, seeing spearmint and peppermint growing side-by-side. Alan Brown lectured us on various aspects of peppermint and spearmint production and this was followed by a tour of the modern distillation plant.

Photo left

Multnomah Falls was a spectacular natural wonder discovered during the tour

Photo right

Article authors, Bhuvana Nageshwaren of Ultra International Ltd and Sandeep Tekriwal of P.T. Van Aroma

The group continued into Chicago for the night. There was a farewell evening cruise and dance on the Odyssey, with fireworks and breath taking views over the magnificent Chicago Skyline. While it had rained for much of the day, the DJ said that we had chosen one of best night's of the year to be to seeing Chicago after dark: a fitting end to a fabulous Study Tour.

So in summary, the participants from 20 countries, a very lively and friendly group, learnt a lot not only from the excellent company visits but also from our daily interactions and the "bus lectures" given by some of the participants. The visits were truly enlightening and the high level of expertise and professionalism meant that we benefitted immensely from this experience. Many thanks must go to the companies visited and their sponsorship of the Tour. Special thanks to Alan Brown the Chair of the Local Organising Committee and to Peter Greenhalgh and IFEAT for this highly educative and memorable Study Tour. Lastly, to Deneen Worthen our tour guide - she was superb - she managed all of us quite well and was very caring and helpful.





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