



What's up, OITA!

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

Oita Prefecture x Wales & OPAM x National Museum Cardiff Memorandum of Understanding: One Year Anniversary Ceremony



On Wednesday 1st March 2023, a ceremony was held to commemorate one year since the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding for the Promotion of Friendship and Mutual Exchange between Oita Prefecture and Wales and their respective art museums - Oita Prefectural Art Museum and the National Museum Cardiff.

The ceremony featured a short seminar from officials at the National Museum Cardiff, as well as a performance from the choir leaders of the Welsh boys' choir 'Only Boys Aloud'.

Mejiron wore a welsh hat to welcome our guests from Wales!



🌀 Oita Prefecture's exchange with Wales

Wales is one of the countries that makes up the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Island (England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Island). Exchange with Wales began in 2019 with the Rugby World Cup acting as a catalyst. Oita Prefecture was then approached by Wales, who proposed further expanding the scope of exchange to include five areas, including the arts and culture. Following discussions, the Memorandum of Understanding for the Promotion of Friendship and Mutual Exchange was signed by both parties on 1st March 2022.

2023 Japanese Language Trainees Arrive in Oita Prefecture!



Since 2013, Oita Prefecture has been accepting Japanese Language Trainees who come to Oita Prefecture to study at university for one year. These trainees are the children of people originally from Oita Prefecture, but who have moved abroad. The aim of this programme is to develop human resources who can serve as a bridge to Oita Prefecture in the future. This year, two students from Brazil, Mr. Koiti 'Kalvin' Ishii and Ms. Mayumi 'Monica' Furusho, will study at Oita University. Both trainees arrived on 30th March and have begun their new lives in Japan!

Courtesy visit to Mr. Watanabe, Director of the Planning and Promotion Department

Left: Ms. Mayumi 'Monica' Furusho; Right: Mr. Koiti 'Kalvin' Ishii

News from Around Oita



Headlines for March

- Usa Jingu's "Kure Bridge" Open to Public for First Time in 8 Years. Commemoration for Completion of Restoration Work from 19th to 21st
- Usuki Tourism Promotional Video Wins "Cool Japan Award" Runner-up Prize
- Mt. Takasaki Celebrates 70 years of Monkey Business on 26th. Various Events Held at Park and its Vicinity
- International Cruise Ships Come Back to Beppu for the First Time in 3 Years. Hopes High for Tourists and Economic Effects
- Taio Kinzan 40th Anniversary, Commemorative Event Starts From 25th.
- Manholes celebrating Folk Stories and Legends Installed in Galleria Takemachi. Designed by Oita City Picture Book Author
- Remains of Large Structure Found at Officially Designated Dig Site in Nakatsu. Possible District Capitol of the Largest Scale in Kyushu?



府内城



中津市 ひいなめぐり



宇佐神宮



Kokonoe "Yume" Otsurihashi Bridge Metal Music Video

Kokonoe "Yume" Otsurihashi (Kokonoe "Dream" Suspension Bridge) is the tallest pedestrian bridge in Japan. From it, you can look upon the seasonal scenery of the Naruko River Valley, including the Kuju Mountain Range and Shindo Falls, one of the 100 best waterfalls in Japan. It's no wonder it has become one of Oita Prefecture's major tourist spots.

In 2022, entries were taken for a heavy metal song to be the new "image song" for the bridge. Out of the many entries, "Promenade in the Sky" by MONSHIROH's Monshiro Katsura was chosen and continues to be broadcasted near and around the bridge. A music video was recently released for the song on YouTube, so check it out using the QR code below!



Kokonoe "Yume" Otsurihashi Image Song, "PROMENADE IN THE SKY" ⇒

Great Stuff at Kokonoe "Yume" Otsurihashi

~Character Manholes~

Manholes featuring the main characters of Oita-native Hiroyuki Eto's "Magical Circle Guru Guru" have also been created and placed around the grounds of the bridge. There are four different designs in total. Try to find them all!



©Hiroyuki Eto / SQUARE ENIX



Spring



Summer



Fall



Winter

Official Website

<http://www.yumeooturihashi.com/>



Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/kokonoeturihashi/>





Let's Bun-Go!



Having caught the Hina Matsuri fever, I trekked out once again, this time to the far south of Oita Prefecture, to Bungo Taketa to check out their Hina Matsuri doll exhibitions. It was a warm and sunny winter's day with hints of spring in the air and in the budding flowers lining either side of the train tracks. I love the train from Oita City to Bungo Taketa: its leisurely pace and the gorgeous scenery it offers make for a relaxed and leisurely time. I often sit and gaze out of the window, mesmerised by the landscapes of Oita's southerly regions. Before I knew it, I had arrived at Bungo Taketa Station, and made a beeline to the tourist information booth to pick up a Hina Matsuri Map of the town. After securing this, I made my way back through the waiting area, snapping a few pictures of the mini exhibition there, before making my way into town to search for some Hina Dolls.

Swara Fife

Coordinator for
International
Relations

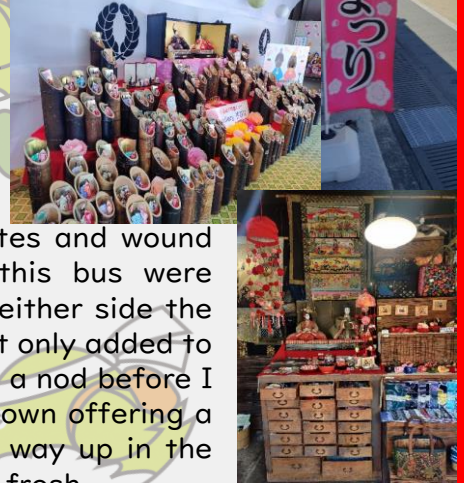


The sleepy town was peaceful on a Wednesday morning, disturbed only on occasion by the milling of a passer-by or two. The Hina Matsuri exhibitions are scattered across town, and marked on the map, although navigation without a map would also be possible, as all the exhibition locations were flagged by pink banners that rippled gently in the wind. The exhibitions were put together and held by local businesses, museums, and shrines, with some being put together in communal areas too. The Hina doll sets were gorgeous and incredibly detailed, their gaudiness increasing incrementally with each step up the stand. Some were no doubt hundreds of years old. I wandered around the town, taking little heed of the map, letting my feet lead me. I stumbled upon a number of particularly interesting exhibits this way, including a lovely paper-based Hina doll exhibition made by the primary school students of Taketa, and little origami Hinas propped in bamboo hollows and lining the path at Taketa Souseikan Hall. All in all, it was a lovely display of community planning and cooperation, and I spent a leisurely morning perusing all that Taketa had to offer for their Hina Matsuri.





I had a 12:30 bus to catch from Bungo Taketa Station, so I grabbed a convenience store lunch to munch on whilst waiting. The bus wound around into the station and I hopped on to my next destination: the Nagayu Onsen area. The bus was almost like a mini bus - it was even smaller than the ordinary Japanese bus (which to me is rather small), and had a paper ticketing system only. The bus journey took around 45 minutes and wound around and up the mountains of Kuju. The sights from this bus were breathtaking. The mountains swept up in graceful arches on either side the higher we climbed, framing the background with a stoicism that only added to the atmosphere. I hopped off the bus, thanking the driver with a nod before I headed to Lamune Onsen. Nagayu is a beautiful little onsen town offering a relaxing retreat from the hustle and bustle of everyday life, way up in the mountains where things move an awful lot slower. Enjoying the fresh mountain air, I checked into Lamune Onsen, paying my 500 yen fee before heading out to enjoy the famed bubbly hot spring. The building itself resembled something you would see in a Dr Seuss book: long rather than wide, it had pointy rooves and plants growing out of the tops. Long black and white stripes gave a cartoonish feel to the building, and a statue of a dog in some dapper garb looked out away from the main building.



The short path outside wound around to the female bath house. The inside had a southern-European vibe to it, with clay-coloured walls and patterns printed in gold. It was smaller than I expected, with three semi-connected baths inside and just one outside bath. I started with the inside baths, which were quite warm, before moving to the outside fizzy 'ramune' style bath outside. This is apparently good for blood-flow, skin ailments, and the heart, as well as digestion. I dutifully splashed my face with water every so often to reap the skin-related benefits whilst watching the bubbles gather and clump all over my skin. The only downside was that the outside bath was quite cool, which would perhaps be a blessing in the summer, but in the winter... not so much. I remedied this by changing baths from inside to out a few times until my skin had pruned up. I left Lamune Onsen very relaxed. I had another hour or so before the bus came back for me, so I took a stroll around the Nagayu area. The town was kept very nicely, with flower pots dotted around framing the magnificent mountainous backdrop. I purchased some hot spring water at a local shop and visited a little shrine, where a makeshift tap spurted mineral-rich water for anyone to bottle and take home. My walk left me feeling much refreshed, and I headed back to wait inside the waiting area of Lamune Onsen until the bus came. The waiting area had a mini exhibition of paintings of the local area, which I perused at my leisure before hopping back on the bus, marking the end of a relaxing and rejuvenating day out.



Taketa Hina Festival

10th February –
5th March 2023

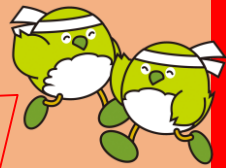


Lamune Hot Spring

❀ ¥ 500/adults

❀ ¥ 200/children

❀ 10:00-22:00



To Every You I've Loved Before



Austin Vaughn



Showa Crossing



Galleria Takemachi



Ikoi no Michi Square

...the End is...

...they say there are an infinite amount of possibilities. You could have done that. You could have done this. *To Every You I've Loved Before* (*Boku Ai*) and *To Me, The One Who Loved You* (*Kimi Ai*) are a brief exploration into this idea. Specifically, "What if all these possibilities did happen?" and "What if you could travel between them?"

Both movies follow the same protagonist, Koyomi. However, his last name, personality, and choices all differ depending on the movie you watch.

In *Boku Ai*, his full name is Koyomi Takasaki. He lives with his mother and grandparents, is a bit on the timid side, and falls in love with a girl named Kazune Takigawa in high school.

In *Kimi Ai*, his full name is Koyomi Hidaka. He lives with his father, and often is left alone to play at the laboratory where he works. He's a bit more adventurous, and falls in love with his childhood friend, Shiori Satou, whose mother works at the same laboratory.

Both stories deal with the discovery of parallel worlds and their integration into daily life. However, they differ in the way that parallel worlds take part. In *Kimi Ai*, they are the subject of the story, which goes into great depth on how they work and the systems that humanity builds around them. In *Boku Ai*, they are instead the background of a love story. You get a basic outline of what they are and how they work, but in the same way a person might learn about gravity in junior high school.

Just with that, the order in which you watch the films changes how you may feel about them. You can keep all the science fiction elements a mystery and then reveal them by watching *Boku Ai* and then *Kimi Ai*. Or you can get the full picture from the beginning by watching *Kimi Ai* and then *Boku Ai*. Not only that, but the way you feel about the characters and the end of the story will also change. It's impossible to say why without spoiling the story, but the official word is, "If you want to feel melancholic, finish with *Kimi Ai*. If you want things a bit happier, finish with *Boku Ai*." There is also one other member of the series, *Because I'm Calling Your Name*. It hasn't been turned into an anime (yet), but it follows the life of the heroine of *Kimi Ai*, Shiori, in the world of *Boku Ai*. Speaking of worlds, the world that all these works take place in is one that you're all probably familiar with. In fact, you may have already heard me say it. After all...



To Me, The One Who Loved You



Austin Vaughn



Uenogaaka Park



Sumiyoshi Ryokuchi Park



Omichinishi Park

...the Beginning is...

...they say there are an infinite amount of possibilities. What if I did this? What if I did that? “To Every You I’ve Loved Before” (Boku Ai) and “To Me, The One Who Loved You” (Kimi Ai) are a brief exploration into this idea, but they’re also an exploration of their setting—Oita City.

Did you know that not too long in the past, there were pedestrian bridges at the intersection of Showa and Chuo-doori? To people who have been here a while, that might be an obvious statement. Of course they were there, how could you have missed them? But to anyone who’s been here for less than a decade, they may as well have never existed.

Boku Ai and *Kimi Ai* feature a lot of areas like those bridges. Places you think will be there forever, that you see every day. But everything changes. Sometimes it’s a good idea to look around and see what’s in your own backyard while you still can. And using these movies to find neat locations might be a great place to start.

Oita Station and Galleria Takemachi need no introduction. If you’re going to Oita, you will end up going to one, the other, or both. The Red Brick Building is a landmark you’ll see on the way, designed by the architect behind the design of Tokyo Station. Inside is a nice café. Iko no Michi Square is a pleasant flat area, perfect for playing sports, just south of the station. You could also take a break at Uenogaaka Park a bit farther south from that. It’s a bit out of the way, but Sumiyoshi Ryokuchi Park, about a mile north of Showa Crossing, has some weird cylinder things you can play on. I personally also went to Omichinishi Park, west of the station, and found a little samurai’s broken foam katana. Now a ronin with no sword...

Of course, seeing locations you know from real life in the movie is possibly even more interesting than the other way around. When I was growing up, more than anything, I wanted to see cartoons and games that took place in my own hometown. But obviously, my hometown wasn’t New York or Tokyo, so that never actually happened. Seeing places like Oita Station or the shopping street in animated form let me finally live that childhood dream.

But maybe in another world, my hometown did make it into an anime. After all...



from our Reporters 国際交流員だより



Swara Fife

Coordinator for
International
Relations



Oita Trinita: Kickoff!

As the football season had just begun, my workplace was giving out free tickets to Oita Trinita's first match in order to increase support for the team. I received two free tickets from my workplace, so I invited an English friend of mine who also likes football. Together, we went to support Oita Trinita in their match against Tokyo Verdy. Before we headed into the stadium, we warmed up with some hot drinks at some of the stalls set up outside. We then proceeded into the stadium and were handed Oita Trinita calendars by staff there! We entered to the sounds of cheering and the sight of banner-waving across the stadium from Oita Trinita's fans. Tokyo Verdy had comparably few fans in attendance, which perhaps helped Oita Trinita secure their first win of the season, one-nil. It was a great experience, especially since it had been years since I had been to a football match.

Birthday Boat Party

The other day was my friend's birthday. Just when we were thinking on what we could do to liven it up, a savior appeared with an unusual idea—to celebrate her birthday on a ferry to Ehime Prefecture. My friend quickly took to the proposal, and I thought it was a really fresh idea as well. I hadn't been to Shikoku yet either, so with that I participated in my first "Birthday Boat Party."

I invited two of my other friends, and the five of us made our way to Saga-no-Seki. After seeing the various octopuses at Hayasuhime Shrine, we made our way on to the ferry. We ate cake, sang "Happy Birthday," and made some "bizarre" JoJo poses. Just when everything was at its peak, we arrived at Ehime. We didn't have a car, so we couldn't actually go anywhere, but just exploring the small port town we arrived at was fun in and of itself.

It all was really a strange idea, but I'm pretty glad that I went.

Austin Vaughn

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International
Relations

