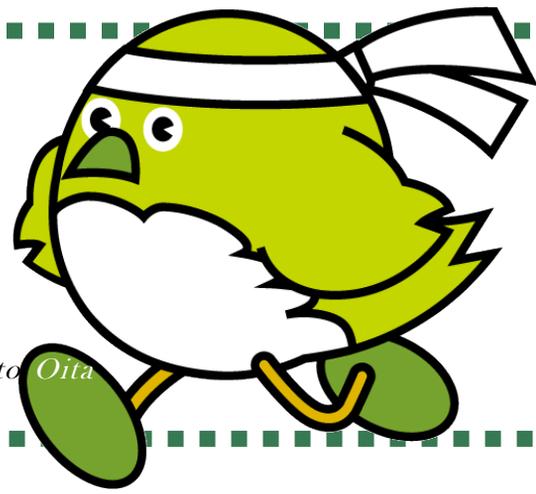


What's up,

OITA!

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Bringing the latest from Oita, Japan to all those connected to Oita thriving all across the globe.



Grand opening of the Oita Consultations & Support Center

The Oita Information & Support Center, which provides consultations for people of foreign nationalities and their affiliates, celebrated its grand opening in Oita city on June 27.

Against the backdrop of labor scarcity in small to medium scale businesses, the new status of residence 'Specified Skilled Worker' was established, and the goal of realizing a society in which locals and foreigners can coexist has become a major challenge. There are currently over 6,000 foreign laborers in the Oita prefecture, a figure that has increased approximately twofold within the last five years. Under the assumption that the numbers will continue to rise into the future, the prefecture is striving to create local communities where local and foreign residents alike can live in with peace of mind.

In response to concerns and queries posed by foreigners living in Oita, the Center is providing face-to-face, telephone and email consultation as well as multilingual call center services in 17 target languages.

Additionally, the Center has run training with relevant staff members so the system can be implemented in municipalities across the prefecture. After the opening ceremony, the Center also held a training session ran by professionals with a focus on consultations.

While the system is at its early stages, the Prefecture looks forward to seeing the Center thrive as a platform that helps create a safer and more accessible environment for foreign residents.



On July 13, I went on a Study Tour to Himeshima Village in a group of 29 members who comprised of CIRs and study-abroad students.

Due to the aging population, the number of residents in the village is gradually decreasing, with only about 2,000 people left at the time of writing. The sole cause can be attributed to the decline of the fisheries industry, causing the younger generation to leave the island at the prospect of entering further education or finding better work opportunities. This begs the question: how should Himeshima Village face the current predicament?

The Himeshima village is abundant in natural resources, blessed with a warm climate and its own Geopark, not to mention a wide variety of food produce. The Japanese tiger prawn (*kuruma-ebi*), in particular, is boasted as the pride of the island. The fried prawn that we ate at the Japanese restaurant *Moriei* was mouth-watering. In addition, the fact that one can commute to work on foot and the lack of traffic accidents is also one of the charms of Himeshima Village – it should be noted that there is only one set of traffic lights on the whole island.

Attracting businesses to the locale is also an important subject, as work is what ultimately draws people to any place. Taking advantage of the island's unique characteristics, the village is bringing the IT industry into the region. While it is not possible to build factories due to land area constraints, IT-related work can be conducted remotely on the island.

At this stage, the IT company that has already settled in is brainstorming ways to attract workers and make them stay for the long term. Since the company is offering the same wage on the island as that of its Tokyo branch's, I think it's natural that people would be inclined to choose to work in Himeshima Village.

As luck would have it, it was raining the day when we were on the island. Nonetheless, we were able to savour the charms of Himeshima Village and managed to have an enjoyable time. I think that there are things to be learnt from the agenda that the village has posed in the face of challenges. Population decline is a present-day phenomenon that is prevalent across the globe. If we all followed Himeshima Village's way of making the most of local resources, attracting suitable industries and keeping talents at home, then we may perhaps find a lead to a means of resolution.



Monthly staff corner

Report from Miss Li Ting,
research associate
from Hubei Province,
China

Another taste of Japan

A weekend in Bungotakada



Author: Xin Lan Xie, CIR from Australia

‘Could this be it?’ ‘I’m not too sure...’

The car rolled slowly towards a huge front entrance, the silence in the air was disturbed only occasionally by the wind sweeping across the nearby rice fields. Uncertain as to whether we got the right address, I dialled our hostess Mrs. Inokuchi’s number, who proceeded to welcome us promptly from the very entrance that we thought was too big to be true – and thus began our weekend in Bungotakada.

*

A series of residences are currently listed up on Airbnb by the Oita Prefecture in preparation to the Rugby World Cup 2019. We chose the *Yugen no yado* in Bungotakada, which suited our tastes fairly well with its homely atmosphere and distinct Japanese touch. Before digging into our dinner, Mr. and Mrs. Inokuchi introduced us to the Hanairo Spa, a public onsen in the neighbourhood. Having had a

good soak and steamed ourselves in the sauna, we had a little shopping spree at the small produce stall just beside the entrance.

*

A homecooked feast awaited us the moment we arrived home. At first there was concern as to whether we could finish so much food, but everything tasted splendid and we ended up finishing off every bit. To ease digestion and close off the evening, we enjoyed a light game of go with Mr. Inokuchi.





*

After waking up to the call of birds and finishing an extremely filling breakfast, there was still a little time to spare before checkout. We had a fair share of good luck and hospitality that day, since Mr. Inokuchi took us around to see the Buddhist temples in the region that are part of the Rokugo Manzan, a culture unique to the Kunisaki Peninsula where Bungotakada sits. Breathing in the morning air, we made our way to Tennenji, the temple that is the stage for the ogre festival Shusho Onie, and Choanji, the ‘temple of flowers’ famous for its rhododendrons in spring and flamboyant foliage in autumn.

*

After parting ways with Mr. Inokuchi and Mrs. Inokuchi, we headed towards Tashinobusho, a village that wows visitors with its picturesque rural scenery. Once we got to the viewing platform, a vista of rice fields painted green by summer opened up before our eyes. ‘Not a bad way to spend a weekend’, I thought to myself as the deep green maple branches swayed to and fro in the warm, summery breeze of Oita – Bungotakada is definitely a little haven for those who wish to slip back in time and appreciate a bit of quietness.



Locations, from bottom left to bottom right: Hanairo Spa, Tennenji, Choanji, Tashinobusho.

Accommodation: Yugen no yado, Category: Farm stay, Location: Bungotakada, Check-in: 16:00~, Price range: ¥ 10,000 for adult~,

Fancy exploring Bungotakada or other rural parts of Oita for a lesser known side of Japan? Check out this Airbnb listing compilation below:
https://www.airbnb.com/farmstay_in_oita

This farm stay was sponsored by the Oita Prefecture.