



# What's up, OITA!

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

## 2023 Oita Prefecture Scholarship Scholarship Award Ceremony



### What is the "Oita Prefecture 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 various events order to deepen their knowledge about Oita's history, culture, and industry.

This year's Oita Prefecture Scholarship award ceremony was held at Oita Prefectural Office on June 14<sup>th</sup>. Representatives from each university with scholarship students attended the ceremony, with each receiving a certificate. 80 students from five different universities in the prefecture were each awarded an amount of ¥360,000 for the year. Hopes are high for what these scholarship students will be able to accomplish.

## What's Up in Oita? 国際交流員だより

### ◆ Stand Up! Stand Up!

American CIR Austin Vaughn



One of my friends is a really huge Gundam fan. Because of that, the other day when I visited Yokohama, I visited the Gundam Factory. There, I bought my first Gundam Kit. I've always liked taking things apart and putting them back together, so honestly, it's kind of strange that I haven't bought one up until now. Either way, as soon as I got home to Oita, I put it together. Making it was really fun, and I got a huge sense of accomplishment from finishing it. I'll never get bored of seeing something I make actually working. I think I'll put together even more Gundams in the future. And in order for me to get more attached to them, I think I'll also watch the first Gundam series on my CRT TV.





## The Maple Yaba Cycling Road Going around the remains of the area's Taisho-era railway



The Second Yamakuni River Railway Bridge, formerly used by the old railroad

Using the remains of the old railway, the Maple Yaba cycling road has gentle inclines, so it is perfect for beginners. Part of the old station building exists to this day and you can enjoy cycling through scenic countryside.



A path where you can cycle through the rock wall where the trains used to pass



A friendly exchange event with Taichung City in June

Nakatsu City has begun a friendly relationship with Taichung City in Taiwan in order to promote cycling tourism and tourism more broadly. As part of this, exchange-based events have been taking place from time-to-time. Looking forward, the aim is to continue to build on the mutual exchange between Taichung City and Nakatsu City and its tourists, as well as to deepen the friendship that will come from this.

ツールドやばけい2023  
10/1(SUN)  
開催決定!



The Tour de Yabakei, October 1, 2023

## Japanese Heritage 'Yabakei Sightseeing,' Yabahaku

Every year in the spring and autumn seasons guide-led activities ('Yabahaku') are held where you can experience the history, scenery, and cultural assets of the Yabakei area. Amongst these are activities that the ordinary person will not normally have the opportunity to participate in, such as walking and trekking.



## Mecca of Water Sports: Yabakei Aqua Park

This is one of the best water sports facilities in Japan, where you can experience water skiing, banana boating, canoeing, and paddle boarding on a dam lake with a spectacular view. Even beginners can use the park's facilities with ease, so please do stop by on your next visit to Nakatsu City.



## TOPICS Immortal Fukuzawa Project Underway!

In Nakatsu City, the hometown of Fukuzawa Yukichi, whose picture appears on the ten-thousand yen note, efforts are being made to convey the importance of his achievements to posterity. One such achievement was his investment of personal funds into protecting the scenic Yabakei area introduced above.





# Monkeying around



During my year and a half in Oita Prefecture, I have ventured to all the municipalities, and visited Beppu more times than I can count, however I had never stopped on the road between Oita City and Beppu to visit the monkeys at Takasaki Mountain Nature Park. In the throes of the rainy season, I decided to do just that, however my timing could

have been better. It was chucking it down as I left Oita Station and I was miserable and hot under my umbrella. I perked up soon after my arrival at the park, however. Contrary to my expectations, the climb was not so steep, and the monkeys actually resided close to the base of the mountain. As I reached the park's centre, I was greeted by some chirpy calls from the canopy of trees above; looking up through my translucent umbrella, I saw a couple of monkeys wedged between branches, seemingly unperturbed by the torrential rain.

**Swara Fife**

**Coordinator for  
International  
Relations**

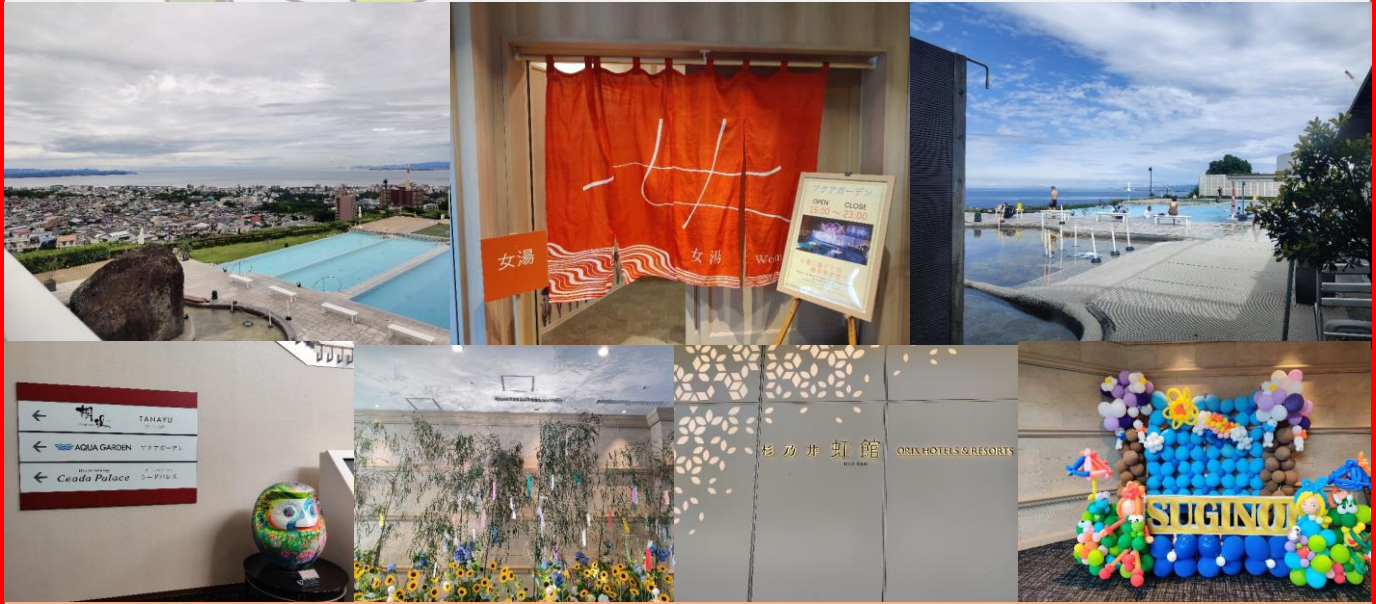


The park itself was quite small in terms of area. There were a few little shrine-like structures where the monkeys were sheltering from the rain. Some of them even held little baby monkeys close to their bellies! The babies clung on to their mothers' fur, even as the mothers ran towards the feeding area at the sound of the snack-time bell. I stayed a little while in the rest area as the rain continued to worsen, and just as I was about to leave, a staff member informed me it was time to feed the monkeys their daily sweet potatoes! I was excited, as I had heard this was a once-daily event that did not adhere to a time schedule, and so was quite random. The monkeys lined up on the wooden posts, their gazes in synchronisation with each other, scanning and searching for the first sign of the keeper with the wheelbarrow of potatoes. It started very suddenly. The keeper came running through with the wheelbarrow trailing behind him. The monkeys jumped into action almost instantly, trailing after him in a massive thud of little feet and a symphony of cries. It died down almost just as quickly once all the monkeys had received a potato or three, and the park settled down to a gentle patter of rain and occasional natter or squabble.





My next stop was Suginoi Palace: the hot spring resort of Suginoi Hotel, which is famed for its gorgeous views over Beppu and its high quality service. I took the free shuttle bus from Beppu Station, which wound up and up, eventually dropping me off at the front of the hot spring's entrance. The hot spring there, though a little pricey, is well worth it. After washing myself first, I tried out the dry sauna. Gentle piano music overlaid the glorious view over Beppu bay; the notes almost seemed to play in tune with the movement of the reeds in the foreground, just in front of the window. After dumping myself into the ice cold bath (I always do so to reap the immune benefits and to improve blood circulation), I hopped into the main bath, which featured an unobstructed view over Beppu Bay. I felt the energy leaving my body in the best possible way, as I soaked through the afternoon until it was time to head home.



## Takasaki Mountain Nature Park

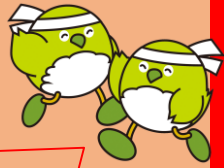
- ✿ ¥ 520/adults
- ✿ ¥ 260/children
- ✿ Free/Infants
- ✿ 9:00 ~ 17:00



## Suginoi Palace

✿ Admission prices depend on the season

- ✿ 05:00 ~ 00:00



# Study Tour



## Tastier Xavier

If I say "Xavier," you probably aren't going to think of a sweet treat that's good to eat. But Oita's most famous souvenir is exactly that. Xavier is a sweet biscuit-like snack that has two different variations. The first is "Xavier Gold," which has a rum raisin filling. The second is "Xavier Silver," which has a normal *mochi* filling. Gold is the traditional version, while Silver was made in order to export Xavier to countries with strict laws on alcohol.

As for the strange name, it comes from "Francis Xavier," a Catholic missionary with deep ties to Oita. Xavier is a mix of western and eastern snackery(?), so it only makes sense to use the name of one of the westerners most historically linked to Oita. However, Xavier, the snack, also has its own history. It used to be made by a company known as Chokyudo, but they went bankrupt in 2000. The loss of Oita's most famous confection was so great that a new company was made just to keep it going, known as Xavier Honpo.

Xavier Honpo was the first stop on the first of three study tours that will be held for students who received the Oita Prefecture scholarship. What they learned is what you learned above, so now you too are an Xavier master. Although, in addition to this, the students were shown around the factory that makes Xavier. Obviously, without the proper equipment, they were unable to get close to the machinery that made the sweets, however. No one likes a random snack hair.

There's also one other thing the students were able to experience that most people probably won't ever be able to: an Xavier fresh off the presses. I also received one, and honestly, that warm Xavier is possibly the best Japanese *omiyage* I have ever tasted. Think literal "melt in your mouth" good.

After exploring the factory, it was time to head to lunch. *Yoshida Kaikan* is a restaurant on the coast that serves *Seki-Saba* and *Seki-Aji* (both kinds of mackerel), Oita's "brand name" fish. Unfortunately, I don't like fish, but Yoshida Kaikan had me (and a few others) covered. They served yet another Oita delicacy, *toriten*, and I was happy.

After lunch, we were going to head off to our next location, but the headcount on the buses was off. After a bit of worrying, it turns out that one person had just switched buses to be with some new friends they made at lunch. And with that, we head off to our next stop.



# Study Tour



## The Yard

Ozai Container Terminal. I have no idea why, and I can't explain it, but I've always wanted to go to a container terminal. I think it might be the video games I've played. There are ones where you can control the crane and pick up containers and it just feels like a big crane game. Maybe it's just an innate part of human nature to like picking up things and putting them down somewhere else? Why else would crane games be so popular? But I digress.

I can't remember the last time I had to put on a hard hat to go somewhere. But if you have to put a hard hat on, you know it's going to be a good field trip. Our first stop at our last stop was the dang-big-crane itself. Unfortunately we weren't taken to the top, but we were able to see how it moved, locked, and changed size for different containers, which was good enough. You wouldn't think something that big would be able to move that fast.

After that, we were allowed to walk into some of the containers themselves. I always wondered how people made homes out of those things, but once you've been in one, it's easy to see how. Looking it up, a 20-foot container is even a little bigger than a normal Japanese studio apartment. Thinking about how you could just stack a bunch together and make a huge super-container-apartment is a bit interesting. After this, we were shown to a room with a TV and the most 90s educational video ever. It was just like being back in junior high, but in Japanese.

We then moved on to both my favorite and least favorite part of this terminal exploration. The cold storage room.  $-4^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) to keep your ice cream nice and frozen. I say least favorite because they were painting a new yellow line, and like an idiot I stepped right on the fresh paint. As for why I say it was my "most favorite," that would be because most of the scholarship students were from countries like Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia, if you catch my drift. Basically, they had no resistance to the cold and everyone was wearing short sleeves. As soon as we went in, they were huddling at the entrance begging to be let out. I'm from Utah, sub-zero temperatures are normal for me, so I was just laughing. I might be a bad person.

After we were done with the container yard, everyone was shown to an internship fair. I obviously can't get an internship right now, but I was able to talk with an IT company's founder fairly in-depth about what I want to do in the future, so I am very happy that I went.





## — Farewell Message —

Coordinator for International Relations



### Swara Fife

#### Farewell, Oita

As I am leaving Oita at the end of July, I wish to extend a big thank you to all the readers of What's Up, Oita!, to all those I have had the pleasure of meeting as part of my exchange events, and to everyone else I have met along the way. Leaving Oita has left a peculiar feeling deep in my heart: I am sad to leave because of all the wonderful people who have made my time here so very special, however I know it is my time to move on. With Covid-19 restrictions it feels as if that time has gone by in a flash, but at the same time, it feels like forever. I can say, however, that I can resign knowing I tried my absolute best for you all as a Coordinator for International Relations.

I have learnt so many things in the past year and a half. Whilst I have learnt that interpretation and translation is not for me, doing so has improved my Japanese skills and given my brain a real workout at the same time! I have also learnt a lot from meeting the lovely people of Oita through my exchange-based events; these I have enjoyed immensely, and will be sad to see them discontinued. I will always treasure the memories I have made with all of you in my Free Talk Classes, lectures, and school-based exchange visits.

Although my time at Oita has come to a close, I am excited for my next step into the world of sustainability and ethics in London. Please keep me in your thoughts and let's meet if you find yourself in the UK! Once again, I would like to thank all of you for the past year and a half - it really has been a roller-coaster of learning new things, meeting amazing people, and making precious memories that I will never forget.

