



What's up, OITA!

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

2022 Oita Prefecture Scholarship Scholarship Award Ceremony



On June 10th, an award ceremony for the Oita Prefecture Scholarship was held at Oita Prefectural Office.

At the Prefectural Office, a representative from each university with scholarship students received a certificate from the vice governor. This was broadcast to other scholarship students online via Zoom.

80 students from five different universities in the prefecture were each awarded an amount of ¥360,000 for the year.

What is the “Oita Prefecture Scholarship”?

Every year since 1995, Oita Prefecture has provided support to self-funded overseas students via scholarship.

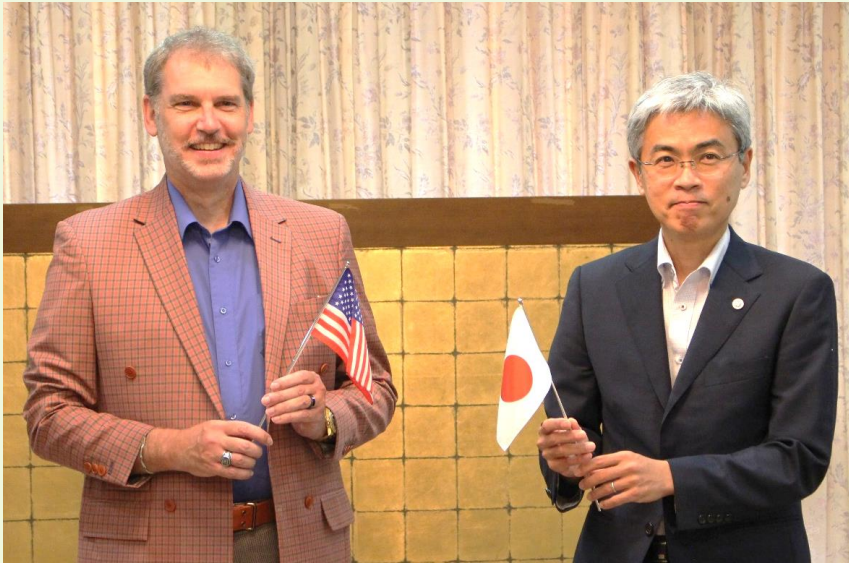
This scholarship is intended to reduce economic burden on students and create an environment in which they can focus on their schoolwork, allowing them to deepen their understanding of Oita and become a bridge between it and their home country in the future.

Students who received this scholarship will participate in lectures about Oita Prefecture and study tours held three times throughout the year in order to deepen their knowledge about the prefecture's history, culture, and industry.

Certificates were handed to each representative.



U.S. Consulate in Fukuoka Principal Officer John C. Taylor Visits Oita



Principal Officer John C. Taylor and Vice Governor Kuroda

On June 17th, John C. Taylor, Principal Officer of the U.S. Consulate in Fukuoka came to Oita Prefecture and paid a visit to Vice Governor Hideo Kuroda.

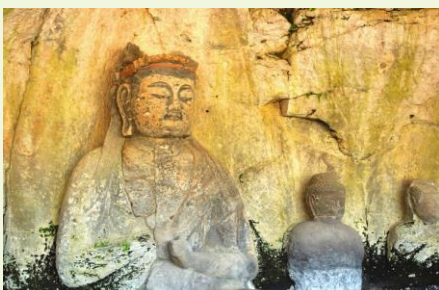
Vice Governor Kuroda welcomed Taylor, who responded saying that he had many fond memories of Oita, although he hadn't been able to visit as much as he had wished due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



News From Around Oita

Headlines for June

- 'Welcome to our Foreign Students!' APU hosts welcome event for 1007 students who arrived since March
- Exchange through food! Welsh Representative in Japan, Mr. Robin Walker, visits Usuki
- A September 2022 chartered flight to Mongolia from Oita Airport marks 50 years since diplomacy began between Japan and Mongolia
- Usa City wins double award in video and PR division in nationwide PR contest
- Yufu City's Hasama Primary School receives Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology Commendation award for project promoting reading
- Adhering to infection countermeasures, prefectural tourism agencies & institutions prepare to welcome incoming tourists from 10th June
- Author presents the karage motherland, Nakatsu City, with karage character picture book featuring diverse foods and ideas
- A grand parade on a sunny stage: Oita Prefectural High School hosts opening ceremony for first time in 3 years
- Beppu Citizens' Dance Group performs for last time, having performed 34 times in past half-century



Usuki Stone Buddhas



Beppu Ropeway



Nakatsu Karage

News from Bungotakada

豊後高田市からのお知らせ

Bungo Takada
Homepage →



Bungo Takada's 'Nagasaki-bana': Enjoyable throughout the year!

Nagasaki-bana is a cape that sticks out like a nose ('bana' in Japanese) towards the Suo-nada Sea in the North of Bungo Takada City.

Nagasaki-bana boasts many tourist spots and seaside activities that you can enjoy throughout the year, such as camping spots, beaches, seasonal flowers that bloom along the coast, art installations, and more!

Luxury camping trailers and cottages are successively popping up throughout Nagasaki-bana. As the facilities are of a high quality, anyone can leisurely enjoy camping here!

The 2022 Spring Soba Season began on 25th June!



There are likely many people who think of 'spring soba' as being a seasonal dish of the beginning of the summer period, however, the soba that is sown in spring is what is called 'spring soba'.

In Bungo Takada City, the warm climate is put to good use, and soba is planted and cultivated 2 times a year in the spring and autumn. The city takes pride in these areas where soba is cultivated, as they are top class in Eastern Japan.

This 'spring soba', which is rare on a national level, is offered at certified shops within Bungo Takada City from June every year.

【 Showa Town · Bungo Takada
City Official Tourism Site 】

https://showanomachi.com/spots/index/keywords:/genre:11/s_genre:42/is_search:1#searchmenu



【Showa Town · Bungo Takada
City Official Tourism Site】



<https://showanomachi.com/spots/detail/192>

Bungo Takada City is promoting immigration and settlement policies, enhancing systems such as the empty house bank and the offering of subsidies to migrants to the city; it is also using all local taxes to support child-raising. Further, a monthly magazine aimed at migrants called 'countryside living' has, in its 'countryside living ranking', ranked Bungo Takada City in the top three for 10 consecutive years.

Please check out the below video on Bungo Takada.

【Bungo Takada City Area Vitality
Generation Department】

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jr-40Us9aB8>



Usuki: Big Buddhas & Fortuitous Felines



I did not know what to expect from a day out in Usuki, but on the ambling country train back to Oita City, I wondered why it was not more famous than it was. Of course, it was known for its Stone Buddhas, which are National Treasures, however despite this, Usuki is always overshadowed by Beppu and Yufuin. I have to say, though, Usuki is a location not to be overlooked on a trip to Oita Prefecture!

Swara Fife

Coordinator for
International
Relations



I began my solo adventure at the Stone Buddhas, which are a 20 minute bus journey from Usuki Station. Passing through the countryside alone on a bus with my sunhat and portable fan, I felt like I had stepped into the Japan I had always dreamed of before I had the chance to come here for my year abroad all those years back; it was almost nostalgic, though I had never taken this route before. The sun beating down on my back, I felt grateful I had applied a generous layer of sunscreen on the train. There were almost no tourists on a day such as this, only a choir of cicadas humming and chirping in the background. After receiving a complementary paper fan from the ticket office lady, I made my way around the twisting route to visit the famous Buddhas, some of which date back to the 12th century. Already sweating profusely, I put the fan to good use, pocketing my electric one; with this kind of backdrop, the paper fan seemed more appropriate. After just a short walk, I saw the first set of Buddhas. Cracked, withered faces peered back at me from Buddhas of all different shapes, sizes, and designs, displaying the sheer level and range of craftsmanship over many years required to carve these magnificent pieces. I passed them by in wonder, mind filled with the possibilities of what those hard grey eyes had seen over their lifetime. Feeling them watching me as I progressed through their ranks was oddly calming, as if they were watching over me.



Next up was the lotus field nearby - the main reason I had chosen July despite its sweltering heat to come (I had, once again, been pouring over my flower charts!). I descended down through an unpainted stone *torii* gate, feeling as if I was leaving their realm. The tassels attached to the gate fluttered in the wind, farewelling me as I stepped into the field of blooming lotus flowers. The soft pink of the lotus offset the stone grey of the Buddhas and I breathed deeply as their



petals harked up towards the morning sun in glee, savouring its gentle warmth before the afternoon rays chased them back into hiding.

On the short walk back to the bus station, I swung by a quaint little donut shop and had the pleasure of meeting my first feline friend of the day: the shop cat. After a lovely couple of minutes of scratching and friendly mewls from that old grey fellow, I reluctantly headed towards the bus stop to catch the hourly bus back to the centre of Usuki for some well-deserved lunch.



My next stop was a traditional seafood restaurant called 'Kawa Mura'. I slipped off my shoes at the entrance-way and was guided to my seat. After an amicable chat with the waitress, I ordered the standard '*kaisen-don*', or seafood bowl. It came, filled with a variety of fish, including tuna, prawn, scallop, squid, and more, all heaped atop a bed of warm, fluffy

rice. It was sweet and delicious, and I thanked my initiative in researching lunch spots beforehand. I was then on my way once more, belly full and ready to take on the next leg of my journey.

The second half of my day began with a walk through the historical Nioza Historical Road. Before I arrived, however, I happened across a shop selling all types of miso for all different occasions and uses. I would usually take no notice, my cooking leaving much to be desired, however after seeing the ice cream flags waving to me from outside, I was lured in. There, I ordered a mini miso soft cream: the perfect remedy for the sweltering afternoon heat. Dollops of miso were mixed through the soft cream, lending it a salty but sweet depth; I would highly recommend trying this flavour if you're ever in Usuki! Next door, there was also a shop selling soy sauce-flavoured ice cream, if miso is not your thing.

Nioza Historical Road is a quiet, semi-residential road. Most of the structures date back to the time the *samurai* roamed Japan. Quiet and peaceful, with some residences offering stunning views across Usuki, it was the perfect time to let both my feet and my mind wander.

The final stop on my trip was Fukuratenuki Temple, a Shinto shrine dedicated to some lovely friends of the feline variety. Entering, I noticed a group of elderly folk sitting on makeshift wooden seats made of wooden planks and barrels. I shrugged it off and began exploring the various cat-themed areas. There was an alter filled with *manekineko* behind a *torii* gate, preceded by some paw-print stepping stones across the rocks. Next to this was a large fat red cat, who watched over the shrine benevolently with a cheeky grin, welcoming visitors to his domain. At the entrance to the shrine was a cat-themed purification basin, which was equally as adorable. I was enamoured, not expecting my Usuki experience to be ending on such a lovely note.

Given the adorable quality of this felicitic shrine, I made sure to purchase a charm from the shop before leaving. After chattering to the staff for a while about the meanings of the multitude of kitty charms on display, I settled on a charm to protect your cat from harm, with my beloved Jackson back in the UK in mind. As I was making my final purchase, the deep timbre of drums reached my ears, and as my head turned, a demon-like creature in a funky red mask with crazy bed hair whirled onto the shrine stage in front of the makeshift wooden seats: I had apparently stumbled upon the beginning of the Usuki Tenjin Summer Festival. The dance I was witnessing was apparently *kagura*, a type of Shinto performance featuring many different gods. The main performance I saw involved the audience tugging at a branch with the deity, only to be pulled on stage for a dance with him - even a baby got involved, with the scary-looking deity holding him gently for a little spin.

The theatrics were intense and enrapturing, and I found myself staying longer than I had intended,

though it was worth getting back later than expected for this, even if there were no felines featured in the performance! Sometimes, it's those small, but fortuitous coincidences that really make a day out, and this time was a perfect example of that.

Usuki Stone Buddhas

Kawamura Seafood Restaurant

Opening Hours: 9:00-17:00 (last entry 16:30)

Entrance fee: → 550¥/adults 15+

→ 270¥/children 6-14yo

Opening Hours: 11:30-13:45 (lunch);
17:30-22:00 (dinner; last order 21:00)

Usuki Stone
Buddha
Homepage:



Rinko to Bungo-Ono



Rinko?

There is one thing I've wanted to do in Japan for months, since before I even got here. I've been doing little preparations for it ever since I arrived, and I finally got myself in gear and went out and did it the other day. That one thing is *rinko*.

What is *rinko*? You're reading this article in English, so unless you are very into cycling, you probably don't know the word, but honestly, it's Japanese that most Japanese people wouldn't know either. It's a two-character word, 輪行 *rinkou*, where the first character *rin* means "wheel" and the second character *kou* means "go" or "travel." What the word *actually* means is bringing a bike onto public transit, like a train. The reason there even is a word for this is because bringing bikes onto transit in Japan isn't like most places in the western world. For most public transit systems that aren't subways in the United States and Europe, you can bring on a bicycle *as-is* onto trains, and buses usually have bike racks on the front or back of the bus for you to place your bike. This is *not* the case in Japan. As a rule, taking bikes onto public transit is banned except on some very specific types of trains and buses that are not at all common here. However, this only applies to taking bikes *as-is* onto transit. All JR Group companies specifically allow taking bikes onto trains as long as they are "taken apart and all parts are contained within a special bag." Hence, *rinko* bags. Take apart the bike and put it in a bag. *Then* you can go on the train. Makes sense, I suppose. It might as well just be normal luggage at that point.

This makes bringing bikes onto public transit *much* more of a pain, but in my eyes, it also makes it more of an adventure. Of course, if you plan on doing *rinko*, I suggest getting a folding bike like I did. It made packing up the bike a breeze. Fold the bike, take off the handles, and then you've got it in the bag in 10 minutes or less. Maybe don't go for the exact brand I did though. It's a good bike for cheap, but it rusts really, *really* fast. At any rate, if you're going to do *rinko* then of course you need a destination, and in my case, I chose Bungo-Ono's Ogata Model Course.



Rinko to Bungo-Ono



Onward!

Time to talk about the actual journey I went on. I headed off a bit early from home, just in case I needed time to get my bike in the bag and to the platform. I got to the station about 30 minutes before the train arrived and ended up arriving at the platform nearly 20 minutes early, which goes to show how convenient a folding bike is for *rinko*. At first, I was going to stay near the front of the train car and stand next to my bike, but when I did that, it seemed like I would be more in the way than simply taking a row of seats for myself, so in the end, I fit my bike between a set of four seats and sat down. I happened to leave enough room for someone else to sit down, and to my surprise, someone actually ended up sitting diagonally across from me. An older woman was going to visit her sister in Ogata, and as I was going to the same station, we chatted for a bit about some different things about Japan, like castles and the differences between traveling in America vs traveling in Japan. I mentioned I was going to Harajiri Falls, and she suggested I stop by the *michi no eki*, the rest stop/restaurant next to the falls, and buy some “flat” manju if I saw them.

We got off the train, said our goodbyes, and I unfolded my bike and went off to my first destination, the Bungo-Ono History Museum...which had moved location. The guide I was following just hadn't been updated. Unfortunate, but the museum wasn't what I was focusing on anyway, so I quickly left for the main event of the trip, Harajiri Falls. The falls were, for lack of a better word, breathtaking. I had never been to a waterfall as big as the Harajiri Falls, and I am glad I went. The view from the small bridge that hangs over the falls is something that I won't be forgetting any time soon. Oddly enough, it wasn't just the waterfalls themselves that caught my attention though. The large stones in the water reminded me exactly of some at the pond in my hometown. The layout is backwards from Harajiri though. The stones there are at the “top” end of the lake, and then the water falls at the “bottom” end.



Rinko to Bungo-Ono



It's About the Journey

I left the falls and went to the *michi no eki* that the woman from the train had mentioned to me. I couldn't find any of the flat manju. I'm not sure if that was because there weren't any or if I was just blind, but what I did find was a very good restaurant. I had *toriten nanban*, an unholy (but delicious) combination of the famous dishes from Oita and Miyazaki that I had no idea existed.

Afterwards, I got back on the road to go to my next destination, the Tsujigawara Stone Bath. I parked my bike a bit away from where the stone bath was on the map and proceeded to immediately head down the wrong path for about a half-hour, which turned out to be a dead end. I turned back and found a valve that seemed straight out of a video game puzzle. I decided it'd be best not to touch it and made my way back to the bath's actual location. It was like a sauna built right into the cliffside I'd been hiking on. Apparently, it's still used by the locals during New Years.

This was the midway point of the model course in terms of distance, so I started on my way back. Last stop, the West/East Miyazako stone buddhas. I took a little break and sat with the buddhas on the western side then went back into town. I happened to run into the woman I had met on the train. We briefly said hello/goodbye as I biked back to the train station. Unfortunately, I didn't get a chance to mention anything about the manju (or lack thereof). I packed up my bike, went on the train, got back to Oita Station, unpacked my bike, and went home. All in all, my first *rinko* was a pretty great experience. I saw cool things, ate good food, and had interesting conversations. It was just as much of an adventure as I thought it would be. If you've also got a sense of adventure, give *rinko* a try. Like having a car, it vastly expands the number of areas you can go to. But, in my opinion, at least, it's much more fun. Instead of just going from point A to point B, the whole trip is an adventure. With a train and a bike, the sky's the limit on the journeys you can make.



from our Reporters 国際交流員だより



Swara Fife

Coordinator for
International
Relations



DRUM TAO: A floating stage in the misty mountains

Drum Tao's mountain stage, situated deep in the mountains of Kuju, transports you to a wondrous fantasy world. Just like idols, the Drum Tao performers made their appearance onstage with both poise and intensity. Their drum beats reverberated across the mountain basin, and I felt all my senses turn towards them, like a flower leaning towards the sun. Within this floating mountain range, I was propelled into another world.

The combined atmospheric intensity, the idols' fiery performance, and the skill with which each idols wielded their chosen percussion and string instruments, left me feeling breathless: this was by far the best Tao drumming performance I had seen to date. I had scoffed at the 10 ticket discount pack available for purchase through the site - who would want to see the same performance more than once, if not twice? - but after being enraptured by their smooth chords, I understood why this was an option, and a popular one at that. In August, I plan to go to the Tao Summer Festival in Kuju, so look out for more from me then..!



Pew, Pew!

If you had a game console as a kid, you probably had one of these--The light gun. Pull the trigger, and a sensor inside the gun detects changes in color on the TV screen to determine if you hit a target or not. However, you can only use a light gun on good old CRTs. They don't work on modern TV screens at all. Because of this, and the fact that graphics for old games look much better on old TVs, CRTs are still in relatively high demand among retro gamers. By the way, the light gun in the picture is the Japanese Famicom version, simply called "Gun." In the United States, selling toy guns that look like actual guns has been banned since the 1980s, so the American version is a raygun looking thing called the "Nintendo Zapper."

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