



# What's up, OITA!

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

## OITA HOVERCRAFT

FROM OITA HOVER TERMINAL FOR OITA AIRPORT (SPACEPORT OITA)



Tanso  
03

Banri  
02

Baien  
01

## Meet Oita's New Hovercraft

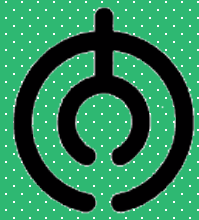
Oita Prefecture plans to introduce what will be Japan's only hovercraft as a seaward method of access for Oita Airport from west Oita. With the start of service closing in, Oita gathered name suggestions from residents and people all over the world to help familiarize them and get people attached to the crafts.

A panel of judges reviewed the 2,507 entries and decided on the names listed in the photo above: Baien, Banri, and Tanso.

The namesakes for the three hovercraft are Miura Baien, Hoashi Banri, and Hirose Tanso. Known as the "three wise men of Bungo," they lived in Kunisaki, Hiji, and Hita, respectively, and dedicated much to the studies of western astronomy, medicine, and Confucianism.

2022

# Top 10 Prefectural Government Topics



Looking back on 2022, the Government of Oita Prefecture has announced the “**Top 10 Prefectural Government Topics**” for 2022. They can be read below, but see the QR code to the right for details



Oita Pref.  
Top 10

- 1 **Co-existing with COVID** Stopping the spread while reinvigorating the economy
- 2 **“Huh?” becomes “Whoa!”** Digitalization not just in SMEs, but also the government
- 3 **From Oita to Space** Accelerating work on opening Spaceport Oita
- 4 **National Tree Care Festival** Agriculture, forestry, fishery exports at all time high
- 5 **People Come First—Number 1 in Japan** Highest “healthy life expectancy” in Japan
- 6 **Surplus of People Moving in for First Time in 15 Years** Largest amount in history
- 7 **Women and Youth Shine on the National Stage** Oita’s new dynamic
- 8 **Rapid Progress for Art Culture** “Culture City of East Asia 2022, Oita”
- 9 **First Nanase, Now Tamarai!** Strengthening the prefecture’s land, one dam at a time
- 10 **“Manufacturing an Oita for the Future”** Talks to sustain Oita into the future begin



## News From Around Oita

Headlines for January

- New disabled-friendly Sunflower ferry unveiled for Beppu-Osaka route
- Umitamago Aquarium breeding success: artificial rearing of Steller Sea Lion Rocco recognised as national first
- Campaign for prefecture-wide sharing of ambulance status information with medical institutions marks national first; improvement in life-saving rate expected
- Tourism for overnight stays within prefecture sees 43% increase in 2022 (3.61 million people) for first time in three years
- Oita Uenogaoka High School wins two student science prizes including Asahi Kasei Prize for Chemistry Club; first school prize within prefecture for 39 years
- Bungo Takada City hosts Ho-ran Enya festival for first time in three years, with cheers echoing to the heavens
- Beppu Tower reopened 27<sup>th</sup> January with rainbow light-up
- Towards revitalisation: Beppu City and Jeju City renew international exchange ties on 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of partnership
- Amabie named most popular, Robert takes first place in ‘most handsome’ category in Mt. Takasaki monkey elections



Umitamago Aquarium



Ho-ran Enya Festival



Yufuin





### Asagimadara Rest Spot



The Asagimadara is a graceful migratory butterfly that flies from the south to Himeshima from early May to early June in search of the nectar of the *Heliotropium japonicum*, a wild flower native to Himeshima. After taking its rest here, it flies to cooler northern regions.



With the change of seasons in mid-October, the new generation of butterflies relocate from the north to the warm south in search of the nectar of the *Eupatorium japonicum* that grows in Himeshima, where they take their rest. A free bus operates whilst the butterflies are migrating so that you can enjoy the sights!

### Himeshima Bon Odori



Himeshima Bon Odori is said to have been derived from Buddhist chanting (Nenbutsu Odori) in the Kamakura Period (1185-1333). This traditional dance is performed by local children and residents, and comprises of the Kitsune Odori, Aya Odori, Zen Daiko, and Sarumarutaiyu. New additions to the dance have also been created in succession, delighting the audience with humour, plots, and elaborate costumes. The dancers dance around the central square as well as the bon tsubo in each district.

Himeshima Bon Odori is held annually for three days between 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> August. On 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> an additional night-time ferry service is provided to cater to the crowds. The festival was designated as a 'National Selected Intangible Folk Cultural Asset' in 2012.



# A Day from Hell!



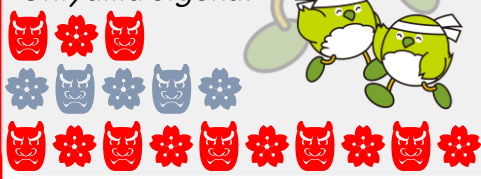
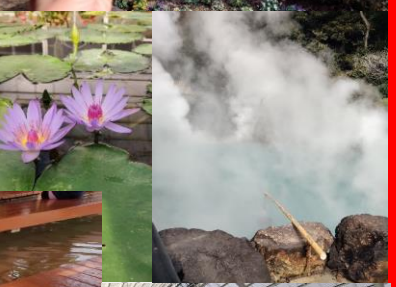
Although I've been a CIR in Oita for over a year, I had never completed all the Beppu Hells in one go - I decided to remedy this on a chilly but sunny January day along with a visit to the newly opened Jigoku Onsen Museum. I grabbed a *melon pan* to munch at Beppu Station before hopping on the bus towards Kannawa. The stunning scenery rolled past, and I day-dreamed for the next 25 minutes or so of the ride: Beppu's mountains were a sight that I could never tire of. I followed their sweeps and curves until it was time to get off at my first stop.

I began my tour of Hell with *Umi Jigoku*, or Sea Hell, so called as its waters are dyed a sky blue. Stepping through the wafts of hot spring steam, I as if I had stepped through a doorway into a fantasy world. The azure waters sparkled in the morning sun, and I proceeded through the *tori* gates up to the little shrine atop a small hill overlooking the hell itself. After paying my respects, I headed back down and into the gift shop to sample some of the hellish treats on offer. I purchased a *jigoku mushi purin*, or a hell steamed pudding, and made my way outside to enjoy it whilst overlooking the bright blue waters. Heading back down the winding road to the entrance, I took a detour to a foot spa. It is there that I sat, soaking in the sun's rays whilst my feet soaked in the minerals and goodness of the hot spring water. A small rest was just what I needed, and I left with a spring in my step towards the greenhouse attached to the Sea Hell. Inside, I found various tropical plants including cacti and flowers a multitude of colours. One sweep around the greenhouse and I was off to my next stop: *Oniishibozu Jigoku*.

The *Oniishibozu Jigoku* is a muddy hot spring that bubbles up from deep below, creating mesmerising patterns in lines and waves on the surface. I wound around the vicinity, admiring the stark contrast with the crystal clear azure Sea Hell. You can also try out a foot spa here, although it is just ordinary hot spring water - not mud! However, I had already relaxed a bit in the foot spa at the Sea Hell, so I moved onto my next pit stop: *Oniyama Jigoku*.

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Relations





*Oniyama Jigoku* is well-known as the crocodile hell - it is the home of a number of snappy friends who lie deep in the pits of hell, wallowing in the sun and hot waters. I had been to this hell before, and I was again a little sad seeing the crocodiles almost piled up on top of each other for lack of space. I did not dwell too long here, however, and instead moved on to the next hell situated a little further across the road: *Kamodo Jigoku*.

The main attraction of *Kamodo Jigoku* is that you can try drinking some of the hot spring water and steam your face too. I steamed my face for a short time, hoping for some skincare miracle, and sipped a small amount of the water. It was metallic and a little bitter, but I'm sure packed with minerals! The second attraction of this hell is its food stall: there, you can purchase all sorts of goodies, all steamed on-site. Feeling a little peckish, I purchased an *onsen tamago*, or steam boiled egg and another pudding - this time soy sauce flavoured. I relaxed, my body warm from the surrounding heat, and dug in, using the soy sauce to season my egg - it was delicious! I left this hell, feeling satisfied and a little sleepy, and moved onto my final stop on this site - *Shiraike Jigoku*.



This hot spring is coloured white, with a little more mistiness in its depths than the Sea Hell. The next stop after this was the Jigoku Onsen Museum. Right across the road from *Shiraike Jigoku* and at the top of Kannawa, it was an architecturally modern building made of wood. I purchased my ticket at the counter and waited a few minutes to be shown into the first exhibition. While I waited, I perused the goods on offer at the gift shop. There was Hells merchandise as well as locally produced and crafted goods and foodstuffs alongside a café selling lunch and snacks. I was shown in and watched a video on an interactive screen about the history of the Hells. It included some English and gave a nice overview through an immersive experience. The main exhibition was a create-your-own hot spring water activity. The room was dark and material was used to create a maze-like effect. Iridescent lighting was used to make it seem as if you were underground, deep down where rainfall first begins its journey to becoming hot spring water. Around various bends were stamp stations, where you take the illustrated postcard of Beppu given to you and stamp it with whatever is at each stamp station - my inner child particularly loved this part. After stamping and exploring to your heart's content, you can place your postcard into a holder on the wall, which cleverly shows you what type of hot spring water you have created based on colour and shape! The next exhibition is a video explaining the history of the Hells, before the final exhibition that showcases items from Beppu Hatto Onsen Festival as well as pamphlets and trinkets through the ages relating to the Hells.





My final stop on my tour of Hell was a bus stop away - *Chinoike Jigoku*, or the Blood Hell, and *Tatsumaki Jigoku*, which showcases a bursting geyser. *Chinoike Jigoku*, although further away, is one of the more popular Hells, as its waters are an unusual blood red. I checked this final Hell out, marvelling at the murky red depths, before I headed back to Kannawa for my final stop of the day itself: the famous Hyotan Onsen. Here, I relaxed in the various baths, both inside and out, enjoying a waterfall massage and a steam sauna before trudging out, exhausted, but in the best possible way. It was the perfect way to finish up a relaxing day in the sun in Beppu.



## Beppu Hells Tour

🐱 7 hells pack 🐱  
¥2,200/adults  
¥1,000/children

Hyotan Onsen  
¥880/adults  
¥380/children  
¥260/infants

\*towel and amenity  
purchase available\*







Austin Vaughn



## King of Bungo

If you've ever spent any time in Oita, you've probably heard of the Otomo Clan. They had such an influence over Bungo Province (modern-day Oita) that nearly every city or town has something related to the clan in it. But if you had to say which Otomo is the most famous, it would definitely have to be Otomo Sorin (1530-1587).

Sorin was a *daimyo* who ruled over Bungo, as well as much of the rest of Kyushu, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In 1545, Sorin was 15 years old, and he saw something that changed the entire course of his life. Some people from Portugal came and visited on a boat. Of course, in the 1500s this was much more impressive than it sounds today. And young Sorin was very impressed as well. His eyes were opened to a whole new world, and rather than rejecting it, he embraced it, fascinated by new technologies, new things, new foods, and new cultures.

This eventually led to him inviting Francis Xavier, a Jesuit from Italy who was proselytizing in Yamaguchi, to Bungo Province. Shortly after, even more technologies and western ideas were introduced to the province, one after another, including a hospital and the first institution for higher education in Japan, the Collegio. The capital of Bungo, Funai (modern-day Oita City), became a hub of international culture. Sorin was known as the "King of Bungo" and the entirety of Kyushu was even called "BVNGO" (V and U are the same letter in Latin) on the first western map of Japan.

Speaking of BVNGO, teaching about all this history is the job of the Namban BVNGO Koryukan (Otomo Ruins Discovery Center). Located near the ruins of the old Otomo Residence, they have several exhibits introducing the life of Otomo Sorin as well as the changes that Funai went through under his reign.

The most impressive part of the center, however, is definitely the garden outside. The garden is a replica of the garden of the Otomo residence. It's built right on top of the location of the original, which still sleeps underneath the earth, along with many other artifacts. The ruins are still an active excavation site, but there are plans to build a replica of the entire Otomo Residence by 2030. If the replica of the residence is made with the same care as the garden, it is definitely something to look forward to.







## Trail of Nanban

Nanban, Namban, spell it how you like but the first thing to make clear is that the title above does not refer to a trail dedicated to Miyazaki Prefecture's specialty, chicken nanban. (~~Please contact the author of this article if said trail exists.~~) 南蛮 *nanban* is a term that was used to refer to the lands of Southeast Asia and, by the transitive property, the western countries and cultures (such as Portugal) that came to Japan via those nations. So oddly enough, the trail and chicken nanban are related, through being connected to Portugal. It's just that one is a trail of locations related to a Japanese feudal lord and the other is fried poultry with tartar sauce.

Putting that aside, there are quite a few stops on the "Otomo Clan Funai Nanban Culture Course": Jingujiura Park, the Funai Castle Ruins, Yuho Park, Daichi Temple, Manju Temple, the suspected site of the Deus Cathedral, and the Namban BVNGO Koryukan (detailed on the previous page). Before heading to any of those however, my first stop was a manhole. Recently, two new manhole cover designs were added to the Galleria Takemachi shopping street, with one being related to Nanban culture. The cover is an illustration of Uryuu-jima, Japan's Atlantis. Uryuu-jima is said to be an island that was said to be located on Beppu Bay used as a port of trade with China and western countries, but allegedly sunk in a day in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Going directly from that to the first stop of the actual trail, my next location was Jingujiura Park, which is also a location supposedly used for Nanban trade. A statue of Otomo Sorin marks the spot, which was remade after being melted for scrap during WWII. A half hour away is Funai Castle, which became the stronghold for the Otomo Clan after the Otomo Residence was burned and Mt. Takasaki Castle was abandoned. Yuho Park holds several statues related to Otomo Sorin, including a party of teenagers he sent to Italy, who received a warm welcome there, but were greeted by a dead Sorin and the banning of Christianity when they returned home to Japan. Daichi Temple is a temple built by the Otomo who invited the master of Manju Temple to lead it, but to be perfectly honest, there isn't much to see. Manju Temple itself, on the other hand, is a very nice temple compound with plenty of buildings and a nice Zen garden. Finally, Deus Chapel, where Francis Xavier used to spread Christianity to the masses. Unfortunately, now there is only a plaque marking where it may have been, but it is interesting to think of what once was.





# from our Reporters 国際交流員だより



## Swara Fife

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## Let's go to School!

Going on school visits has, until recently, not been part of my work schedule. However, as Covid-19 restrictions have been easing, I've begun receiving some requests for school-based exchange. So far, I have participated in a wide range of exchange projects and events, including helping high school students with their sustainable tourism projects, as well as judging a speech contest. This time, I made my way over to Usuki, where I participated in my first primary school exchange. I visited three different classes, where I listened and reacted to the self-introductions of year six students, played some English games with them, and presented on the UK and its culture. It was there that I tried my very first Japanese school meal! The tray I was handed had a bowl of meat sauce pasta, some vegetables in a stew, a long wedge of bread, and a little carton of milk with Oita Prefecture's mascot 'Mejiron' on the front, advertising the benefits of milk for growing kids. The lack of butter with the bread dismayed me; it is a travesty to eat plain bread in the UK, even when there's a sauce or soup to mop it up with. Unfortunately, the milk, too, was left untouched, as I only drink plant-based milks: in the UK, there is a choice of dairy free milk, even at schools. Despite this, the lunch was tasty, and I left the staffroom with lots of energy, which I would subsequently need, as I chatted and played with the kids for the rest of the lunch break. The kids were so excited and full of energy, their eyes shining as they asked me quick-fire questions about every topic under the sun. It helped me recharge my batteries, and left me hoping for another school visit soon.

## Why is *This* Here?

I really don't know why, but sometimes I have a really bad habit of thinking too much. I think too much about things that are really obvious, or sweat about the small things until I just don't even know what I'm thinking about anymore. For example, recently I had a chance to walk around Oita City. While I was doing so, I found a small figure of a soccer player. It was just lying there on the street, but for some reason I took a picture of it, and looking back on it even now, I can remember what I was thinking. "Where did this come from? Did a kid from this neighborhood drop it? Was it one of their favorites? Is it just junk? If I threw it away and the kid came back to get it, would it make them sad? Is that just an excuse I'm telling myself because I don't want to pick it up and throw it away?" I really just thought too much. If anyone else ends up doing some thinking like this, it might be good to write it down. It made me feel a little bit better, so I think I might try doing it more from now on.

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