

# 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

2017 was a year when relations between Oita Prefecture and other countries advanced even further. Many ambassadors from areas all around the world as well as the Parliamentarian's Union came to Oita Prefecture. There were also official visits from the prefecture to Asia, Europe, America, and other locations that further deepened relations. By expanding our circle of relationships deeper and wider while using the international relations we've had so far as a base, I would like to connect these relations to the creation of an Oita that is full of vitality. We anticipate international events both within and outside of the prefecture in 2018, including the International ONSSEN Summit and the 65th anniversary of the Brazil-Oita Prefectural Association. Moving forward, I would like to continue to present these events in "What's Up, OITA!" I look forward to your continued support this year.



**Hirose Yuhiro**  
Director General of the  
Planning Promotion  
Department

## **New Year's Greetings to Everyone Overseas Involved With Oita Prefecture**

Happy new year.

There were torrential rains across northern Kyushu last July, and areas throughout the prefecture suffered a great deal of damage in September due to Typhoon No. 18. We received support from everyone, and the prefecture is putting all of our effort towards restoration and revitalization. I would like to take this opportunity to offer my gratitude for everyone's material and moral support.

Amidst this, the Oita Prefectural Art Museum recorded an all-time high for exhibition visitors during the "Ghibli Expo -From Nausicaä to Marnie-" special exhibition. There was other good news as well, such as 451 people moving to Oita Prefecture during the first half of the year, a 36% increase in comparison to the previous year.

In particular, the most noteworthy event was undoubtedly the publication of the match schedule for the Rugby World Cup. It has been decided that Oita will host several good matches, including matches in the knockout phase. In addition to eagerly awaiting the world champion country to play in Oita, we are continuing with full scale preparations so that <Continued on the next page>



all of the athletes can play to their best abilities and those who attend the matches can experience the charms of Oita Prefecture.

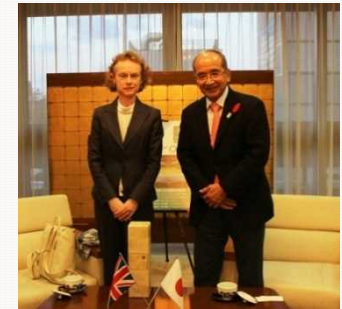
Furthermore, the prefecture will host the “International ONSEN Summit,” where representatives from the world’s leading renowned ONSEN will gather, in May and the “National Cultural Festival” and the “Art and Culture Festival for Persons with Disabilities” in October. This year will be packed with big events, so the prefecture is proceeding with preparations and carefully disseminating information about Oita Prefecture to everyone abroad.

For the sake of progress in our native Oita, we ask for all of you to continue providing us with your assistance.

In conclusion, I hope that all of you will find this to be a wonderful year, and I pray for your continued health and vitality.

### **British Consul-General Visits Oita**

On December 6<sup>th</sup>, British Consul-General Sarah Wooten visited the prefecture and made a courtesy call to the governor. Before meeting with the governor, Consul-General Wooten first visited Oita Bank Stadium, which will be a venue for matches during the 2019 Rugby World Cup. Consul-General Wooten remarked to Governor Hirose, “With this outstanding stadium, I see that everyone in Oita Prefecture is diligently gearing up for the Rugby World Cup. Even if many foreigners visit, Oita will be able to accommodate them.” Afterwards, she exchanged opinions with the governor in regards to the prefectural economy and other topics.



### **Overseas Oita Prefectural Association Relations Bulletin Board**

Los Angeles Oita Prefectural Association Chairman Yuji Kaida has reported the end-of-year events for his prefectural association to us!

On Friday, December 15<sup>th</sup>, an end-of-year karaoke party for the Prefectural Association of Southern California was held from 6 to 10 pm in the karaoke room of Bridge USA in Torrance, Los Angeles County. Attendees included Masako Posselius, Vice Director General of Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University,

Eugene Wanyama, a staff member from the university, and Principal Yanai of Iwata Middle School and High School, who had all just arrived the previous day for a two day joint seminar. It was an incredibly lively four hours.

Still more, three participants received Fighting Spirit Prizes in the form of gift certificates to local supermarkets.

## *Follow the Maple Leaf Road*

There's nothing better than an adventure in nature.

That thought was what brought me to Nakatsu to experience their Maple Yaba Cycling Road. The trail stretches from Nakatsu Station all the way to the former site of Morizane Onsen Station (near the Core Yamakuni building), and is split up into nine sites. According to the estimates on the Maple Yaba Cycling Road pamphlet, it takes about three hours and forty minutes to traverse all thirty-six kilometers of the trail.

I was not brave enough to attempt all thirty-six kilometers, so I started from the fourth site listed on the pamphlet, Ao no Doumon, which had rental cycle facilities. The Maple Yaba Cycling Road stretches from Nakatsu Station down to Core Yamakuni, but only about half of that road has a dedicated bike lane. (The dedicated bike lane begins shortly after Ao no Doumon.)

Unfortunately, the cycling road was currently under construction at several points, and I rode alongside cars for a lot longer than I thought I would. However, the view along my journey was spectacular, and the path was easy to follow.

I look forward to trying the Cycling Road again once construction is finished.



*When in doubt, follow the maple leaves! (Or follow the beautiful scenery.)*



## Views from Ao no Doumon

**Fun fact:** Buddhist priest Zenkai (statue depiction in the bottom middle row) dug the tunnel photographed in the top row by hand.



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## Editor's Note

2017 was an interesting year, amongst many other things. I hope 2018 will be kind and filled with exciting possibilities for all of us. I would like to thank everyone for their readership in 2017, and I look forward to editing more of "What's Up, OITA!" in 2018.