

# What's up,

# OITA!

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



## New Year's Greetings to All Associates of Oita Prefecture Residing Overseas



*Tetsuo Okamoto,  
Director General of the Planning  
Promotion Department*

Last year saw the commencement of many highly-anticipated events. One of these was the International Onsen Summit, where leaders of hot-spring areas and researchers alike gathered together to discuss the prospects of using hot-springs as a resource to foster regional development. Other occasions included the National Cultural Festival and the Art and Culture Festival for Persons with Disabilities that convened as part of the 'World Tea Party' event where more than 1.4 million participants showed up to enjoy the art and culture the festivals had to offer. On top of this, the annual Music Festival Argerich's Meeting Point in Beppu also ensued for the 20<sup>th</sup> time with additional live performances in both Tokyo and Rome.

Now, moving onto sports – we've received happy news that the Oita Trinita has reentered the J1 League ever since the 2013 series.

As for this year, the Rugby World Cup will finally commence after long anticipation. We are very excited to welcome guests from all across the globe to our prefecture to engross in the heated games that are soon to kick off. While the Prefecture has always put in its foremost effort in making appropriate measures and preparations, we strive to be even more meticulous and attentive so that our guests are safe and comfortable during their stay.

We have also been making concrete efforts in promoting the Oita prefecture towards overseas audiences – it would be greatly appreciated if you could all contribute to this cause for the sake of the prefecture we call home.

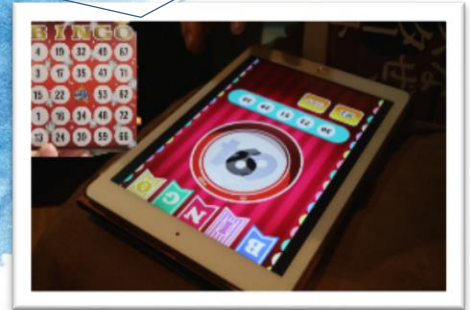
On a final note, I would like to conclude by wishing you all good health and success in 2019. Happy new year.

The last end-of-year party for our division was held in a Korean restaurant. While I was happy to eat spicy food for the first time in ages, the main event of the night was a game of bingo. The winners received giveaways in the following order: vouchers from Tokiwa, hot-spring vouchers, Starbucks gift-cards, beer vouchers, movie vouchers, book vouchers, among others. I usually don't have a lot of luck when it comes to lottery-like games, so I became extremely excited when I became the first person who was one slot away from 'bingo' on that day for some reason.

However, as usual, people who reached bingo appeared one after another before me, and it wasn't long before the Starbucks gift-cards I was eyeing entered the scene. I finally cried 'Bingo!' when only one of the two gift-cards was left, but there was also someone else who reached bingo with me, so we had to settle it with a game of scissors-paper-rock. Just like clockwork, I lost the game and received the beer coupons, the giveaway that I had wanted the least. This flow of events was so unexpected that I burst into tears of laughter. Thankfully, the head of the division eventually exchanged his Starbucks gift-cards with me, so all was well. This is one bingo game that I will remember for the rest of my life.

- Jina Kim, CIR from Korea

# Monthly staff corner



I went to the Usa Jingu again the other day. Although I had been to the Usa Jingu in August as well, the shrine in winter was completely different to how it was in summer and filled with a quaint and mysterious aura. The Usa Jingu is the most prestigious Shinto shrine next to the Ise Jingu, and is visited even by the Japanese royal family. In addition to being one of the sixteen Chokusaisha where imperial envoys perform their rituals, the shrine is also widely popular as the enshrined deity's divine powers reach out to the prestigious and common citizens alike. Surprised at the sight of the many visitors despite the softly drizzling rain, I left the fierce stone lion-dogs that guarded the shrine behind me and climbed a flight of stairs only to experience a sense of serene and wistful beauty in the fallen leaves that littered beneath my feet. Three spectacular shrines, which enshrined the deities Hachiman, Himegami and the Empress consort Jingu respectively, appeared before me as I went deeper into the grounds. Visiting the grand shrine as one embraces the penetrating cold surely was a refreshing experience. I would like to make my way there again when the autumn foliage is in full display.

- Yingmei Fang, CIR from China



# Shedding Light to a Small Corner: Exploring Kunisaki's Rokugo Manzan

The Kunisaki Peninsula, situated north-east of the Oita Prefecture, is famous for its unique tradition of *Rokugo Manzan*. *Rokugo Manzan*, which literally translates to 'Six Villages, Full Mountain', was named after the six districts that were established in 718 A.D when the Buddhist saint Ninmon founded temples in the region. While the local religious institutions' powerful presence has faded with time, the traditions of *Rokugo Manzan* which incorporates elements of Shintoism, Buddhism, Taoism and mountain worship have remained resilient. Year 2018 welcomed the 1,300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Rokugo Manzan*, and Kunisaki remains a place that is embraced by locals and visitors alike for its charms and spiritual heritage.



## 11:30 ~ 12:10 Choanji Temple

A quiet gem that is also known as the 'temple of flowers', Choanji Temple has become a popular destination for guests who travel long distances to admire its carefully cultivated rhododendron trees and hydrangeas that bloom throughout spring and summer months. While I have missed the flowers as well as the brilliant display of autumn maple foliage, the thick carpet of ginkgo leaves that covered the ground was still a sight to behold. The temple was regarded as an important spiritual location by samurais, and serves as an important cultural property today.



## 12:30 ~ 13:20 Onie no Sato / Tennen-ji Temple

Lunch was settled at a restaurant in Onie no Sato, where a light meal of soba noodles and 'ogre rice cakes', grilled mochi dressed in spicy miso paste, was served. Having filled my stomach, I ventured to the Tennen-ji Temple that was just outside of the door. According to the information at the Onie no Sato History Museum, the temple is the grounds for the local Shujo-Onie, an event held every January 7<sup>th</sup> on the lunar calendar that beckons good health and bountiful harvest. Unlike other ogre-related rituals in the country, the ogre is not warded off but instead welcomed as the reincarnation of gods.



13:40~14:10 Mudoji Temple

An ancient temple founded in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the Mudoji Temple worships the Fudo Myo-o as its main idol. It is said that the temple once had twelve branches in total, but is the only one that remains to date. Nonetheless, the statues of the Dainichi Nyorai and Yakushi Nyorai have been moved from the other branches and can be admired if one visits the site. The jagged cliff face and small Shinto shrine right next to the temple creates an interesting backdrop to the scenery.

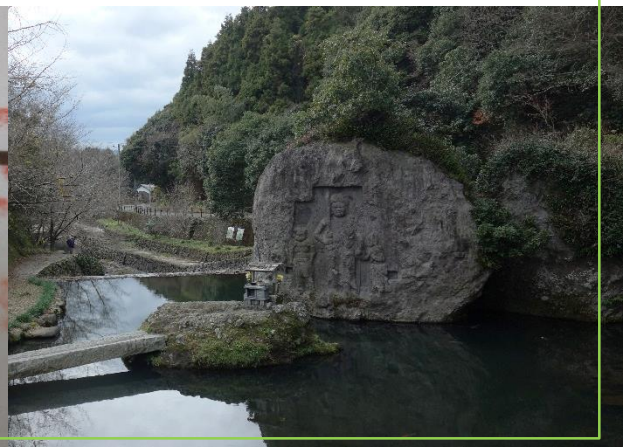
14:20~15:00 Shunkoji Temple

The two kanji that make up the name of the temple mean 'camellia' and 'light' respectively. Both take on unusual readings that prove to be a head-scratcher even for native speakers. Also known as 'Tsubaki-ji' ('Camellia Temple'), it is said that the establishment was founded by the 10<sup>th</sup> abbot of the Tennen-ji Temple. Legend has it that the Buddhist Grandmaster Kukai once hit his staff on the ground, and upon impact, clear water erupted from the cracks of the earth. Coming in contact with the spring water, the staff shot forth new buds and turned into a camellia tree – such is the origins of the temple's name. Ever since Kukai's passing, many pilgrims make way to the temple to pay their respects at the foot of the great camellia tree within the temple's grounds.



*Other highlights from the journey*

(Bottom left) One way to enjoy Rokugo-manzan is to collect goshuin, stamps that signify one's pilgrimage, from the individual temples. / (Bottom right) A statue of Fudo-sanzon that depicts the Fudo Myo-o and his two guardians, stands in the river outside of Tennenji Temple. It is said that the statue was placed there to ward off floods that plagued the area in the past.



15:20~15:50 Jissoin Temple

Another temple dedicated to the Fudo Myo-o, the two jizo idols within the Jissoin Temple are said to have powers that relief pilgrims from health-related troubles, in particular earaches and toothaches. Mr. Aoyama, the abbot of the temple, is a delightfully whimsical man and excellent calligrapher. Hearing that I had come from the faraway land of down-under, he created a memorable moment by generously offering me a calligraphy-themed calendar as a gift.



16:20~16:50 Sentoji Temple

The last stop for the day was the Sentoji Temple, where we were welcomed warmly with hot coffee and snacks. While the current Sentoji Temple is situated at the foot of a hill, the old Sentoji Temple ruins rests quietly halfway up of Mt. Fudoyama. It is said that the temple was named 'Temple of Thousand Lights' as the Dragon God of the North-Eastern Sea had graced the site with a thousand lanterns upon hearing the virtues of Ninmon. The ruins of the old temple was the site where Ninmon had founded the Rokugo Manzan, and it also came to serve as his final resting place.



## Words from the editor

As lovely as Kunisaki is, it's difficult to get around in without a car. I happened to be on a bus tour organised by Tourism Oita that day that proved to be quite a pleasant experience. Looking at the wistful winter mountain scenery in the comforts of a well heated coach sure was nice.

## A few words from the head of the International Division



I attended the Beppu Christmas HANABI Fantasia at the end of last year. The iconic seasonal event that lights up the winter night skies of Beppu has commenced for its 25<sup>th</sup> time. The fireworks that launched in the clear wintry air was exceptionally beautiful and dream-like, and the Beppu Beach Sand Bath, where the event was held, was filled with foreign tourists and overseas students. Moreover, there were also those who had come from Kobe on a firework viewing cruise. These guests stayed in lodgings nearby and enjoyed the fireworks from their box seats. More fireworks will be on show during the springtime Hida-River-Open Tourism Festival as well as the numerous firework exhibitions in summer, so please take the opportunity to enjoy them if you can.

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