

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

It's been a little under a year since the prefecture established the "Oita International Students Business Center." This center provides the opportunity to listen to presentations from students who have already started or intend to start businesses. Naturally, the students' business plans have great ideas and overflow with hopes and dreams of serving as a bridge between Oita and their home countries, be they China, South Korea, Thailand, Bangladesh, Nigeria, or elsewhere. I would like to introduce them to you if I have the chance. Please give them your support if you meet them.

Preparations for Hosting the International ONSEN Summit Are Pushing Ahead!!

Preparations are underway for the "International ONSEN 湯 Summit – OITA Prefecture, JAPAN" that will take place in Beppu from May 25th to the 27th. Leaders from ONSEN in 16 countries and 17 regions, as well as leaders from Japanese ONSEN, will participate. The program for the Summit is as follows:

May 25th

- National ONSEN Summit (sponsored by the Ministry of the Environment)
- International ONSEN Summit & National ONSEN Summit Joint Reception

May 26th

- Keynote Speech: Yolanda Perdomo (Spain), Director of the UNWTO Affiliate Members
- Case Study Presentations:
 - Tourism Field: Jerome Phelipeau (France), President of Compagnie de Vichy
 - Medical, Health and Beauty Field: Massimo Sabbion (Italy), President of the Hotel President Terme
 - Energy Field: Grimur Saemundsen (Iceland), CEO of Blue Lagoon Iceland
- Foreign and domestic representatives will exchange opinions in the fields of tourism, medical, health, and beauty, and energy.

May 27th

- Excursion
Four options have been prepared that will allow participants to experience the charms of "Oita, the Onsen Capital of Japan."

Furthermore, there are events being held in conjunction with the Summit that general audiences can attend. We plan to hold an "International ONSEN Tourism Product Exhibition" and "ONSEN Gastronomy Walking (in Beppu and Nakatsu)." We will provide further information in next month's issue.

<Tourism Promotion and Regional Development Division>

The Beppu Experience

Yufuin is known for being a tourist mecca. It doesn't matter what time of day or which day of the week you choose to go. You can count on tourists lining the streets and speaking a variety of languages, primarily Japanese, Korean, and Chinese.

It's hard to think of a type of store that Yufuin doesn't offer. You like Ghibli? Yufuin has a Ghibli store. You like Sanrio? Yufuin has a Sanrio store. You like Snoopy? You guessed it. Yufuin has a Snoopy store.

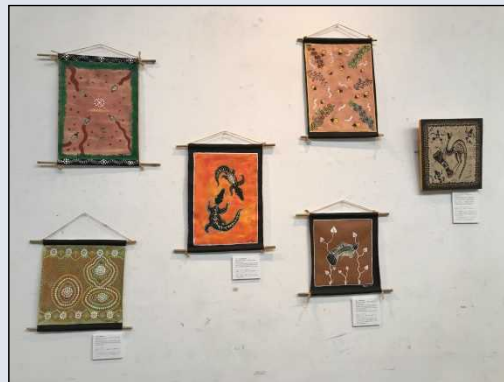
But aside from a large number and variety of commercial goods for sale, what else is in Yufuin? There's nature, from Lake Kinrin to Mt. Yufu, horse drawn carriages and rickshaws, tasty food, and art, amongst Yufuin's other attractions.

This month, we set out to find out more about art in Yufuin.

Our art exploration began right in Yufuin Station.

The station's waiting room doubles as an art exhibition named the Art Hall, and works of art line its walls.

All of the pieces in this month's exhibition were created by a Australian residing in Yufuin. He produced a fantastic series of images representing both Yufuin's and Japan's culture using Aboriginal techniques. These paintings greet visitors to the station and make for a terrific first impression.



Our next impression was much more hands on. At the Kyushu Yufuin Folk Craft Village, we got the opportunity to make our own art in the form of tie dye. Our instructor showed us how to make a number of patterns using creative folding techniques and rubber bands. We suited up with aprons and gloves, soaked our white handkerchiefs in blue dye, and then soaked the dyed handkerchief in warm onsen water. As we washed our hands, our instructor dried our handkerchiefs. In less than 30 minutes, we had a finished product.

The rest of the Folk Craft Village is filled with other crafts on display in addition to workshops that make everything from spinning tops to salad dressing. If you're looking for a tourist destination where you can "do" and not just "see," I wholeheartedly recommend it.

Notes: Entrance to the Art Hall is free. Entrance to the Kyushu Yufuin Folk Art Village is ¥650. The handkerchief dying workshop is ¥1,300.



Editor's Note

It's almost the start of the new fiscal year, and change is in the air. (And the air is getting a lot warmer.) There's a lot to continue to look forward to, especially with the International ONSEN Summit on the horizon. Here's to a happy new "nendo!"

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