

W h a t ' s U p , O I T A !

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

On November 2nd, the schedule for the 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan was determined. There will be five matches held in Oita in October 2019, including two quarterfinal matches. These matches are sure to receive ample international attention. Preparation will continue from here on out at full tilt, and we plan to promote Oita so that the many visitors who will come from abroad to watch the matches can travel all around the prefecture. Furthermore, I would like to work in cooperation with relevant organizations in Oita in regards to introducing the culture, food, and more of the country and region hosting the match.

The Rugby World Cup Schedule Has Been Determined!

On November 2nd, the schedule for the 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan was determined. A total of five matches will be held in Oita, including three pool phase matches and two quarterfinal matches. New Zealand (the world's #1 team), Australia (#3), Wales (#7), and Fiji (#9) will all play in Oita.



【Preliminary Pool】

Oct. 2 nd , 2019 (Wed.)	7:15 PM ~	Pool B	New Zealand	VS.	Repechage Winner
Oct. 5 th , 2019 (Sat.)	2:15 PM ~	Pool D	Australia	VS.	Americas 2
Oct. 9 th , 2019 (Thurs.)	6:45 PM ~	Pool D	Wales	VS.	Fiji

【Knock Out Phase】

Oct. 19 th , 2019 (Sat.)	4:15 PM ~	Quarterfinal	Winner Pool C	VS.	Runner Up Pool D
Oct. 20 th , 2019 (Sun.)	4:15 PM ~	Quarterfinal	Winner Pool D	VS.	Runner Up Pool C

On November 10th, there was a publicity event for the Rugby World Cup in Japan in London, England. Several employees from Oita Prefecture, including members of the Planning Promotion Department, participated and promoted the tourism opportunities and attractions of the prefecture, focusing primarily on hot springs, and appealed directly to how the prefecture will be hosting several matches.

Kiora Cottage, a Jaunt into a Different World

From the moment I heard about Kiora Cottage, a shop and café selling items produced by foreigners living in Japan, I knew I had to visit. How could I resist when it was located right here in Oita Prefecture?

The store itself opened on November 2nd, but my first opportunity to visit didn't come until a week later.

On November 9th, I got off the local train at Nishi Yashiki Station for the first time. As far as Oita Prefecture goes, the area surrounding Nishi Yashiki (located in Kitsuki but technically closer Usa's city center) is quite "inaka." But that's the charm of it.

If you wander around towards the backside of the station, there's a series of paths that intertwine with nature and connect you all the way to the cottage. It's only a fifteen minute walk, but it really did take the city away from my mind and put me in a better mood.

The ambience of Kiora Cottage begins with the goats, Max and Mocha. Their cuteness aside (and they are quite cute), they are located on the short but winding path from the road to the shop, and it is their presence that begins the transformation. The transformation in question is the feeling of having left the present for a different, cozier corner of the universe.

This coziness is not a coincidence.

Kiora Cottage, before it was a shop and café, was used as a guesthouse. What's more, the building for this guesthouse was not rented or purchased but built from the ground up with Joanne Tomooka's ideas in mind.



JR Nishiyashiki Station



The path to Kiora Cottage



Max



Kiora Cottage

Joanne Tomooka is the owner of Kiora Cottage. She is what makes Kiora Cottage feel, indescribably, like a home—like the sort of place you want to go when you intend to stay awhile.

Joanne first made Oita her home a little over two decades ago, when she was stationed in Yamaga as an ALT on the Jet Programme in 1996. (Yamaga was formerly a part of the Hayami District, alongside Hiji, but has been a part of Kitsuki City since 2005.)

In those days, she taught at six different elementary schools and three junior high schools. She continued to work at private schools in the area after leaving the JET Programme, but eventually the time came for a change. There are many foreigners who work in Japan in the field of education or translation, but Joanne wanted to expand her horizons beyond these traditional career paths.

The move away from teaching began with green tourism. What is now Kiora Cottage once hosted guests, sometimes family members, other times exchange students, in cozy accommodations. Green tourism eventually led to baking and putting the resulting baked goods, primarily cookies, in local michi-no-eki.

Eventually, Joanne decided to remove the middleman and sell her own goods through her own shop. But, similarly to michi-no-eki, the goods on display at Kiora Cottage are not just the products of one person. She sells goods crafted by other foreigners living in Japan as well.

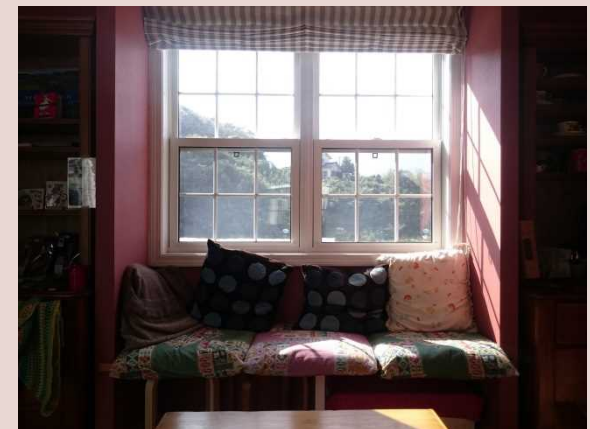
The process of finding new contributors for the shop is a careful one. For one thing, maintaining quality is important. For another, contributors have to change their sales mindset. Many contributors are used to selling their wares to foreigners interested in having products that are made in Japan and produced by Japanese materials. Naturally, this doesn't have the same appeal to Japanese audiences as it does abroad, so products can require some rebranding. Instead of emphasizing the Japanese aspects of a product, the foreign aspects must be emphasized instead.

Finally, Joanne has to be careful with the balance between foreign and Japanese.

The shop does sell some goods, namely tea, seeds, and coffee, that are produced by Japanese people living in the Kitsuki area. However, the main focus of the shop has to be goods produced by foreigners. Otherwise, it wouldn't be too terribly different from other shops, and having a space that feels un-Japanese is a critical part of the experience.



Joanne Tomooka



Take the woodwork that fills the cottage. It's New Zealand wood in its entirety and was constructed by a relative of Joanne's. All of the cookies and seasonal foods are homemade and use ingredients from her personal garden. (And, quite frankly, they are delicious enough to die for.) Images of the pukeko bird fill the shop. (Although many associate New Zealand with the kiwi bird, the pukeko is Joanne's favorite and likewise receives more of the spotlight.) The menu is replete with items that use ingredients native to New Zealand, like the feijoa fruit.

I had never tasted a feijoa before, and the taste, as Joanne warned me it would be, was indescribable. Delicious, refreshing, and I still can't quite put my finger on something similar.

This experience of going to the shop is just as important as the goods themselves.

"Thank you for opening this shop," is a common sentiment among those who visit. There isn't much in Nishi Yashiki, and people are looking for places to stop by as they travel across Oita.

I couldn't help but have the same sentiment as I left. I've never been quite any place like it before, and I was already filled with the urge to come back.

Joanne's words, to me, and to everyone else, are, "You're welcome anytime."

Kiora Cottage is open Thursday – Sunday or by appointment. Please check the website for further details. The shop is also available for rental for things like workshop, crafts, etc. Please inquire for further details.

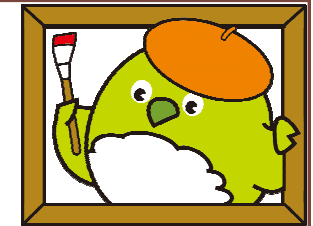
Website:

<https://www.kiora-cottage.com/>

The multi-talented artist of 20th century Isamu Noguchi –from sculpture to body and garden–

On November 17th, the Oita Prefectural Art Museum (OPAM) held an opening ceremony and private viewing of their newest exhibition regarding Isamu Noguchi, a renowned biracial Japanese-American artist. I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to attend this viewing. OPAM's exhibition marks the very first Noguchi centric exhibition in all of Kyushu and the most recent Noguchi exhibition in the past decade.

Noguchi's work was broad, and the exhibition was suitably extensive. It was fascinating to see the many different mediums and fields he worked in, from sketches of stage sets to designs for parks and gardens to sculpture to paper lanterns. Interesting biographical excerpts about Noguchi punctuated the pieces the exhibition collected and rounded out the experience well. Furthermore, the exhibition's chronological arrangement made it easy to see his progress as he transformed from a young man to a seasoned artist.



*The multi-talented artist of 20th century
Isamu Noguchi –from sculpture to body
and garden–
will be on display at the Oita Prefectural Art
Museum until January 21st, 2018.*

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Editor's Note

The year is coming to a close! 2017 has had plenty of ups and downs, but I think it will end on a good note. Hopefully, 2018 will bring nothing but good things.