

W h a t ' s U p , O I T A !

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

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

The National Cultural Festival and the Art and Culture Festival for Persons with Disabilities Bureau and the Rugby World Cup 2019 Promotion Office were newly created this April. The preparation for several large events is well underway as we look towards next year and the year after that as a prefecture. Looking at the tourism statistics from last year, the increase of foreign tourists (inbound tourists) made up for the loss of tourists due to the Kumamoto Earthquakes. From here on out, we will polish up our hospitality again and do our best to convey the charms of Oita to many people, particularly foreigners.

Los Angeles Prefectural Association



Yuji Kaida, chairman of the Oita Prefectural Association of Los Angeles, visited the Oita Prefectural Office on March

30th. The Prefectural Association will greet its one hundredth year in 2017, and a commemorative ceremony is scheduled in Los Angeles in September. On this occasion, Mr. Kaida came home to Oita in order to prepare for the ceremony and had a preparatory meeting at the prefectural office.

A variety of programs are scheduled, and the prefecture will have the privilege of helping the ceremony to become a magnificent occasion.

“Yabakei Sightseeing” Becomes a Japanese Heritage

After making a joint application, Nakatsu and Kusu’s “Yabakei Sightseeing ~ Going Down the Path of Illustrated Landscape Scrolls Etched into the Earth” was selected as a Japan Heritage. A Japan Heritage is something determined by the Agency of Cultural Affairs as having a story that tells the culture or tradition of Japan through the historical attractions or features of a region. After the start of the 2015 fiscal year, Yabakei Sightseeing will become the second Japan Heritage in the prefecture, following after Hita’s Kangien Academy Ruins.



An Usa History Lesson

I went to Usa for the first time on a rainy day in April. I didn't know much about Usa besides Usa Jingu and renowned karaage, so I went to the Usa City Tourism Association in order to learn more about the history of tourist attractions in tourism. Upon my arrival, I spoke to Mr. Ono and Ms. Itai, respectively director and vice director of the Association.

My first question was, "What's the second most famous tourist attraction in Usa?"

There was no question that Usa Jingu, a mere two minute walk from the Tourism Association, was the biggest, but after a bit of brief deliberation, the answer I received was "Machu Picchu."

The Machu Picchu of Oita is located in Innai, one of the three districts Usa is divided into. It is named for the Machu Picchu of Peru and heavily resembles it. Machu Picchu has an interesting history as its residents had to figure out how to build houses in the "V"-shaped valley without having enough flat land for houses.

In Ajimu, another area of Usa, you'll find "kote-e." Kote-e are paintings put on the walls of houses during construction in order to protect the home and its inhabitants. Paintings may guarantee health, happiness, or similar things. Popular imagery includes dragons and tigers. The kote-e go as far back as the Meiji Period (1868-1912).

From these tourist attractions and other attractions scattered across Usa, you can learn about 20% of the history of Usa. For the remaining 80%, two places are very important.

First, the Oita Prefectural Museum of History. There is clearly a lot of knowledge inside of the building, but history lies even outside its walls. There megalithic tombs (kofun) in the land surrounding the museum. The oldest of these tombs dates back 1,800 years.

Secondly (and obviously), there is Usa Jingu.



Machu Pichu (Credit: Oita Photo Collection
www.visit-oita.jp)



Kofun on the site of the Oita Prefectural Museum of History (Credit: Oita Photo Collection)

Usa Jingu was built 1,300 years ago in the Nara Period. In the days before Buddhism, Japan had no alphabet, no architecture, and it operated on a very traditional system of living life as the sun rises and sets. Buddhism was brought to Japan to help with literacy around the 6th century, and building Buddhist temples also taught people about architecture.

Usa Jingu was an attempt to combine the world of the gods and the world of Buddhism in a system called “jingū-ji” or “shrine temples.” Usa Jingu was the very first of these shrine-temples to exist. Usa Jingu was also the first Hossō sect shrine in Japan.

Usa Jingu continues to remain important and regularly sees many visitors, including visitors from foreign countries. For those who decided to visit the shrine, there are pamphlets available in a variety of foreign languages, including English, Chinese, and Korean, at the Usa City Tourism Association.

The Tourism Association also has audio guides with multilingual support available (Japanese, English, Chinese, Korean) for Usa Jingu. With a touch of a pen against a map, you can learn more about all of the spots spread about through Usa Jingu.

The guide provides insight into the history of Usa Jingu as well as the culture of the surrounding area. Despite the rain, I lingered at each stop while listening to the audio guide. I felt as though I really understand the history of the shrine and its importance.

I am already looking forward to my next visit to Usa.

There is no entry fee for Usa Jingu. The audio guides can be rented for 500 yen from the Usa City Tourism Association. (In-person guides are available for 1,000 yen.)

Editor's Note

Every season in Oita is beautiful, but as the days get longer and warmer, and the feeling of spring fills the air, it's hard to think of anything more lovely.

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Usa Jingu (Credit: Oita Photo Collection)

