



What's up, OITA!

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

Appointment of Oita Prefecture Overseas Advisor

A ceremony for the official appointment of Oita Prefecture's own Overseas Advisors took place on 20th February 2023. This time, two advisors were appointed. One of these is Ms. Sasaki Izumi, an Oita Prefecture Overseas Mejiro Supporter who is a former APU student from Vietnam currently living in Ho Chi Minh City. The other is Mr. Takeshi Yoshiwatari of the Oita Prefecture Indonesian Society, who is from Beppu, but currently living in Jakarta, Indonesia. Both have experience in personnel and talent acquisition in Ho Chi Minh City and Jakarta respectively, and have abundant expertise in effectively utilising foreign talent. As a measure against labour shortages, which is increasingly becoming an issue, Oita Prefecture is actively planning to accept workers from overseas. For this, the prefecture has enlisted the help of Ms. Sasaki Izumi and Mr. Takeshi Yoshiwatari, who are experts in this field.

The prefecture is hoping to continue to deepen its ties with Indonesia and Vietnam in the field of foreign labour.



Ms. Sasaki Izumi



Mr. Takeshi Yoshiwatari

🕒 Foreign workers in Oita Prefecture

In December 2022 there were 15,249 non-Japanese people living in Oita Prefecture.

Top 3 nationalities:

- 1: Vietnamese (3,159)
- 2: Chinese (2,279)
- 3: South Korean (1,727)

Top 3 visa categories:

- 1: Technical Intern Training Programme
- 2: Exchange Student
- 3: Professional/Technical Field

Consul General Vu Chi Mai from the Consulate General of Vietnam in Fukuoka visits Oita Prefecture



Consul General Vu Chi Mai with Governor Katsusada Hirose

On Monday 6th February, newly appointed Consul General of Vietnam in Fukuoka Vu Chi Mai came to Oita Prefecture to introduce herself to Governor Katsusada Hirose.

As of December 2022, there were 3,159 Vietnamese nationals living in Oita Prefecture, making them the most populous of foreign residents.

In addition, as this year marks the 50th anniversary of the start of Japan-Vietnam diplomatic relations, we hope to further strengthen our relationship with Vietnam looking forward.



News From Around Oita

Headlines for February

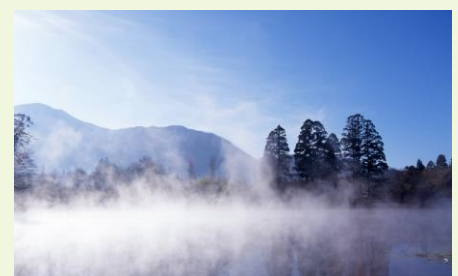
- “Flying Car” Takes Flight in Oita City, First Successful Manned Flight in the Nation
- Trinita’s Home Opener, 15,000 Cheer the Team to Another Consecutive Victory
- First Export of Kitsuki Dekopon to Dubai, an “Appealing Market” with No Competition
- Bringing Usuki’s Charm on the Road, “Advertising Truck” Sets Off, Featuring Usuki Stone Buddhas
- Amount of Workers from Abroad in Oita Reaches New High of 8,383 People. Possibly From Relaxing Border Measures or Lack of Workers
- Ryokan “Yufuin Tamanoyu” is First Signatory in Oita to Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, Vows Sustainable Tourism
- Oita Consumes Most Chicken in Japan for First Time in Five Years. Amount Spent on All Meats Also Number One
- “Onsen Capital” Marketing Videos, Appearances by Marc Panther and Others



Toriten



Hina-meguri (Kitsuki)



Kinrin Lake (Yufuin)

News from Hiji

日出町からのお知らせ

Hiji
Homepage



Hiji is a marine castle town, full of nature, that is bordered by the towering Kanagoe Mountain Range to the north and Beppu Bay to the south. It also has many historic cultural assets, such as the ruins of Hiji Castle, built by Kinoshita Nobutoshi when he was given Hiji-han in the Edo Era, as well as the former manor of Narikiyo Hiroe, “Tekizansou,” built with the boundless resources mined from Mt. Bajokin.

And what would be coming in season for Hiji? That would be “Shio Tomatoes.” One faithful year, a typhoon came to Hiji and caused seawater to get mixed into the soil of a farm near the ocean. However, it turns out this made the tomatoes there taste very sweet, leading to the idea of using seawater to cultivate them on a regular basis. Shio tomatoes are smaller than normal tomatoes, but make up for it with their high sugar content and rich flavor. The tomatoes are divided into ranks based on their sugar level, with the tomatoes with the highest level of sugar (rank 10 and above) tasting so fruity you wouldn’t believe they’re tomatoes. They have to be tasted to be believed.

When it comes to Hiji’s specialities, you also can’t forget *shiroshita-karei* (castle flounder)! Shiroshita-karei are raised in a part of the Beppu Bay where fresh and salt water mix together leading to a refined sweetness with no muddy odor. In the Edo era, they were even presented to shoguns and their families. Brought up in the bounty of nature, their meat is tender, with a sweetness in their simple taste. The unique flavor and refined sweetness of shiroshita-karei will spread through your entire mouth. Sashimi, fried, or boiled, no matter how you prepare them, they’re delicious. Shiroshita-karei are in season from May to July, so come to Hiji and taste their heavenly flavor for yourself.



- 1 Hiji Castle Ruins
- 2 Shiroshita-karei
- 3 Shio Tomatoes
- 4 Tekizansou



Hinas in Hita



Hina Matsuri, translated as Girl's Day or Doll's Day in English, is a festival held on 3rd March every year to pray for the happiness, prosperity, and health of young girls. During this festival, families display traditional doll sets in their homes, however there are a number of areas where the Hina Matsuri tradition is rooted deeply and so have become

Swara Fife

Coordinator for
International
Relations



known for their public doll displays. Hita is one such place. On the far west side of Oita, it is no easy feat to get to, particularly for a day trip! But a day trip was what we embarked on at the crisp hour of 8 o'clock on a Monday morning in late February.

After a short two hours on the most rapid train available, we arrived in Hita City. It was a sunny but crisp winter's day. The station was packed to the brim with 'Attack on Titan' pop-art boards and memorabilia, as its author, Hajime Isayama, is originally from Hita. There was even a statue of Levi in front of the station! As with all Japanese cities and towns, the one famous person to ever live there is always worshipped and revered as a marker of collective identity - it's one of the things I find so charming about Japan, as it makes for a unique atmosphere everywhere you go, and shows a sense of pride in one's hometown. From the station, we strolled down the streets of Hita. It was quiet, but in a calm and quaint way, and the streets were lined with small local shops; I was loving the atmosphere already. Being so far away from Oita City, we decided to make the most of our time and booked a Temari-making experience. Temari is a type of traditional Japanese handball used in games. It is a craft originating from China that was introduced to Japan around the 7th century. The storefront was lovely. It had temari of different colours, sizes, and patterns hanging from the awning and a sign for the shop written in cursive lettering. The scene and the atmosphere of Hita combined made me feel as if this could be a scene from an anime, complete, with wistful piano music, whose notes followed the movements of the temari in the light breeze.



The store's owner matched the vibes of the storefront. She was a lovely elderly lady who ushered us in with a smile, leading us past her displays of charming temari, from simple balls to animals and objects designed and made using temari. She had apparently been making temari since she was very young, and had been taught by her mother, and was now teaching her own grandchildren. We sat down and listened to her explanation, before choosing our



thread colours to begin the crafting process. We began with a simple black ball that rattled when shaken, and ended the process with colourful temari. I fell into a deep concentration, threading in, and then out, breaking it here and there only to ask for advice or what to do next. It was deeply therapeutic and by the end of it, I had my own pastel-coloured temari to decorate my room with – perhaps I, too, could hang it on a little string and to some degree replicate the atmosphere we had enjoyed in Hita.

On a tight schedule, we moved swiftly on to our next stop: the highlight of our trip, the Hina Matsuri Doll displays in Mameda-machi. Due to the train times and distance, we could not stop to try any of Hita's specialties on the way, and instead had to pick up some onigiri at a nearby convenience store and eat on the go. Mameda-machi was even sweeter than the central area of Hita. It was a long street lined with traditional buildings, many of which had become shops, but were no doubt originally dwellings for the wealthy. Near the start of Mameda-machi was our first stop, Kusano Honke, a residence built in the 17th century by the Hita Kusano Clan. Kusano Honke is now a museum open to the public that holds four special exhibitions yearly, including the Hina Matsuri Exhibition. Kusano Honke was actually the first establishment to turn Hina Matsuri into a public sightseeing event. Inside, the old features of the residence had been preserved, and there were various permanent displays of old furniture and objects; unfortunately pictures were not allowed. The Hina Matsuri display was gorgeous, and included a voice-over explanation of each of the figures: the detail that went into making each one was mind-blowing. You shall, however, have to take my word for it!



Leaving the old residence, we strolled down the main street again, taking in the quaint small-town atmosphere before reaching our final stop: The

Hina Doll Museum located in the main Hita Shoyu store. The storefront welcomed us in with pink banners indicating the exhibition for Hina Matsuri and we stepping in, moving past all the soy sauce products and towards the back, where a decadent tori-style archway had been made, complete with hanging mobiles of animals and Temari balls. The exhibition was, without a doubt, the highlight of the day. Like a rabbit-warren, it was bigger than expected, winding around in a circle with various different rooms to check out on both sides.

The museum houses a multitude of Hina Dolls from all different ages, some hundreds of years old. The ladies donned elaborate hats with dangly decorations that looked as if they would reduce to dust should they be touched. They also wore layers of lavish kimono rich in both colour and texture. It was truly a feast for the eyes. The men were equally well-dressed, often donning swords or weapons at their waists.



The men were equally well-dressed, often donning swords or weapons at their waists. The main room was breath-taking. Rows upon rows of dolls created a sea of colour and stimulation for the eyes, ending at the back with the centrepieces, seated under ornate awnings. Another such room contained objects found in houses in the front rows, whilst the people lined the back rows. I had never seen so many dolls in one place before! Winding around, a room near the end contained some modern takes on the Hina Dolls, including a Disney-themed set with Mickey, Minnie, Goofy, and Donald amongst others, as well as a Hello Kitty themed set. These were adorable and I definitely saw the appeal in these more modern sets. Near the exit, we checked out the final pieces in the exhibition: traditional Hina Dolls crafted with modern sensibilities in mind. There was a beach setting, a cherry blossom setting, and more. These were gorgeous and mixed the perfect amount of modernity with traditional aesthetics - I wouldn't mind owning something of the sort myself!

After being dolled-out, we headed back through the flower-lined streets of Mameda-machi, breathing in the crisp air and enjoying the afternoon sun warm on our backs. It had been a fast-paced, but incredibly fun day!



Temari-making Experience



~ ¥ 2000
(booking in Japanese only)

Kusano Honke

🌸 Hina Matsuri

Exhibition 15/2 – 26/3

🌸 ¥ 700/adults

¥ 250/children

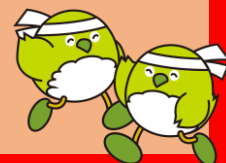
🌸 10:00-16:30



Hina Doll Museum

🌸 ¥ 300 entry

🌸 9:00-17:00





Austin Vaughn



You're Gonna Like the Way You Look

Kitsuki really is deserving of the nickname, “Kyushu’s Little Kyoto.” There are a few other places I can think of in Oita Prefecture that are similar, but none with quite the same atmosphere. The town’s layout is also very unique. Look up anything about Kitsuki and one of the first things you’ll learn is how it’s “sandwich-styled” in a V shape. The middle road was, and still is, a shopping district. “Sandwiching” the district are two steep slopes, *suya-no-saka* (Vinegar Slope) to the north, and *shioya-no-saka* (Salt Slope) to the south. These slopes lead to districts in the hills that used to house samurai and other warriors. Moreover, most of the former homes in these districts are open to the public and free to enter when wearing a kimono.

I’ve gone down the streets of Kitsuki Castle Town three times; two of those times were in a kimono I rented from the premier rental service in Kitsuki, *Warakuan*. I won’t be sharing any photos of me in one here, but somewhere out on the world wide web is a tourism video where I’m wearing one, so if you really want to see that, go ahead and search the internet. Once something’s uploaded there, it never disappears, after all. Putting that aside, it’s best to be honest here. If you’re a guy, your choices in kimono are *very* limited. (What you see in the above photo is what you get.) Still, they look very nice and I still kind of wish that I did wear a kimono the one time I chose not to.

There is one disadvantage to wearing a kimono, however. The footwear that goes along with it. I don’t know if this is common knowledge, but flip-flops as most know them likely originate from American soldiers bringing back sandals known as *zori* from Japan. And *zori* are what you will be wearing if you rent a kimono. They aren’t the worst things to put on your feet, but just a single hour in them will be making you wonder how on earth people managed to walk around in them all day, hundreds of years ago. Although, in a more modern timeframe, it will also make you wonder how people in Los Angeles and Florida walk around in flip-flops all day.

Whether you’re wearing *zori* or not though, Kitsuki has plenty of history to explore. Ohara-tei is a particular favorite attraction of mine, the only one I visited all three times. Not only is the manor itself stunning, but the garden is especially nice. Looking out on it from the veranda in a kimono is probably one of the most quintessentially traditional things that you can do in Japan.





Mochi Mochi Wagashi

Wagashi (和菓子) are, to put it most literally, “Japanese confections.” As the name suggests there’s a large variety of different sweets, but when most people say “wagashi,” they usually mean a type of wagashi made of mochi, filled with anko (bean paste), and often served with tea. To open a wagashi shop in Japan, you actually need to get certified, which requires you to have years of experience making wagashi. But to make wagashi, all you need is someone willing to teach you.

There aren’t many places in Oita that offer this experience to the public, but there is one in Kitsuki, so not only do you get to make Japanese sweets, you get to do it in a kimono. Although, whether this is a plus or a minus is up to you. (Make sure not to get it dirty.) Making wagashi reminded me a lot of what you see on TV when people make pizza from scratch. The mochi was a lot like dough, and you needed to flatten it and then wrap it around a ball of anko. This honestly surprised me, because I always thought anko was more liquid-y, and was squeezed into an already-made ball of mochi, like filling a donut.

Of course, I was awful at it. There was no consistency to the mochi wrappings that I made at all, some places were too thin, some were too thick. They definitely weren’t the prettiest wagashi ever, especially compared to the ones the professional made for us as examples. But really, I don’t know what I’m doing comparing myself to someone with years of experience. All that really matters is that making them was a lot of fun, and I was able to learn more about a craft that I had never really thought of before.

For example, one other thing we were told was that wagashi actually has a very subdued flavor so that it doesn’t overpower the tea that it’s usually served with. Yet another surprise for me, because I always liked the taste of wagashi, but never really thought about why most types tasted the same. I suppose in the end, it’s because wagashi is different from American sweets. It’s not just a sweet. It adds more to the whole tea experience. The Brits might be able to relate though.

Kimono Rental:
¥3,000 per person



Wagashi Making
(Japanese Only):
¥2,000



from our Reporters 国際交流員だより



Swara Fife

Coordinator for
International
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Pancake Day Fun!

There are three things you should know about Pancake Day in the UK. First is that by pancake, we mean what most of the world call a 'crepe'. Secondly, Pancake Day is indeed a real celebration in many countries. Thirdly, Pancake Day is a Christian celebration, which occurs before the start of Lent - a time of fasting before Easter. This year, Pancake Day was on 21st February, however I celebrated two days later on the public holiday, with my American friend, who had never heard of Pancake Day before! We went to the supermarket, grabbed ingredients including a wide array of sweet toppings, and headed back to start making the batter. Using the recipe my mum had always used for Pancake Day, we whipped up some tasty stacks, and I taught my friend the proper British way of eating pancakes. First, you take your flat pancake on a plate and sprinkle white sugar on top to your preference, then, you squeeze fresh lemon juice on top, roll it up, and repeat on the top before digging in with a knife and fork - eating it like a burrito is also acceptable! After we tried the traditional way, we moved onto the other toppings - there was walnuts, caramel, maple syrup, brown sugar, cinnamon biscuits, and butter. We also had some leftover, so we had savoury pancakes for dinner, using a chicken stir-fry we whipped up the night before. It was a delicious Pancake Day!



Where the Snow Goes

The place I come from is, to put it frankly, weird. There's plenty of contradictory things about it, and one of those is the weather. It's got four seasons, really hot summers, and really cold winters. But in the middle of all that, some really weird weather phenomena have been occurring recently. It's especially bad in the winter. One day it's below freezing and tons of snow falls, and the next it's 60 °F (15 °C) outside and it all just disappears. Being that Utah proclaims to have "the Greatest Snow on Earth," you could say it's in a bit of a pickle. So when I moved to Oita, where the weather is at least a bit more stable, I was pretty happy. Happy, but at the same time, I really did miss the snow. Of course, you can see it in the mountains, but it's just not the same...was what I was thinking when I came back from Utah in January. But wouldn't you know it, just when I wanted to see it, it came. It snowed in Oita City. My first winter here, it didn't snow at all, so it really was a surreal experience. Even still, it was very exciting.

Austin Vaughn

Coordinator for
International
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