

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 International ONSEN Summit took place, and lively presentations and discussions took place between both Japanese and foreign participants. Based on the Summit's Declaration, we hope to see the world's ONSEN locations promoting various uses for ONSEN and improving cooperation between other ONSEN locations. We are now a year and a half away from the Rugby World Cup, and training camps for five different countries will be located in Oita and Beppu City. From here on out, tourism promotion and other preparations will pick up speed. Other activities for international relations will increase, and I hope that What's Up, OITA will promote relations with people from even more countries.

Overseas Oita Prefectural Association Bulletin Board



The Los Angeles Oita Prefectural Association's Chairman, Yuji Kaida, reports a joint event with nine prefectural associations.

A joint event that increased by nine prefectures this year took place on May 20th. 165 participants came to a 9 prefecture joint picnic hosted in Wilson Park in the city of Torrance. 16 participants from Oita Prefecture attended and enjoyed barbecue, games, and more.

A Celebration for Cameroon's National Day Took Place in the Village of Nakatsue

May 20th is the National Day (Independence Day) for the Republic of Cameroon. Every year, the Cameroonian ambassador to Japan hosts a celebration in Japan, but this year marked the first time the celebration was held at Taisei Sports Center in the village of Nakatsue in Hita City. From Cameroon, His Excellency Dr. Pierre NDZENGUE, the ambassador to Japan, visited Hita City as the event sponsor and took part in a ceremonial tree planting ahead of the ceremony where he planted a tree next to the image of an indomitable lion.

Guests, including Chairman Yokoyama of the Oita-Cameroon Friendship Association, as well as many Hita residents were in attendance of this very lavish event. Attendees were treated to Cameroonian food, including beef ndole and fried plantains. Stage events included a flower bouquet presentation and a song from Nakatsuemura Elementary School, and attractions like chainsaw art decorated the event.



B a m b o o i n B e p p u

When I think of things Beppu is famous for, hot springs comes to mind first. But aside from hot springs, Beppu is also famous for its bamboo handicrafts. To find out more about bamboo handicrafts in Beppu, we went to the Beppu City Traditional Bamboo Crafts Center to investigate further.

We began our visit by taking a look around the museum. (Unfortunately, the museum does not allow photography in most areas.) There were displays of all kinds of bamboo, tools used for weaving bamboo, and many different products made from bamboo in the past. There were also displays from different living bamboo craftspeople as well. There is also a computer kiosk that lets you see crafts that are currently not being displayed. I imagine this means they must change their exhibitions frequently, so you could see different crafts on display if you visited a second or third time.

Aside from seeing bamboo, we also got to learn more about the history of bamboo craft in Beppu. Bamboo craft in Beppu dates back to the 12th century. Beppu has been a popular hot springs destination since the Edo Period, and, during this time period, the bamboo craft market expanded.

All of the exhibition information is available in both Japanese and English, so this is a perfect tourist destination for anyone who wants to learn more about history and craftsmanship without Japanese language knowledge.

After we explored the museum, we went upstairs to make our own bamboo handicrafts.

It was during the handicraft workshop that I began to understand how difficult it is to weave bamboo. I can't imagine how they do it without a third hand. You need precision to fold the bamboo properly and have to pay special mind to the direction of your folds.

But our hard work paid off in the end, and we went home with very pretty bamboo shikainami baskets.



Bamboo palanquin



A new onsite café complete with artisanal mugs



Entrance to the Beppu City Traditional Bamboo Crafts Center is ¥300. The shikainami basket weaving experience costs ¥1,000 and requires prior reservation.

The International ONSEN Summit Took Place!!

Leaders and researchers from ONSEN locations around the world met in one place to discuss possibilities regarding regional development through ONSEN application at the "International ONSEN Summit" held from May 25th to the 27th at B-Con Plaza in Beppu City.

On the 25th, the leaders of ONSEN municipalities in Japan participated in the Third National ONSEN Summit, hosted by the Ministry of the Environment. Upon its conclusion, there was a joint reception for the International ONSEN Summit and the National ONSEN Summit. Around 300 people participated from Japan and abroad, and they were able to enjoy Oita's fruits of the sea and land as well as alcohol.

The 26th marked the main day, and around 1,000 participants, including ONSEN location leaders from 16 different countries and 17 regions as well as representatives and researchers from Japanese ONSEN locations, took part in the main conference for the International ONSEN Summit held that day. Yolanda Perdomo, Director of the World Tourism Organization Affiliate Members Programme, began the event with a keynote speech, and case study presentations from ONSEN location representatives followed.

In the afternoon, participants split into "Tourism," "Medical Care, Health, and Beauty," and "Energy" workshops and delved deeper into those topics. At the conclusion of the main conference, participants adopted the "Declaration for the International ONSEN Summit."

On the 27th, there was an excursion for domestic and foreign participants where they inspected local resources in Oita that use ONSEN.

Additionally, international students studying at universities within the prefecture helped interpret for foreign participants all throughout the Summit.

Moreover, both domestic and foreign media reported on the discussions at the Summit and tourism resources within the prefecture. It was the perfect opportunity to promote Oita across the globe in preparation for the Rugby World Cup next year and the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games.

We hope that ONSEN locations both inside and outside of Japan, including our prefecture, make use of the networks and application case studies they gained at this Summit and continue to strive for development of ONSEN locations.

[Tourism Promotion and Regional Development Division]



Reception



Medical Care, Health, and Beauty Workshop



ONSEN Gastronomy Walking Tour Excursion

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The rainy season is here, and staying dry is hard. I look forward to visiting some of Oita's indoor attractions.