



What's up, OITA!

Bringing the latest from Oita, Japan to people around the globe!

The Curtains are Up: Culture City of East Asia, 2022, Oita!

The opening ceremony for the Culture City of East Asia, 2022, Oita was held in Beppu City, Oita Prefecture, on Sunday 22nd May 2022. The Culture City of East Asia Project runs over the course of one year, with inter-city exchange, including various cultural and arts-related events, taking place. Cities that are aiming at cultural and artistic development were chosen from each of the three participating countries - Japan, China, and South Korea. This year, Oita City was selected as Japan's host city, participating in various cultural exchange endeavours alongside China's Wenzhou City and Jinan City, and South Korea's Gyeongju City.



The opening ceremony celebrations featured a message from the representative of each host city alongside an introduction of each host city through video. Additionally, PR Ambassador Hello Kitty declared the opening of the East Asia Culture City 2022, Oita along with those in attendance at the ceremony. Following this, the general manager of Beppu Music Festival Argerich's Meeting Point, Martha Argerich herself, gave a commemorative performance. As part of connected events, culture and arts organisations within the prefecture held public performances, with many visitors, including residents of Oita Prefecture, coming to experience culture and the arts.



Martha Argerich's commemorative performance

Looking forward, many arts and cultural events are planned in each area of Oita prefecture, for example artist in Residence programmes, where artists produce work whilst in the prefecture. Artists from each host city will be invited to participate, including Ms. Chiharu Shiota, who has been internationally active in Berlin.



PR Ambassador Hello Kitty!



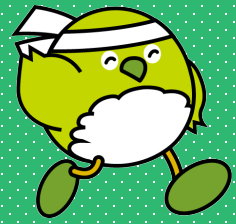
Chiharu Shiota *The Key in the Hand, 2015*

Ms. Chiharu Shiota's solo exhibition

Let's eat, walk, and laugh together!

「Number one in Japan for Healthy Life Expectancy」

Oita Prefecture ranks no.1 for men & no.2 for women



祝

Oita Prefecture's Healthy Life Expectancy (December, Reiwa 3 (2021))

Men : 73.72 years; 1st in
Japan

(Heisei 28 (2016) : 71.54 years; 36th in
Japan

Women : 76.60 years; 4th in
Japan

(Heisei 28 (2016) : 75.38 years; 12th in
Japan

In Oita Prefecture, we are extending the 'healthy life expectancy', which is the number of years people can live their daily lives to the fullest without health problems. Our goal is to achieve the ranking of 'number one in Japan for healthy life expectancy' so that all residents of Oita Prefecture can live a healthy and active life.

With the announcement of new rankings in December Reiwa 3 (2021), Oita Prefecture jumped up in the rankings, with men ranking 1st and women ranking 3rd.

Next, we are aiming to be
the number one healthy
prefecture in Japan!



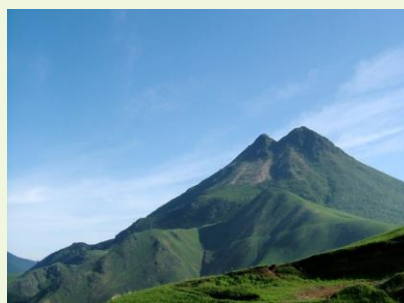
News from Around Oita

Headlines for May

- "Savor the Scenery!" Mount Yufu "Opening Festival" Held for First Time in Three Years
- Martha Argerich Receives Prefectural Honor Award at Music Festival. "Deeply Moved" by Residents of Oita Prefecture
- *Douwasai* (Japan Fairy Tale Festival) Starts May 4 in Kusu. Outdoor Events for First Time in Three Years
- "Space Course" Established at Kunisaki High School in Anticipation of Oita Airport's Transformation into Oita "Space Port"
- Oita Tanabata Festival to be Held as Normal for First Time in Three Years. Return of *Funai Pacchin* and *Chikirin Bayashi*
- Young Residents of Amagase Share Vision for Reviving the Onsen Town. Plan Illuminations and Water Events
- Large Flowers of Fire in the Sky Mark Summer for the *Tenryo* (Imperial Lands). Hita River "Opening Festival" Held for First Time in Three Years
- "Asahi Beer" Neon Sign Removed from Beppu Tower. Continuation TBD
- Yabakei Bridge Designated as Important Cultural Property. Country's Longest Stone Arch Bridge.



Funai Pacchin



Mount Yufu



Douwasai Fairy Tale Festival



Taketa Castle Town: International and Modern

【Taketa Retreat】

Taketa City Library



Location
1979 Taketa,
Taketa City
Library Hours
Tues. - Sun.
10:00 A.M. - 6:00
P.M.
Days Closed
Mondays,
Fourth Friday of
Every Month,
New Year
Holidays
Phone #
0974-63-1048



Libraries and library books have captivated to me ever since I was a child. To me, Taketa City Library is a special retreat. One where you don't need a reason for going; you can just drop by. While sporting a striking modern design, it still blends in beautifully with the other buildings of the town. When you enter the library, you are greeted with the scents of cedar and knowledge. Pleasant music plays softly in the background. In this atmosphere, you can spend your time in the library in your own way, whether it be reading, studying, or dealing with everyday problems. Enjoy reading in a seat inside on cool rainy days, the window slightly cracked open. Or maybe instead read outside on the terrace on clear sunny days. You don't normally see terraces in Japan, but here you can experience the charm of distant lands, and I highly recommend it.



【Taketa International】

Language Exchange Room

After spending a quiet moment at the Taketa City Library, please drop by our cheerful Language Exchange Room. From games popular in the west and Japan, to Free Talks and other events, we've always got new programs and surprises in store. Talk with the five of us (from America, Germany, and Indonesia) and have fun in both Japanese and English! Join in once, join in twice, join in as much as you like! Please join us at the Taketa Language Exchange Room!

Instagram

international_taketa



Location: Taketa Castle Town Plaza
Community Room
487-1 Taketa, Taketa City
Date/Time: Every Wednesday,
6:30 P.M. - 8:30 P.M.
*When school is not on break.

Beppu Beach Bonanza!

In the poignant words of Nicki Minaj: 'let's go to the beach-each, let's go get a wave!'. There's no doubt that that is what's on everyone's mind at the moment as temperatures soar this summer, with the mercury reaching 40 degrees in Oita Prefecture this June. With that in mind, I decided to go with a beachy theme this month. Cruising along the coast of Beppu, the fresh sea air from the slightly ajar bus window whipping through my hair, I felt like summer had truly arrived. With a typhoon allegedly incoming, the seas were rough, white foam churning upwards from the choppy waves. The sky was overcast with a thick layer of cloud hanging heavily in the sky; this stormy blue palette made for a striking scene. Looking upwards towards the mulling sky was like gazing upon poetry.

My first stop was Oita's own aquarium, 'Oita Marine Palace: Umitamago', situated on the coast, nestled between Oita City and Beppu City. It was my first time, and a long time since I had been to an aquarium due to the pandemic; needless to say I was excited, grinning like a child having been given a lollipop. The timing of my entrance was fortuitous, as the 'umi-tama performance' was just about to begin. The line-up was phenomenal. It included a cheeky otter, a hungry pelican, a well-rounded sea lion, and a rather polite walrus. The highlight was, for the sheer strength it must have taken, the sea lion's iconic pirouette atop a rock on one flipper. A close second was the variety of expression displayed by the whiskered walrus, who bowed, nodded, and shook his head to the trainer in response to her words. Overall, it was a magical performance with some real characters.

Swara Fife
Coordinator for
International Relations



Meet the
Cast!



Other than some chunky seals, walruses, and the like, Umitamago boasts large tanks of fish and marine species. The stars of this show had to be the jellyfish. They were lit up in different colours in a dark underwater tank, their transparent, fluid bodies swaying mesmerisingly as they glowed red, orange, yellow, and then green. I highly recommend taking a boomerang of them! Finally, I decided to treat myself to a cold sweet, and purchased Umitama Café's speciality honey soft cream. It was delicious, and just the thing for a hot day on the coast! I'm glad it wasn't fish flavoured, at least..!

After leaving Umitamago, I headed to Beppu's own sand bath. The sands are heated by the hot spring steam, making for a relaxing bath that also offers all the health benefits of hot spring waters - with a sea view to boot! The sound of rolling waves against the shore entered my periphery like a soothing plaster for the soul, whilst the thick blanket of warm sand raked over me seemed to protect me from the outside world, pulling me down to Mother Earth; connecting, calming. After my 15 minutes was up, I showered off the sand, feeling lighter than I had before, and ready for a stroll along the beach to finish up a fine summer's day.



Beppu Sand Bath

Opening hours: 9:30am - 6pm
(March-November)

9am - 5pm (December-February)

Bathing fee: 1,500¥

Towel: 360¥; shower cap: 110¥;

locker: 100¥

Oita Marine Palace: Umitamago

Opening hours: 9am - 5pm

(9am - 6pm during holiday seasons)

Entry fee: →

2,600¥/adults

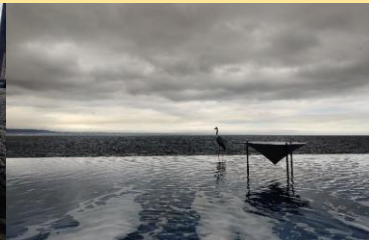
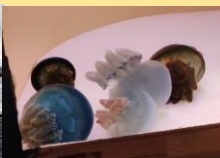
→ 1,300¥/primary & middle

school-aged children

→ 850¥/infants

Performance

schedule:



A Battle of Irises



Austin Vaughn

Kagurame Lake



We went on a foggy day in June. A few participants of the Free Talk class I hold every month invited me to see the irises in Beppu, among a few other things. I thought it would be a lot of fun, so I agreed, and I'm glad to report that I was correct. We arrived in the morning to a surreal scene. Mist covered the entirety of the garden grounds. Not exactly prime flower-viewing weather, but in its own way, I thought that was perfect. Everyone goes to see flowers on sunny days. There's something poetic to be said about the ephemerality of viewing a short-blooming flower during weather conditions that are just as fleeting. What that is, I can't say. I'm not a poet. We looked at the various species of irises on display, with their different shades of purple, pink, white, and yellow, and talked about the names given to each as written on the signs next to them. Most of them had extremely creative Japanese names that would make even the most hardened *chuunibyō* blush. "Nebula (星雲 *seiun*)," "Lion's Wrath (獅子怒 *shishido*)," "Awakening (めざめ *mezame*)" ... They were all from one of the three main "branches" of irises, as one of the members of my group told me. Edo irises originating from what is now Tokyo, Ise irises from Mie Prefecture, and Higo irises from Kumamoto Prefecture. However, there was also one specimen from the United States, simply named, "Pink Frost." I think it might have been my favorite. Together, these flowers were battling it out for the people's attention, in this *shoubu* (battle) of *shoubu* (irises).

A Battle of Irises



Shidaka Lake

We continued walking around the garden. Among the irises, we also found various kinds of trees, and some of the most beautiful spider webs I have ever seen, covered in the morning dew. After our irises had gotten their fill of irises, we took a short drive up to Shidaka Lake. While Kagurame Lake is called a “lake,” it was really more of a small pond. Shidaka Lake, however, was the real deal. It was quite a sizable lake, and in it were three things: koi, swans, and pedal boats. I had always wanted to ride in a pedal boat, so getting the opportunity here was fantastic. One of the members of my party also kindly shared some of the food he bought for the koi and swans, which we threw to them as we pedaled along the surface of the lake. Swans and koi gathered around the boat whenever we threw out even a single morsel; the koi emerging like submarines, the swans speeding up to us like motorboats. I held food out for one of the swans to eat. I probably shouldn’t have done that. Unlike mammals, swans don’t have lips, obviously. So feeding a swan means you *will* get bit. I then proceeded to feed the swans by holding out food in my hand several more times. They say that insanity is doing the same thing multiple times and expecting a different result. In that case, I may be insane, but at least I had a lot of fun. I got to see some of Oita’s greatest things with some very kind people and if my sanity was the price for that, then so be it. To be fair, I did eventually end up throwing food normally, so maybe I got out with my sanity intact after all.



from our Reporters 国際交流員だより



Swara Fife

Coordinator for
International
Relations

Namaste, Ole!

After hiking Mt Kuju in March, I felt it was time to take on a new challenge - trekking! The Oku-Bungo trek is one of the many Kyushu Ole courses, which are known for their scenic beauty, marked with blue and red arrows indicating the way for trekkers. We began our journey in Bungo-Ono, passing a number of beautiful scenic spots, including a park and a river, and finally stopped for a rest at Fukoji Temple, about a third of the way through. It was there that we stumbled upon a wooden terrace nestled in the inlet of a cave in the rock face. On one side, it peered out over the trees and the temple entrance, whilst on the other, we were watched over by a multitude of stone figures, lovingly carved along the rock face. Cradled in this pocket of spiritual energy, I focused my consciousness to my breath, centring my mind and body as I descended into Eagle Pose. Legs and arms intertwined tightly; deep breaths; detoxified spirit. There, upon that terrace in the trees, I let go of everything other than the essence of that very moment. It was eventually time to move on. We had much of the course yet to complete, and we had only just begun. 12 kilometres later, we arrived at our final destination: Bungo-Taketa. Passing through the castle ruins and the old castle town, we finally reached the hot spring at the end of the course. There, we let our stiff and tired limbs soak in the natural waters, completely relaxing ourselves after a tough challenge; it had been a perfect day of wondrous balance.

A New Genesis for the Drive

One of my biggest hobbies is electronics, so every once in a while, I repair my old game systems and things like that. It's kind of relaxing, and the sense of accomplishment I get when I can save something destined for the scrap heap is absolutely insane. The latest thing I've managed to repair is the CD-ROM attachment for a certain 1980s video game console. It would power on, but the CD drive would eject discs on its own almost immediately, and no sound was coming out from the add-on at all. I was able to fix the CD drive with a new rubber belt, pretty easy. But as for the sound, it turns out some of the capacitors (a common electronics component) had leaked and I needed to replace a few of them. 80s and 90s electronics are especially susceptible to this "capacitor rot" and the liquid that leaks from them can completely destroy circuit boards, so if you've got electronics from that era, make sure you keep a good eye on them.

Austin Vaughn

Coordinator for
International
Relations

