



WHAT'S UP, OITA!

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

COME, ALIENS! WELCOME TO THE ONSEN CAPITAL OF THE UNIVERSE!

Did you think Oita was just for hot springs? Right now, things are happening that will change the way you think about Oita. On a *cosmic* scale.



↑ A candid shot of "Alien U" enjoying an onsen

It all started with just one video. An alien, enjoying a hot spring at a certain hotel in Beppu. It had to be seen to be believed. "Alien U," so called because of its human-like love of hot water (お湯 *o-yu*), has since been captured on video at several other famous spots around Oita. You can find these videos on YouTube, but it appears that Alien U itself has also caught the social media bug and has been enjoying Instagramming its own journey throughout the prefecture.

Official Website →

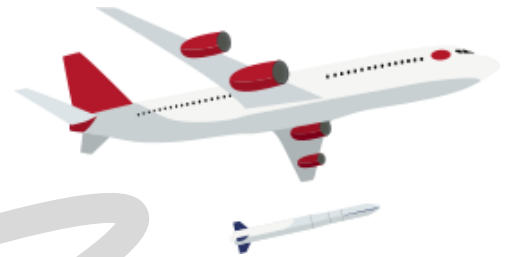


The Catalysis was Oita Airport's Conversion into Asia's First Horizontal "Spaceport"

These events are just a small part of "Oita, the Onsen Capital of the Universe," a new promotional event started to capitalize on Oita Airport's new use as a "spaceport."

A "spaceport," as the name suggests, is a "port" for launching people and artificial satellites into space. In 2020, Oita formed a partnership with Virgin Orbit and are hoping to use "Spaceport Oita" as a "horizontal spaceport" to *horizontally* launch rockets carrying artificial satellites from airplanes while they are in the air.

In addition to the previously mentioned PR videos and social media posts, an "Alien Discount" and space-themed pictograms have also been set up at various hotels and onsen resorts located throughout the prefecture. You can receive the "Alien Discount" by admitting of your own volition that you are an alien, which comes with perks such as a discount on room costs. This program is planned to last until the end of February.



A rocket carrying an artificial satellite (illustration)



Oita Airport, set to become a horizontal spaceport

"Oita, Onsen Capital of the Universe" is a declaration that Oita will evolve into an "onsen capital" that can be beloved by the entire cosmos. Oita will work to be a bastion of hospitality and improve its skills related to onsen, gourmet food culture, and all other kinds of sightseeing activities. All so that it may better welcome our visitors from beyond the stars, as well as visitors from other parts of our own planet.



宇宙ノオンセン県
オオイト
Earthican logo



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おひのふゆ
Alienese logo



Hita City: Tourism Select!

Although last year was a year influenced by the spread of COVID-19, we hope to introduce Hita City to many people through advertising and communications campaigns in order to encourage tourism to the city. We hope that this will be the year that the COVID-19 pandemic ends so that people can holiday in Hita City without worries or concerns.

Hita City

Hita City is situated in the centre of Northern Kyushu, and is surrounded by picturesque scenic beauty, including rivers and greenery. From ancient times, it has been blessed with rich and abundant waters, and has therefore become known as 'Suikyo Hita', which roughly translates to 'Hita, the waterscape of scenic beauty'. Situated at the source of the Chikugo River in a basin, the city is surrounded in all directions by mountains. Sitting on a pleasure boat and enjoying the elegant form of *ukai* (cormorant fishing, a traditional fishing technique where fisherman use cormorant birds to catch fish) is a scene that offers a taste of the quintessence of summer in Hita.

Hita has rich and plentiful hot springs, including 'Amagase Onsen', one of Oita's 'top three onsen', established around 1,300 years ago, as well as 'Hita Onsen', known as an onsen for fertility. Hita City is known for having one of Kyushu's three most beautiful forests. Its core industry is a thriving forestry industry, and *geta* (wooden sandals) and furniture made from Hita cedar are well-known throughout Japan.

In addition to beautiful nature such as mountains and rivers, Hita City boasts a rich 300-year-long history of traditional art forms passed down from generation to generation, including 'Onta Ware', a form of traditional folk pottery, and traditional cuisine in abundance. These include dishes using freshwater fish such as trout, sweetfish, and even eel, as well as Hita *yakisoba* and locally-brewed *sake*.



The 39th Tenryo-Hita Hinamatsuri (Doll Festival)

In *Tenryo-Hita* lied the headquarters for the *Saigokusuji Gundai*, one of the Edo shogunate's four major regional administrators (*Tenryo* meaning land directly ruled by the shogunate). It is said to have been the most prosperous domain in all of Kyushu.

Wealthy merchants that made their living as financial agents for the *daimyo* of the Edo era were very active in Hita and the town had a rich *chonin* (townspeople) culture. Thus even today, in homes from Hita's past, you can still find luxurious *hina* dolls and furniture, purchased from cities such as Kyoto and Osaka. During *Hinamatsuri*, these *hina* dolls and furniture will all be on display at old homes and museums located in Mameda Town and Kuma Town in Hita City.

When: Tuesday 15th February 2022 ~ Thursday 31st March 2022

Where: Museums Mameda Town & Kuma Town, Hita City, Oita Prefecture

Contact information: Hita City Tourism Association: 0973-22-2036



Hita City Tourism Division Social Media

Hita City Tourism Division Social Media
Follow Hita City on social media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter) for sightseeing info and scenic pictures!



Kannawa Bonanza!



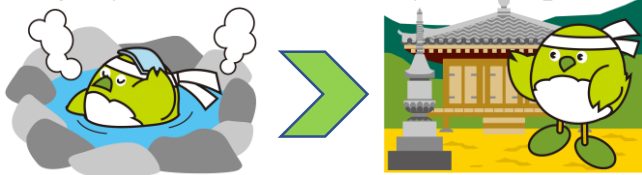
Swara Fife



For this month's edition of What's Up, Oita!, I went to Kannawa in Beppu and had a ball – quite literally – with my Korean co-worker, Noh (see said ball pictured below). Together, we customised our very own balls using takezaiku (竹細工), a bamboo weaving technique first developed in the Muromachi Period (1333-1573). In Beppu, this technique adopts a unique twist: the bamboo is heated using the steam from the natural hot springs Beppu is oh so famous for in order to make The strips pliable for weaving. We unfortunately were not afforded the opportunity to heat the strips this way, however we were taught the ways of Muromachi weaving by an instructor at Kannawa's 'Enma'.



With colourful bamboo strips in one hand and a pre-made skeleton of a bamboo ball in the other, I embarked on a prolonged bout of concentrated creativity I did not realise I had the capacity for. While Noh chatted amicably with the instructor, I journeyed deeper into a state of zen, allowing my mind to weave its way deeper into the creative energy I was generating, grasping at the colourful strands with both my fingertips and my mind's eye. Despite the pliability of the bamboo, this technique is still one that requires practice to master, as was clear by the nubs of snapped bamboo surrounding me upon completion of my takezaiku piece. The simplicity of takezaiku combined with the creative potential this activity promises to release in you makes it perfect for all ages – plus, you can satisfy the hunger you will undoubtedly work up with Enma's jigokumushi (地獄蒸し) experience.



After steaming colourful platters of local specialties whilst soaking the tension away in Enma's foot baths (足湯), we snaked our way through the winding streets of Kannawa all the way up to the home of a slithery local legend. As my head bobbed along to the tones of the castle caretaker's thick Oita dialect, I took in both the panoramic views of Beppu, hot spring steam billowing languidly, expanding, fading, then disappearing over the mountain tops.



Kannawa Bonanza!



Originally a Japanese Inn (旅館) whose eccentric owner had a soft spot for snakes, we learnt, that this structure had now become a 'castle' open to tourists, with shrine-like prayer spots on each level, supposedly dedicated to the deified resident snakes. After approaching the prayer spot on the ground floor just outside the castle, I clapped once, maybe twice, looking up at two coiled forms as I bowed clumsily, unsure of the etiquette for this castle-come-inn-come-museum.

Its uniqueness struck me further as we entered; another prayer spot encircled by tatami mats, which were further encircled by European antiques, framed currency, and Japanese Edo-period art, all cross-crossed in a mesmerising pattern made by the shadows of wooden beams supporting the ceiling.



If one were to choose an angle within this room to look at with tunnel vision, one would undoubtedly reach a different conclusion each time about where in the world this place was, and what in the world it was too: Japanese castle? European country lodge? Local snake shrine? Traditional sake store? Take your pick and enjoy the eclectic energy to be found and enjoyed at this Kannawa landmark.

Enma

1) Takezaiku (竹細工) experience
Cost: ¥1,100 per person
Time: 30 minutes ~ 1 hour
Bookings: phone 0977-75-9592, or
book via online form
(QR code #1)

2) Jigoku Mushi (地獄蒸し)
experience
Cost: Dependent on order (QR
code #2)

Opening hours: 10:00-22:00

Kifune Castle

Entry fee: ¥300/adult
¥150/child
Opening hours: 8:00-17:00
Contact information:
0977-66-1181



QR
Code #1



QR
Code #2



HIDEAKI ANNO EXHIBITION



Austin Vaughn



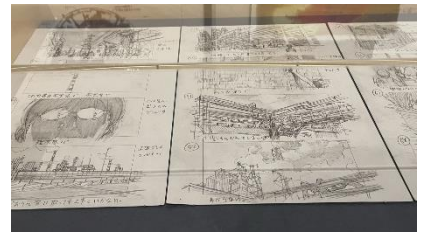
Hideaki Anno is probably best known as the director of hits such as *Nadia: The Secret of Blue Water*, *Shin Godzilla*, and of course, *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. But what brought him to make those works? What were the processes he and his teams took to bring those projects to life? With the *Rebuild of Evangelion* over and his clout and experience in the film and anime industries, what are his plans from here on out? The Hideaki Anno Exhibition at the Oita Prefectural Art Museum explores these three areas in detail—what made *him*, what *he* made, and what he *will* make—in an attempt to show not only the man behind the curtain, but also what was, and will be, worked on behind that curtain.

WHAT MADE HIDEAKI ANNO?

When you walk into the exhibit proper, what you are greeted with is a large room filled with memorabilia of movies, television shows, manga, and other productions from Anno's childhood and adolescence. An audio guide (Japanese only), completely new for this iteration of the exhibition, tells of works such as *Ultraman*, *Kamen Rider*, *Kaiju* films, and *Gundam* and how they influenced Anno. However, the most breath-taking part of this section of the exhibit would have to be the large LED panel that shows clips from dozens of shows and films all at the same time. From *Gundam* to *Godzilla* to even *Tom and Jerry*, I'm positive that everyone will find at least one work that they loved as a child and helped make them who they are today that also influenced Anno and helped make him who he is today. And of course, they also serve as a hint for what is to come later.



WHAT DID HIDEAKI ANNO MAKE?



Before you even enter the exhibit, you will come across a huge scale-model town. This town is from *Evangelion: 3.0+1.0 Thrice Upon a Time*. But it's not that the model is a replica based on the town from the movie. It's the other way around. The town in the movie is based on the model. Later in the exhibit proper, you can see how Anno and his team took hundreds, if not thousands, of photographs of the town to get the right angles for animating it and making it feel like a true town in the movie. This attention to detail is a trademark of Anno, and this is just one of the examples of it throughout the entire exhibit. Throughout the rest of this section of the exhibit, you can see storyboards filled with notes, design pages and drafts, concept art, and so much else that went into the production of every work that Anno worked on. They don't just show Anno's attention to detail, but also the dedication of him and other members of the works' staffs to making the best productions they could. But the exhibit does not shy away from the darker sides of what was occurring while Anno was making these works. Panels throughout the exhibit also tell of Anno's struggle with budget issues, strict deadlines, and other troubles that occurred during production.

WHAT WILL HIDEAKI ANNO MAKE?



“Even when we're gone, I want anime and tokusatsu to live on.” Hideaki Anno has already made his mark on both the anime and tokusatsu industries with his work on *Evangelion* and *Shin Godzilla*, but he still wants to do more. To that effect, he has established the non-profit “Anime Tokusatsu Archive Centre” which hopes to preserve and expand those industries for years to come. The final section of the exhibit displays some of the projects of this mission, such as *Shin Ultraman* and *Shin Kamen Rider*. These two properties are deeply ingrained in Japanese culture, and in the same way they influenced Anno as a young boy, he hopes to leave his influence with these reboots to inspire future generations.

General Admission: ¥1,500
Student (Junior High/High School): ¥1,000
Student (Elementary School): ¥800
Three years old or above: ¥400
(Children below the age of three are free)

Oita Prefectural Arts Museum (OPAM)
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Phone: 097-533-4500 Web: <https://www.opam.jp>