



What's up,

OITA! 2020 January No. 44

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

Greetings to the Associates of Oita Across the Globe

New Year's Greetings from Nakashima Eiji,
Director to the Planning Promotion Department, Oita Prefecture

Happy new year.

During last year's Rugby World Cup 2019 period, Oita hosted 5 matches including 2 quarterfinals, in which a total of 173 thousand spectators attended the games at the stadium. Other than South Africa, the remainder of the best four teams - England, New Zealand and Wales - put on world-level performances here at Oita. Primary school students and other citizens alike engaged in welcoming ceremonies such as national anthem recitals and commemorative photography with guests. Local senior high school students in particular interacted regularly with visitors through rugby-related events and school visits. On top of this, citizens mingled with circles of overseas guests in fanzones and tourist attractions, stepping out of their comfort zones through participating in challenging roles such as tour guides so as to engage in more proactive communication.



Moving onto tourism, for the first time in history, Oita topped the national ranking in the 'Overall Satisfaction Level at the Completion of the Journey' category in Jalan's Travel and Boarding Analysis 2019. Furthermore, according to the Japan Tourism Agency's figures in 2018, foreign tourists alone have spent over a record-breaking 1.4 million guest nights in local accommodation facilities; factor in Japanese visitors, and the figure reaches a never-before-seen 7.77 million guest nights.

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(Continued from previous page) In other news, the highly anticipated Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics 2020 is to convene this year. The Olympic flame will be passed around the prefecture between 24~25 April, and we are hoping that this will add momentum to the big event. Before the games begin, Olympic and Paralympic athletes representing Portugal, Fiji, Mongolia, Malaysia, Laos and other nations will be attending the pre-games training camps held at Oita. Learning from our experiences at the Rugby World Cup, the people of Oita greatly looks forward to demonstrating the best of our hospitality.

The Oita Prefecture is also consistent in delivering information to our overseas audience - we greatly look forward to your future contributions to the promotion of our prefecture.

To end off my greetings, I wish you every success in both work and life - best wishes for the new year.

Ms. Sarah Backley has been Appointed Mejiron Overseas Supporter



Ms. Sarah Backley from the UK, who served as a Coordinator for International Relations for the Oita Prefecture since July 2017, has left the office from December 2019. She has since been appointed a Mejiron Overseas Supporter.

Two years and a half spent in Oita flew by at the blink of an eye – it was a great pleasure to have experienced the many highlights of Oita and the kindness of its people through my time in the JET Programme.

Furthermore, thanks to large scale events like the Rugby World Cup, I was able to see Oita at its liveliest. The experiences that I have acquired shall remain memories for a lifetime.

While it is with sadness that I leave Oita, I have had the greatest time thanks to the kindness shown by the many wonderful people I have met, to whom I cannot thank enough. Oita will forever have a place in my heart as a home away from home, and I hope to continue to enact as a bridge across cultures in future to promote its appeals to the wider world.

- Sarah Backley



Scorching the Winter Skies

Beppu Christmas Hanabi Fantasia

Every year, on the weekend of Christmas or the one that falls before it, the night sky above Beppu Bay is illuminated by the light of firework displays. The evenings of 21st and 22nd last December saw the convention of the Beppu Christmas Hanabi Fantasia 2019. I attended on the second evening, and as the starting time approached, swarms of people began arriving the Matogahama Park where the fireworks are set offshore. While the seaside park is the viewing location of choice, I chose to watch from the rooftop carpark of YouMe Town Beppu, another location mapped on the event's official flyer. It had rained throughout the day, and while the sky cleared up just before the display, the wind was chilly so finding the courage to press the shutter proved to be quite challenging. Despite this, the ground shimmered like a mirror thanks to the rain and the city of Beppu shone twice as brilliantly from the incandescence of the fireworks.

Not far off from the firework barges stands the Beppu Tower. Completed in 1957, the Beppu Tower is designed by the late architect and engineer Naito Tachu who is renowned as a pioneer in earthquake-proof designs. Naito built many broadcasting and observation towers around Japan – alongside the Nagoya TV Tower, the Tsutengaku, the Sapporo TV Tower, the Tokyo Tower and the Hakata Port Tower, the Beppu Tower was built in the 1950~60s of postwar Japan and the towers are collectively dubbed the 'Six Tower Brothers'. While not tall by modern standards, the Beppu Tower still stands proudly like a candle shedding light over the city to this day. Around me were young families who had also come to enjoy the lightshow, and somewhere nearby a dog howled as the fireworks crackled above. Even if you don't celebrate Christmas, soaking up the atmosphere of the festival and looking at the night scenery of Beppu is quite enjoyable in itself.

Details on last year's event and upcoming information on this year's schedule can be accessed via the link below:

<http://beppu-event.jp/xmas/>

***Information is currently only available in Japanese (01/01/2020)*

- Xin Lan Xie , CIR from Australia

