



What's up, OITA!

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

Hovercraft No. 1 Arrives!



Hovercraft No. 1 "Baien" has arrived in Oita Prefecture! A ceremony celebrating the delivery was held on September 9, followed by a public viewing on the 10th. The hovercraft has 80 passenger seats as well as space for luggage, bicycles, and wheelchairs. Three craft in total will be delivered to Oita. They will connect Oita Airport (Kunisaki City) to Nishi-Oita (Oita City). It's expected that the hovercraft service will both improve access to the airport as well as invigorate activity in Nishi-Oita.

What's Up in Oita? 国際交流員だより

◆ What Even is "Art" ...?

American CIR Austin Vaughn



I'm going to be honest, I'm not actually all that interested in seeing art in person. It's not like I hate it or anything, but when I see a piece of art, I don't really feel anything beyond, "Yeah, this is neat." That might be because to me, it feels like whether I see a piece of art in person or through my computer screen, nothing really changes. But "Art Fair Beppu 2023" was different. If I had to say why, it'd be because the artists were actually there. If a work's creator is there, not only can you hear an explanation of the piece, but also directly feel the emotions they have for their artwork. And personally, I think that's wonderful. Plus, I went with friends, so I was able to compare my thoughts about a work with theirs, listen to the creator's explanation, then see who was the closest to being right, which was pretty interesting. But what still lingers in my mind the most is when I did a "pair interpretation" with one of the fair's staff members. They translated a Korean artist's words into Japanese, which I then translated into English. Kind of surreal.





食文化創造都市
臼杵
CITY OF
GASTRONOMY

Usuki, UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy

Usuki joined the UNESCO Creative Cities Network as a Creative City of Gastronomy in November 2021. It has developed a varied food culture thanks to its brewing industry, started around the year 1600, that has continued to protect traditions while improving its miso, shoyu, and sake; as well as thanks to its hometown cooking: simple, frugal dishes born out of necessity from the minds of the people of Usuki. In recent years, in addition to this food culture cultivated by our residents, Usuki has also been working to protect the water cycle, and promote organic farming and locally produced, locally consumed products. For example, Usuki is the only city in Japan that produces a compost mainly made of grass and trees and uses that compost to create a rich soil environment, full of life. By doing so, it promotes better understanding for the importance of food with both producers and consumers. We believe that such activities in Usuki that enhance food diversity and sustainability are consistent with SDGs and will lead to the creation of a sustainable city. In the future, we plan to cement Usuki's status as a Creative City of Gastronomy by contributing to the development of its food culture via international cooperation and economic growth. This will be done by continuing to promote our current policies and increasing the brand strength of Usuki as a powerhouse in brewing, environmentally-friendly farming and fishing, and frugality.

Miso·Shoyu



Sake



Organic Farming



Hometown Cooking



More information
about Usuki, City
of Gastronomy→



Hear the latest about
events in Usuki here!→



LINE



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Usuki Takeyoï

Time: Saturday, November 4 - Sunday, November 5
Place: Around Nioza

"Usuki Takeyoï" is a ceremony that recreates the legend of Manano Chouja, who is said to have created the "Usuki Stone Buddha." About 20,000 bamboo lanterns envelop the castle town in a soothing glow, turning the townscape into a fantasy wonderland. There are also many elaborate bamboo objects and events to enjoy, such as the Hannya-hime Parade.



Anime Pilgrimage

Find Mejiron...



Austin Vaughn



Locking Up the Roundhouse

Japan is the holy land...is a sentence that might turn a few heads, but at the same time, it's true for a lot of people around the world. Those people being anime otaku. There are many "holy" places around Japan, to the point that "pilgrimages" to these places are a major part of Japanese tourism. And Oita is no exception. On this rousing episode of "What's Up, Oita!" join me and many others on our bus pilgrimage (not tour) as we explore the holy sites of *Attack on Titan*, *Suzume*, and other anime.

Our first stop was the Bungo-Mori Roundhouse. If you've ever seen *Thomas the Tank Engine*, then you probably know what a roundhouse is. They were used for servicing trains in the days of the steam locomotive, with a semi-circular shape and a turntable for directing trains into different stalls. Nowadays, most lie abandoned and unused.

"What does a choo-choo house have to do with anime?" you may ask. Okay, probably not. But still, it's more related than you might think. The roundhouse was used in not one, but two different anime. The first being as the setting for the music video for "Happy Party Train," the third single of the main band of *Love Live! Sunshine!!*

In the music video, the roundhouse is returned to its former glory, which we were able to watch on the bus as we made our way to the roundhouse. Of course, the Bungo-Mori roundhouse is now derelict. However, it is not abandoned. Thanks to the efforts of Kusu-machi, the entire area has been turned into a heritage site, complete with a decommissioned locomotive, a rideable tiny train, a building housing miniature train models, and a museum. And also, a door to nowhere.

Why a door to nowhere? That would have to be because of the second anime that used the roundhouse as a setting, Makoto Shinkai's *Suzume*. Unlike *Love Live!*, this appearance had nothing to do with trains. In the film is an abandoned hot spring town, with a building that has a strange circular appearance, the ground covered in water, and a door in the middle of it. The locations at the beginning of *Suzume* are based on Oita and Miyazaki, so it's thought that this building is also based on Bungo-Mori Roundhouse, as it is the only building of its kind remaining in Kyushu. With this much history, the roundhouse is worth the pilgrimage.

Also, there's a giant koi fish flag you can walk inside for some reason. Definitely a plus.



Anime Pilgrimage

...before they find you!



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Advancing Hita

After our journey to Bungo-Mori Roundhouse came a pilgrimage for one of Oita's homegrown anime, *Attack on Titan*. It may be surprising to know that the author of one of the biggest anime phenomena in recent years is from little mountain town Hita. But not only that, the reason *Attack on Titan* even exists might be **because** of Hita.

Hita is surrounded on all sides by mountains. As a young boy, Hajime Isayama, the author of *Attack on Titan*, may have wondered about the world outside those towering peaks. Thoughts such as those must have led to him thinking of the famous walls of *Attack on Titan*, and the protagonist who wanted to go beyond them.

However, after leaving those tall barriers, both the protagonist and Isayama never forgot where they came from. Case in point, the sheer amount of *Attack on Titan* related objects and locations in Hita. Our first stop was the Attack on Titan Café for lunch. There what awaited us was a group of Titan...bentos. The bentos were filled with foods from the anime, like Sasha's famous stolen potatoes. There were also famous foods from Hita itself, like Hita yakisoba and karaage chicken.

After getting our fill, we made a brief stop at Hita Station, which is host to a statue of everyone's favorite little captain, Levi Ackerman. There I also used the "Attack on Hita" app to take an AR picture of a Titan smushing the HITA sign (where you're the "I"). It's a good bit of fun to see Titans in the real world.

Speaking of anime in the real world, after the station came Oyama Dam, which has a statue recreating the famous scene of the three main characters of *Attack on Titan* looking up to see a giant imposing ~~Mejiron~~ Titan. Not only is the statue expertly crafted, the dam and river are also absolutely stunning.

The end of our pilgrimage brought us to the Attack on Titan Museum, a celebration of all things *Shingeki no Kyojin*. There were original manuscripts of manga pages, statues of Titans, and two desks used by Isayama in two different eras of his writing. The odd thing about the museum though, is that it's adjacent to a farmer's market. Terrifying Titans and delicious fruit aren't exactly two things you think would go together. But in the holy land, anything is possible.

