

# What's Up, OITA!

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

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

The Global Hot Springs Summit will be held in Oita in late May next year. Representatives from hot springs all over the country and the world will gather in Oita and passionate discussion surrounding tourism, health and beauty, energy, and other uses for hot springs will take place. From here on out, I would like to take in information and enjoyment from hot springs all over the world, even in "What's Up, OITA!" I eagerly await information from all of you.



## The 19th Beppu Argerich Music Festival

*A superstar of the classical music world! The music festival of the world's foremost pianist, Martha Argerich, took place between May 6th and 26th.*

Patrons welcomed conductor Seiji Ozawa and experienced an fine performance unrivaled in history from the world's top artists in Oita. Furthermore, at the Marathon Concert, revived after a five year absence, there was a solo piano performance from Argerich alongside recitation and imagery. This caliber of music festival means delivering outstanding content.

International TV channels picked it up as well, and Oita Prefecture and the Beppu Argerich Music Festival were transmitted both domestically and abroad. The music festival and Oita Prefecture's PR video, "Oita Peace Symphony," was viewed 1.7 million times in one month, with views coming primarily from Western countries. There were 75,000 follows overnight after the Ministry of Foreign Affairs tweeted the state of the conferment ceremony for Argerich at the Oita performance of the music festival. Once again, we are grateful to be able to feel Argerich's renewed popularity as well as the charms of Oita being relayed to the rest of the world.

Be on the lookout for events from the Shiiki Argerich House starting in September.

【Art, Culture and Sports Promotion Division】



## *Himeshima: Princess & Prawns*

Tucked away off the coast of the Kunisaki Peninsula lies the island of Himeshima. Having grown up in a landlocked area, there is something very magical about tiny islands lying off the coasts of places to me, so I had to go and find out more.

The weather was beautiful on the day I arrived, with a few cirrus clouds painted across the sky. I stood between the sea and a small, charming town lined with shops and restaurants. Before I explored these venues, I headed off to the Himeshima Village Office and spoke to Ms. Kei Kishimoto, a staff member of the Fisheries and Tourism Commerce Division, and Mr. Yasukuni Kojima, the director of the division.

Himeshima's biggest months for tourists are May, August, and October. Chestnut tiger butterflies fly to the island in large numbers in May for a brief stay before heading north and return to the island in October before heading south. There is also a festival dedicated to righteye flounders in May as well as a tiger shrimp festival in October.



But the biggest month for tourism is August. Himeshima is a popular sightseeing spot during the three days of obon. Although there are several dances performed that derive from Buddhist prayer dances traced back to the Kamakura period, the kitsune-odori where children dance dressed as foxes is especially popular.

## History Lesson

According to *Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters), when the deities Izanagi-no-mikoto, and Izanami-no-mikoto begat the many islands of Japan, they produced large islands first and then Himejima. Himejima is now known as Himeshima but was also once known as "Ame no Hitotsune." During Emperor Suinin's reign, the prince of Ohokara-no-Kuni (modern day southern South Korea), Tsunugaarashito, tried to marry a princess who was born from a white rock. But the princess escaped. She crossed the ocean, reached land, and became known as the goddess of Himekoso.

This princess not only gave the island its name, but she also gave it seven wonders, or fushigi, each connected to her history on the island. These seven fushigi can be viewed at different spots around the island. The most famous of these fushigi is "Sennindou," or the temple of a thousand men. The temple took this name as it was able to shelter a thousand virtuous people who were being pursued by debt collectors on New Year's Eve.

Himeshima does not receive a lot of foreign tourists and does not have brochures available in foreign languages. The number of English speakers on the island is small, but the number of foreign visitors is increasing every year.



After gaining this insight about Himeshima, I decided it was time to learn by doing. Or, at least, learn by eating. My first stop was a charming restaurant only a few minutes' walk from the village office. The restaurant I visited offered several different ways to eat tiger shrimp, and I chose to have it fried. The legendary shrimp did not disappoint!

Once my stomach was full, I headed off to one of the souvenir shops and rented a bicycle to take a trek around the island. My journey began with a trip down the Himeshima Blue Line.

The Himeshima Blue Line is a road that runs alongside the Suonada Sea. There's a lovely beach along the Blue Line, and I couldn't resist parking my bike and going for a stroll in the sand. The beach was nearly empty on a Monday afternoon, so I was able to revel at the scenery in tranquility.

When I got back on my bike, the ocean was to my right, but to my left stood mountains covered in greenery. There were times I wasn't sure which way to look because I couldn't decide which view was prettier.



*Just a chestnut tiger butterfly stopping by...*

Once I said goodbye to the Blue Line, I rode (and at times walked) my bike uphill to the viewing spot for the chestnut tiger butterflies. The viewing spot had more gorgeous views of the island and its surrounding waters, but the weather (though pretty) was too windy to attract a large number of butterflies. Although the numbers weren't large, I still saw at least three in the short amount of time I was there.

### Editor's Note

I already have the feeling that my umbrella collection will increase again this rainy season. Wherever you are in the world, remember to stay dry!



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