



# What's up, OITA!

Bringing the latest from Oita, Japan to people around the globe!

## 45th National Tree Care Festival



The 45th National Tree Care Festival (*Zenkoku Ikujusa*) was held on November 12 and 13th this year in Oita.

The festival is a public celebration of greenery held every autumn, meant to emphasize the importance of protecting forests and having future generations continue to do the same.

This year's theme was "Cultivating Oita's Bountiful Forests. Living with the Trees." It was the first time the festival has returned to Oita since the first ever *Zenkoku Ikujusa* in 1977, held in Beppu 45 years ago.

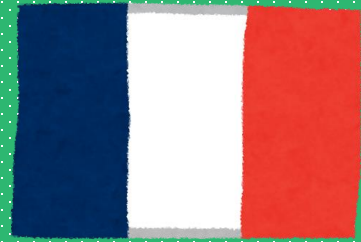


At a "tree tending ceremony," Crown Prince Fumihito and Crown Princess Kiko tended to the tree that was planted in Oita for the 51st National Tree Planting Festival (*Zenkoku Shokujusa*) by then Emperor and Empress, Akihito and Michiko.



There was also a ceremony to commend the many groups and individuals who have contributed over the years to making the earth a greener (literally) place. At the ceremony's main attraction was a display of song and creative dance to convey the meaning behind the festival's theme to every audience member, as well as show them the wonder of Oita's forests and forestry industry.

# Consulate-General of France in Kyoto Consul-General Jules Irrmann Visits Oita



With Consul-General Irrmann

On December 20, Consul-General Jules Irrmann, of the Consulate-General of France in Kyoto, visited Oita Prefecture and met with Governor Katsusada Hirose

Governor Hirose spoke of the “Space Port Oita” project that the Prefecture has been diligently working on for the past few years, while Mr. Irrmann listened on in great interest.

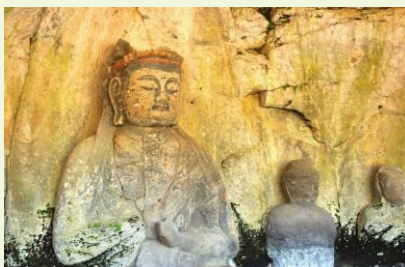
It’s hoped that we can expect greater cultural and economic exchange between Oita Prefecture and France in the near future.



## News From Around Oita

Headlines for November

- ‘Celebrating our history with pride’: Oita Nishi High School marks 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary with celebrations
- Oita Prefecture announces designs for its hovercraft, utilising the concept of ‘spaceport’ and welcomes ideas for craft’s naming
- Opening ceremony for hovercraft terminal to be held December of next year
- An administrative legacy of placing citizens first: Oita Prefecture Governor Katsusada Hirose’s retirement announced
- Prefectural wagyu awarded second place in first division of Wagyu Olympics Kagoshima ZENKYO; Kuju Kogen Agricultural High School places 11<sup>th</sup> in agricultural high school division
- Oita High School's Calligraphy Club and Oita Uenoaka High School's Chemistry Club honoured by Mayor of Oita City for excellence in national competition
- Sri Lanka Japan Fellowship Association holds ceremony for establishment of Japan-Sri Lanka ties in Beppu
- Coastline trails and mountain roads: widely enjoyed local tradition Tour de Saiki attracts 1087 entries
- Yato District, Tsukumi City farewell autumn festival: all residents to be relocated due to large-scale mining development



Usuki Stone Buddhas



Oita City



Himeshima





## For tourist information about Yufu City... Yufu City Tourist Information Centre



Located next to JR Yufuin Station, the Yufu City Tourist Information Centre not only provides guidance on Yufu City for tourists, but also handles bookings for horse-drawn carriage rides, rental bicycles, and nolc! On the second floor, there is a lookout deck and a library of travel resources. From up there, you can spend some time relaxing whilst looking out over Mt Yufu.



← Yufu City Tourist Information Centre Official Site

!Check out Yufu City Tourist Information Centre's Instagram for Yufu City travel inspiration!→



## Green Slow Mobility: nolc

### Explore Yufuin at a leisurely pace with nolc!

Nolc is an environmentally friendly electric vehicle with a maximum speed of 20km. Setting off from JR Yufuin Station, nolc winds past Flora House and Unagihime Shrine at a leisurely pace. Please enjoy Yufuin's gorgeous scenic views from nolc!



## Yufuin's Morning Mist



Encounter another side of Yufuin during the winter - one that is wrapped in mist and mystery. This is due to the large temperature difference between the daytime and evening. The early morning the only time weather conditions align to create conditions of high humidity and no wind, and Jakoshi Observatory is a place where you can, if you're lucky, witness this transient but splendid view.

When staying overnight on Yufuin, we recommend you take an early morning drive to witness this misty wonder.

## Yunohira Onsen

Yunohira Onsen has flourished as a healing hot spring retreat since the Edo Period. At night, you can experience the peaceful charm of the historic cobblestone slope lit by red lanterns. For 200 yen, you can make use of the communal bath 'Gin no Yu', or 'silver bath', between 10am and 2pm.



When visiting Yunohira Onsen, please enjoy 'Yunohiran ice-cream', which is lovingly crafted by the staff.





# Go crazy at Kijima Kogen!



It was a crisp autumn day and my nerves were about as ready as they could be for the excitement that lay ahead of us as we wound up and around mountainous curves to Kijima Kogen, a traditional amusement park in Beppu. The sun shone down on us as we stepped off the bus, making our way to the park entrance where a few other early birds were milling around, waiting for the ticket counter to open. We paid the entrance fee and purchased an 'all-you-can-ride' wristband and made our way inside. Orange and yellow leaves rustled overhead; the leaves always turn much faster up in the mountains. A few stray leaves danced down in twirls as we made our way to the dragon boat. The UK does not have many theme parks - I think they are more an American tradition - but even I was familiar with this particular dragon. The Viking dragon boat oscillates back and forth like a swing; it was the perfect warm-up ride for two scaredy-cats such as ourselves!

Feeling pumped on the adrenaline, we headed over to another swing-based ride, grinning as we went. This one I was very familiar with: my university summer balls always rented this ride and drunk students would have a blast. Looking back, this was probably not the best choice considering the event, but I remember those memories fondly. We sat down in our swings, buckled up, and away we went, spinning in a circle, our swings hanging from just a string. The view of the burnt-orange mountain in the morning sunlight was a sight to behold, however the serenity of this image was interrupted numerous times by our own screams. Feeling that we had pushed our limits a little, we sat down on a nearby bench overlooking said mountain whilst the children who rode with us ran along to their next adrenaline hit - oh to be young!

One chilled out merry-go-round later, and we were feeling ready for a little more adventure. We decided to work our way up to the big boss of roller coasters: Jupiter. We started off with the dragon coaster, a coaster that looped three times around a short course, with just a bit of light spinning. Feeling our confidence replenished, we levelled-up to the Super L&S Coaster, which increased in loop-the-loops and spirals. A quick rest after this, and we headed onwards towards the big boss. Jupiter is a daunting sight indeed: tall, long, and supported by criss-crossing wooden beams that just add to the overall effect. Jupiter was certainly an experience. Since it is quite old, the ride itself was bit too rickety for my liking. It was fast and would be sure to provide adrenaline junkies with a good hit, but side effects included crazy hair and whiplash due to a lack of modern headrests. It was great to ride once, but I would probably not be returning for this particular ride.

## Swara Fife

Coordinator for  
International  
Relations







Following our Jupiter experience, we grabbed a drink and ice cream at a nearby stall - I felt the need for a little sugar after the fun but wild experiences of the day so far. We chatted a little, overlooking the patchwork landscape of the autumn mountains surrounding us. The ferris wheel rotated leisurely in the background as we breathed in the refreshing mountain air.

The park's restaurants were varied, from an Italian-style diner to a Japanese-style *teishoku* joint. We chose the latter, and after some *karaage* and *nanban*, we headed off to ride the ferris wheel.

Considering our full bellies, this was a good choice indeed, and we relaxed, swaying a little in our pink bubble in the air and enjoying the mountains once more. After exiting, we tried Poseidon 30, a water ride that offers a covered, soak-free experience as opposed to other theme parks where ponchos are offered (for an extra cost, of course), and you still get soaked through. It was a little underwhelming as the glass was old and scratched, obscuring the view, but the other rides up until now (perhaps barring Jupiter) made up for it. Finally, I soaked my tootsies in the foot spa, or *ashiyu* as it's called in Japanese, while my co-worker took a final spin on the Super L&S Coaster. I soaked up both minerals and rays until she came to pick me up.

Finally, we headed for the go-cart racing - some much-needed driving practice for me - before heading to the souvenir shop. Here, I purchased a Kirby gatcha figurine. I stood there shaking the various boxes, attempting to guess what was inside each one before finally settling. It was worth the effort, as I got one of the cutest types available! We the park in high spirits after a slightly nerve-jangling but fun day at Kijima Kogen!



## Kijima Kogen

Park entry price:  
¥1,500/adults  
¥600/children



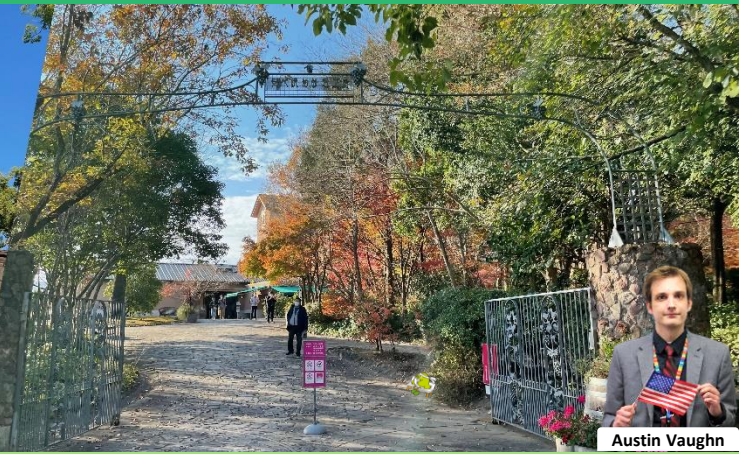
Opening hours:  
varies throughout  
the year;  
generally 10:00-  
16:00

Park entry & all-  
you-can-ride:  
¥4,800/adults  
¥3,900/children





# Study Tour



Austin Vaughn



## Wine and Sake; Relief and the Void

I should probably preface this article by saying that I don't drink. Never have, never will. Don't mind if anyone else does, but if you're looking for recommendations for good alcohol to buy, then you're in the wrong place. However, the two breweries (...wait, is there a single word for "a place that makes alcohol"? Breweries are for beer...) that I visited alongside Oita's scholarship students were so beautiful, and the processes they use to make alcohol so fascinating, that I was captivated by them even with my personal hang-ups about alcohol.

The first place we visited was *Karashima Koku no Kura*, a craft brewery making sake, as well as low-malt beer. The building itself was in a traditional Japanese style, with a courtyard that had a river flowing right through it. Definitely not the image that normally comes to my mind when I think "brewery." *Koku no Kura* was much nicer. The main attraction, however, was the "sake-making experience" we all got to try out. We were all given lab coats and shown into a clean room, where we helped stir the fermenting rice and given a good chance to smell it. Even though there's nothing but rice and koji in the vat, it gave off a very fruity smell, which is very interesting to think about. After that, we were able to taste some of the rice they use for the fermenting process, which is steamed to form a hard outer shell. As you might expect from something that isn't food, it honestly wasn't that good.

We left the brewery and had lunch at Usa Jingu, which I'll detail more on the next page because I can't think of a good way to segue between alcohol and one of the most important shrines in Japan. After lunch, we visited the second brewery (okay, winery), Ajimu Winery, makers of gold-medal winning wine. The winery grounds were a total surprise. I did not expect such stunning scenery. The leaves were still changing color and the entire backdrop was something you'd expect to see more in Europe than in Japan. Definitely one of the more unique places that I've been in Japan. Our tour guide also tossed us some fruit directly off the branch, and I wish I could remember what kind of fruit that it was, because it was delicious.

Karashima  
Koku no Kura  
(Japanese)



Ajimu Winery  
(Japanese)





# Study Tour



## Usa! Usa!

Going back in time a bit, for lunch the Study Oita Scholarship Brigade (unofficial name) had lunch prepared for them (err, us?) at a restaurant called Kakumasa right next to Usa Jingu. There I saw for the first time: A. dango that weren't balls, but strips, and B. food that honest to goodness was still on fire when it was at the table, or at least had a fire under it. *Dango-jiru* is a very interesting dish, and pretty tasty too. The other food was really good as well. I'm always a fan of *toriten*, no matter where I go. After eating, we were set free to wander and marvel at Usa Jingu. I had only been to Usa Jingu once before, and it was to guide another person around, so it was nice to be able to look around the shrine at (mostly) my own pace. The main *torii* was as impressive as ever, and this was the first time I noticed the steam locomotive right outside. It looks like there's also a time capsule buried next to it that will be opened in 2031. If I'm still around here then, I wouldn't mind seeing what secrets are inside.

I also took a look at the "disaster year" / "disaster avoidance" *yakudoshi/yakuyoke* board. Even though I'd seen them a few times, I had never actually looked up what it all meant until now. I think I at least somewhat understand it, if not fully, with 25, 42, and 61 being the years most prone to disaster (or change) in your life. But it's actually kind of funny to me that 42 is supposed to be one of the most calamitous years of your life. 42 is my favorite number, since it's the answer to life, the universe, and everything according to a very famous British book. Either way, I'm just glad it all goes by traditional Japanese age (with everyone aging one year on New Year's Day and starting at one year old as soon as they're born) instead of the modern way, since I'm 25 and I'd prefer my year to be a bit less on the rocky side.

Finally, we made it up to the main shrine. Usa Jingu really isn't a head shrine to thousands of others just for show. That red-orange color is just amazing, no matter how many times I see it. My only regret is that I wasn't able to see the inside at all. With any luck, one day I'll be able to. Third time's the charm, I suppose. Speaking of charms, on the way down, I bought a traffic charm for my grandfather. He's almost always on the road, so I figured it would make for a good present for when I visited back home for Christmas. I still don't know if he actually hung it up on his car windshield or not, but hopefully it's the thought that counts.

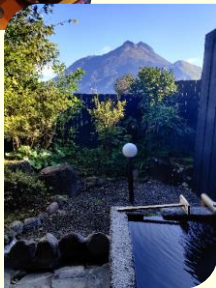




# from our Reporters 国際交流員だより



## Swara Fife Coordinator for International Relations



My parents finally made it to Japan in October, just in time for my birthday! It had been almost a year since I had seen them, so it was an emotional and happy reunion. While my parents were here, I took them around Oita, which has become my home in this past year. I not only took them around Oita City, Beppu, and Usuki, but also Yufuin, where we stayed one night in a traditional *ryokan*.

We departed for Yufuin on the train, which chugged leisurely up the mountain. The topography of Japan, being very different from the UK, fascinated my parents, and they were enamoured with the sweeps and falls of the mountains and countryside. We visited the sleepy Lake Kinrin, its mists floating along the water's surface whilst the sun shone bright, making it glitter mystically. We also sampled some of the street food, including *tori-ten senbei*, an Oita specialty!

My parents loved the food, and were in for more delightful surprises at the *ryokan* we stayed at. The room was a traditional Japanese one with a private hot spring. Before dinner, we took an evening bath in swimsuits together, laughing and soaking in each other's company whilst gazing upon Yufu-dake, burning red in the last rays of late afternoon sunlight.

Dinner was delicious, and my parents enjoyed local specialties including *kabosu* with Oita-caught sea bream and Oita *wagyu* cooked *shabu-shabu* style. Together, we experienced the best of what Oita has to offer - I think they thoroughly enjoyed themselves!

## Sunflower, Sunfloowwwer

The other day, I went on a trip with my friend to Kyoto. And from a mutual acquaintance's suggestion, we decided to get there by ferry. So for the first time in my life, I boarded a large ship, literally. (This joke worked better in Japanese...) I've been on small ships tons of times, and even drove some when I was a kid, but obviously for "double-landlocked" Utah, there's nowhere for a large ship to go. They call it the "Great Salt Lake," but it's really not that "great" in size, and if you cross it, all that awaits you is a desert... At any rate, seeing the nightscape of Oita and Beppu pass by as I stood on the deck of the boat was a great feeling, and I hope to ride it again someday. Luckily, I'm not the type to get seasick.

## Austin Vaughn

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