

What's up,

OITA!

2018 September,
No. 28

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



A few words from the head of the International Division



The mercury hit record-highs all over Japan this summer, and Oita was no exception. I wonder how things were in your own localities? In this coming autumn, Oita will be hosting the Japanese National Cultural Festival for the second time after twenty years, and the National Disabled Citizens Art and Culture Festival for the first time ever, so we are expecting plenty of exciting things on the way. One of the special collaboration projects include the personal exhibition of British artist Anish Kapoor, who has been gathering global attention – the exhibition will be held at Beppu Park from October. Having made large scale projects such as the monument for the London Olympics and fascinated audiences all over the world, artworks of similar scale will shortly be available for your viewing pleasures in Beppu, so please come over to take a look if you can.

Mitsuru Tokuno <tokuno-mitsuru@pref.oita.lg.jp>
Head of the International Policy Division in the Oita Prefecture Planning Promotion Department

August saw the arrival of new JET Programme participants (Assistant Language Teachers and Coordinators for International Relations) from all around the world. The Oita prefecture has received a significant rise in numbers, with an increase of a total of 91 JET Programme members last year to a total of 102 this year. In the hope that new participants can transition quickly into their lives in Oita, the Prefectural Government organised an orientation on 17th August, in which essential information concerning work and everyday life were distributed.

With the addition of one CIR position in the prefecture, Beppu City has welcomed Ms Ella Donaldson from the UK as their first ever CIR.

Another new member joining the CIR team Ms Xin Lan Xie from Australia, whose greetings you can read later in the newsletter.



New JET Programme participants join the prefecture



Good day, I am Xin Lan Xie. I will be reporting with everyone else for 'What's up, OITA!', as well as creating the English version of the newsletter. Please keep your eyes peeled, as I will be heading all over the prefecture for work in the future!

Xin Lan Xie, CIR from Western Australia, Australia

On the evening of the 25th of August, I took part in the Tsukumi Folding Fan Dance Ceremony with my colleagues from the prefectural office. While I've witnessed countless Japanese festivals thus far, this one really left an impression as it was the first time I've ever joined in as a participant.

According to legend, the Tsukumi Folding Fan Dance Ceremony holds a lengthy history of 450 years, and started off as a form of memorial service for warriors and farmers who fell in the turmoils of the Sengoku period in which Otomo Sorin ruled as daimyo. While the dance was first created for the purpose of mourning departed souls, it gradually took influence from the dancing styles of Kyoto, eventually becoming the Tsukumi Dance as we know it today by merging elements of the past and present.

With colourful fans in our hands and vibrantly hued yukatas wrapped around our bodies, we immersed ourselves in the enjoyable atmosphere and fluttered and danced into the summery night of August, feeling almost as if we've travelled back into the past.

Thanks to this engaging experience, I witnessed how the Japanese people conserve and inherit their traditional cultures; moreover, I felt just how mysterious festivals from the distant past continue to influence the Japanese people to this very day. My interests towards both Oita and Japanese culture have been ignited by this experience – I am now more excited than ever about my upcoming days of training.

Chen Juan, research associate from Hubei Province, China

Monthly staff corner



A Day at Takkirikeikoku

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Summer

in Japan is quite something. Having only been part of the Oita International Policy Division team for less than a week, I was already withering in the brutal heat. You can only imagine my gratefulness when my director invited me for a tour to Takkirikeikoku Valley to escape the heat.

The day began early; blessed with good weather, our car departed from the city and weaved through winding mountain roads surrounded by greenery for about an hour, until finally reaching the Takkiri Ravine hidden quietly within the valley.

The sound of cicadas pierced the air, and the cool mountain breeze tickled our cheeks. Children frolicked in the shallow water, delighted at having captured the small fish and prawns swimming in it. We took off our shoes and went for a quick walk in the flowing brook with our bare feet, a treat for souls escaping from the heat of the city.

Returning to shore, I immediately spotted some wooden bungalows among the trees. These bungalows with lofts are apparently popular dwelling lodges for friends and families on vacation, with smallest of them costing just a bit above a humble 3,700 yen per night and hosting up to five people. If you're more of a 'the more the merrier' sort of person, you can certainly pay more for larger capacities – the priciest of them all cost 31,500 yen per night, and hosts up to 30 people. There were also ones that came with a functioning kitchen, shower, and toilet, and I entertained myself with them for a fair while. Having finally finished, I then walked towards the barbeque area. Years of living in Australia has trained me into picking up any pair of barbeque tongs within sight and flexing them around like a lobster clicking its pinchers, which I did immediately. Looking around the lush greenery surrounding us, I can only imagine how nice it would be to put a shrimp on the barbie with your family and mates.



Clockwise from left:
1. Bungalows hidden among the trees / 2. A big picnic gathering. / 3. A cosy picnic with a party of two is nice, too.

It's also worth mentioning that the Takkirikeikoku Valley is situated around 20km away from the Usa Jingu, and 40km from the Myoban Hotspring, a bit of something for both shrine enthusiasts and bathing enthusiasts. For the foodies, some local delicacies one can try along the way include the *dango-jiru*, a wheat-flour-based dumpling stew cooked with vegetables and miso, the *Hyuuga-don*, a bowl of steaming rice covered with tuna slices, sweet soy sauce mixture and sesame sauce, and last not but least, the *jigoku-mushi-purin*, pudding cooked by the thermal heat of the hot springs.

If you like the idea of icy water tickling your toes on a summer's day, or a visage of flaming autumn leaves as far as the eyes can reach, or happen to enjoy a good bite and a good soak, why not take a drive to the Takkirikeikoku Valley?

bungalow pricing

- Bungalow for 5 – 3,700 yen/night
- Bungalow for 7 – 5,800/night
- Bungalow for 15 – 15,800 yen/night
- Bungalow for 30 – kitchen, shower and toilet available, 31,500 yen/night

****Bungalows not open all seasons, please enquire before planning your journey.****

Greetings from the new editor:

To devoted past reader of this newsletter, I am sure that you'd agree that my predecessor, Sheridan, has done an excellent job in creating its contents, and frankly I feel just a bit apprehensive about upholding the standard. Nevertheless, I've tried my best at playing it cool in this steamy weather. To new readers, welcome. After enjoying the greenery, fireworks, and occasional breeze offered by Oita's Summer, it's finally time to embrace the wonderful season that is Autumn.

Xin Lan