

What's up,

**OITA!** 2018 December  
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*Bringing the latest from Oita, Japan to all those connected to Oita thriving all across the globe.*



## A few words from the head of the International Division



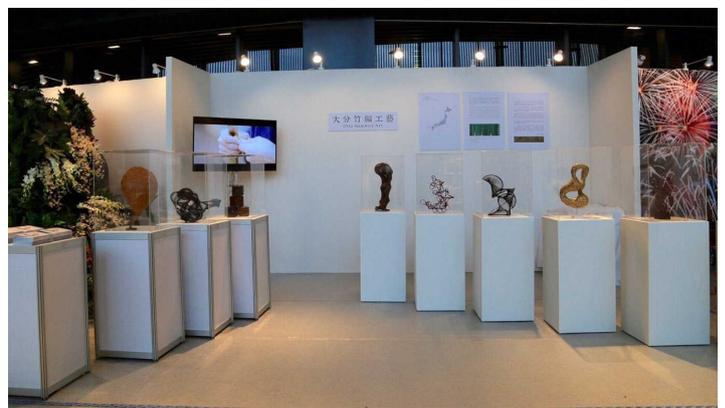
Thanks to everyone's active participation, the Oita 2018 Japanese National Cultural Festival and the Japanese Arts and Cultural Festival for Citizens with Disabilities have officially finished with a bang. I wonder whether visitors were able to get a taste of the diversity and depth of Oita Prefecture's culture with renewed perspectives? One of the highlights of this grand event was the active administration of culture tourism, which allowed one to visit various regions while indulging in local culinary delicacies and traditional arts. I would love to see again in the future similar attempts where elements of Oita's traditional culture and abundant local cooking ingredients are incorporated.

Mitsuru Tokuno <tokuno-mitsuru@pref.oita.lg.jp>  
Head of the International Policy Division in the Oita Prefecture Planning Promotion Department

## Oita Promotion Work in Taiwan

In an effort to increase interests towards Oita Prefecture's local tourism and exportable products, the Governor of Oita and ten affiliates from Oita's tourism industry made a visit to Taiwan from 5<sup>th</sup>~8<sup>th</sup> November. Promotional work of this nature first begun in 2015, making this year's journey the fourth of its kind.

During the journey, the group observed the booth run by Oita Prefecture in the Taichung World Flora Exposition that opened from 3<sup>rd</sup> November.  
*(continued on next page)*



(Continued from previous page) Nine pieces of artwork from six local artists were selected and displayed at the booth in order to promote the prefecture's traditional art of bamboowork. In an exhibition space that was filled with fresh flowers, the booth's art gallery-like ambience received many favourable comments.

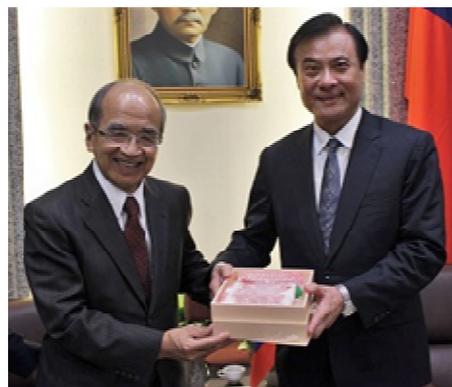
Meanwhile, an outdoor booth featured hot springs such as those of Beppu and Yufuin's, and visitors were wowed with the charms of these local tourism hotspots.

Participation in these promotional events were closely followed by courtesy meetings with various prominent figures, including Taichung City's mayor Mr. Lin, the President of the Legislative Yuan Mr. Su, the Third Wednesday Club's Supreme Advisor Mr. Chiang, and the Taiwan-Japan Relations Association's Chairman Mr. Chiu. Matters concerning interregional relations and commercial tourism were discussed during these meetings.

A visit was then made to the Nichiwa International Business Corporation. The group approached the company's president Mr. Wu for questions on the sales of the Oita Bungo Beef, a product that was added to company's catalogue this year. It's been reported that the product is currently aimed at high-income consumers, and has thus far enjoyed a favourable reputation for its aroma and soft textures.

In addition, dinner gatherings with the local Oita Kenjinkai were conducted in both Taipei City and Taichung City respectively, in which stories of local challenges and topics concerning the Oita Prefecture greatly livened up the atmosphere.

Following this year's work, more plans with the aim of improving communications with Taiwan and expanding the scope of Oita's local tourism and exportable products will continue into the foreseeable future.



- Second image from top: Photo with members of the Taichung Oita Kenjinkai.
- Third image from top: Photo with members of the Taipei Oita Kenjinkai.

~Oita, my sweet home~

Photo gallery feat. Bungotakada & Kitsuki



Choanji Temple,  
Bungotakada



Soba noodles,  
Bungotakada



Suya no Saka Slope,  
Kitsuki



Yamaga Onsen  
Kazenosato, Kitsuki

## Monthly staff corner

Last month, I went to Usa Jingu to collect materials for my report. According to the local shrine priest, if you walk through the concrete jungles of Tokyo and make it to the Meiji Jingu dedicated to the late Emperor Meiji and Empress Shoke, you will come upon a great forest line with scared trees. Originally nothing but arid land, volunteers from all around Japan transported these trees to the location so they can create a forest, and it's said that people from Oita had also contributed to the cause. Since this was such an impressive feat, I decided to visit the Meiji Jingu. Weaving through the holiday crowd, I enjoyed the autumn breeze and bathed in the sunbeams filtering through the trees, and it so happens that the annual Niiname-no-matsuri was on show. Deciding to take a little peak, I discovered none other than the famous dried shiitake-mushrooms standing among Oita Prefecture's offerings. Washed by a sense of warm familiarity, I couldn't help but smile at the sight – what a happy thing it is to stumble upon something from Oita even when one is so far away from home.

- Xin Lan Xie, CIR from Australia



While it's not often that you get to browse the tourism hotspots of your own city, I tried my best at showcasing the charms of Oita since I was on a roll with visitors in November – the first of my guests was a friend from New Zealand, followed by a visit by my grandparents. Although I had made numerous visits to different sightseeing spots without a halt, everyone's favourite was definitely the Umi Jigoku (Seas of Hell) at Beppu City.

As much as the majestic blue hot-spring waters 'harbouring the history of a millennium' is an attraction, what makes the Umi Jigoku extra special is perhaps the interesting things that you can see and do in its vicinity. I got used to the distinctive odour of the hot-springs pretty quickly, and feasted on boiled eggs and steamed puddings in both of my visits, all cooked with the power of hot-spring water. As soon as I entered the bounds of the Umi Jigoku, I was met with numerous lovely traditional Japanese gardens, public footbaths, tiny shrines on the right-hand-side of the hot-springs among other fascinating things, all of which had quite blown me away.

- Sarah Backley, CIR from UK

# Bathed in Candlelight

## A night in Usuki



The Oita Prefecture ranks the top in the nation when it comes to the production of *madake*, or Japanese timber bamboo. In celebration of this proud heritage, the prefecture holds many festivals around the year that feature the *madake*. The annual *Usuki Takeyoi* held in the city of Usuki is one of many such events.

The city of Usuki is around 40 minutes away from Oita Station. By the time I exited the gates of Usuki City at 17:20, the sky was already starting to dim. Yawning in the remnant warmth of the sun, I began to walk slowly towards the Nioza Historical Road, the main site of the *Usuki Takeyoi*.

*Takeyoi* literally means 'Night of the Bamboo'. For two evenings every October, the historical townscape of Usuki is bathed in the gentle candlelight of over 20,000 bamboo *bonbori* lanterns. Work of such scale requires the combined efforts of both residents and businesses within the locality, who begin the laborious chore of cutting down bamboos and crafting them into lanterns from as early as August.

The moment the sun had finally sunk and all the candles were lit, the already beautiful historical streets were immediately transformed into a fantasy-like landscape in the firelight's warm glow. The air was filled with the buzz of conversation and the smell of food from vendors who lined the sides of the streets. I helped myself to black coffee, crab miso-soup and a sizeable plate of sushi. Since that this was a *matsuri*, I also bought a bowl of *ozenzai*, a dessert porridge made from adzuki beans and filled with *mochi*. Having satiated my hunger and sweet-tooth, I was again high in spirit and began browsing the streets.





Strolling down the dark alleyways decorated by the dim firelight of the bamboo lanterns, I entertained myself by chatting with shopkeepers and taking photos as I waited for the main event of the night – the Han'nya-hime Parade. Han'nya-hime, who had mesmerised the Emperor with her celestial beauty, was a legendary figure who sacrificed herself to calm the raging dragon that sank numerous ships in the Seto Inland Sea. Grieved by her death, Han'ya-hime's father Mana-no-Choja turned the townscape of Usuki into a river of incandescence by adorning it with numerous bamboo lanterns with the hope that the light will lead the soul of his daughter home – such were the origins of the *Usuki Takeyoi*.

Having warmed myself with food and good conversation, I noticed that the buzz of the conversation around me had grown louder and that people began moving towards the side of the street – the parade was on finally its way. I could hear solemn, ceremonial music from afar before Han'nya-hime appeared before the crowd in the company of her father, mother, and little daughter. The procession was also joined by an impressive number of Shinto priests and Han'nya-hime's servants. The bamboo-carrier that Han'nya-hime and her family rode on seemed of considerable weight, despite this, the procession still moved on with

*Image descriptions:*

- (Left) Young girl playing the role of Han'nya-hime's daughter.
- (Right-top) Crowd before the live music event at the foot of Usuki Castle, moments before sunset.
- (Right-bottom) A bowl of ozenzai filled with matcha soft-serve,



remarkable speed. Tracing the sound of music, I followed the bobbing sea of people to catch another glance of the princess before I decided that I should call it a day.

The soft buzz of conversation and the atmosphere lingered in the air even as I entered the carriage of the train on my way home. I looked out of the train window only to see a river of stars stretching beyond the horizon. If the soul of Han'ya-hime had indeed made herself home by following the trail of light, I hope that she too was enjoying the lights of the heavens.



## Words from the editor:

Winter is closing in, and the skies grow dark more quickly each day. A boar had been run over by the train on the night of the *Takeyoi* – perhaps it too had wanted to see the lanterns, but had instead lost its life before witnessing the charms of Usuki. Following this, I urge you all to keep yourselves safe in the winter dark and watch out for any wild animals that might charge into your vehicle's headlights.