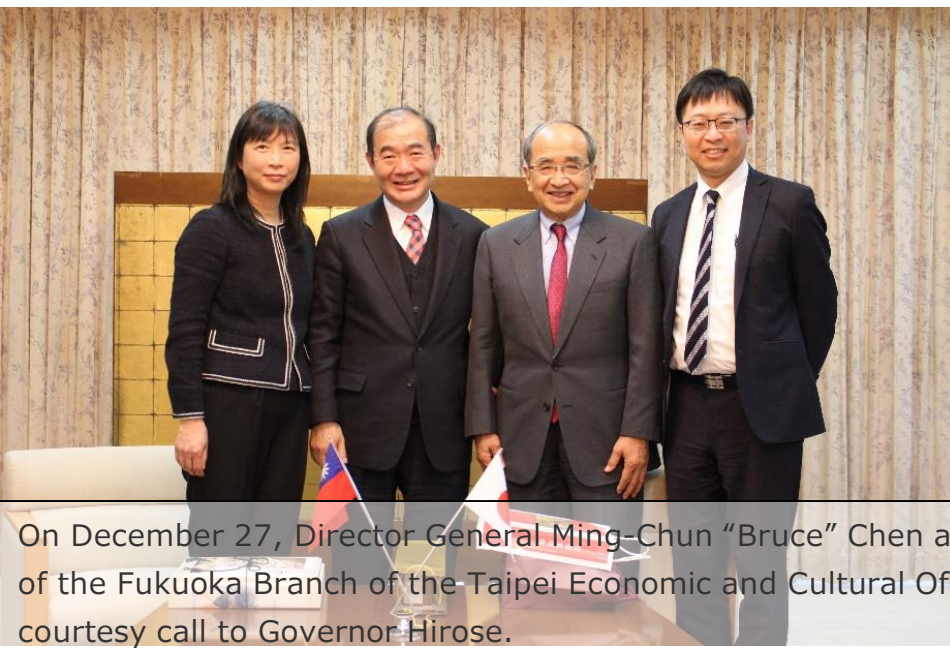




What's up, OITA!

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

Welcome! A Visit from the Taipei Cultural Office Director General



↑ A present of Oita-produced dried shiitake mushrooms, famous in Taiwan.

←From left to right, Ching-min Cheng, Director General Chen, Governor Hirose, Cultural Office PR Director Lee

On December 27, Director General Ming-Chun “Bruce” Chen and his wife, Ching-min Cheng, of the Fukuoka Branch of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office visited Oita, paying a courtesy call to Governor Hirose.

Director General Chen assumed his current post in October of last year. Governor Hirose welcomed the Director General, and the two discussed Taiwan and Oita's deep bond. Director General Chen mentioned how Oita's dried shiitake is famous in Taiwan, and talked with the Governor about Rikio Nakajima, an Oita-born engineer who was heavily involved in dam construction in Taiwan. The topic then shifted to Taiwan's outstanding response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The Director General spoke earnestly of how in 2003, many lives were lost during the SARS pandemic as a result of the virus spreading within hospitals, and that Taiwan took that lesson to heart. This time, they were able to quickly sense what was to come and took immediate action, such as by halting all international flights.

Taiwan and Japan: A History of “Mutual Aid”



The topic then turned to Taiwan and Japan's history of "mutual aid," how they've helped each other over the years. Governor Hirose touched on how Taiwan sent Japan over 26 billion yen in support during the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami. Director General Chen then added how Japan has provided Taiwan with vaccines. When Oita was running out of masks at the beginning of the pandemic, Taiwan sent 10,000 to Oita's medical facilities. When one country has been in trouble, the other has helped out. Today's talks helped reaffirm this history of "mutual aid" between Japan and Taiwan.

←The Director General speaking passionately about Taiwan and Japan's history of mutual aid.

Oita Prefectural Assembly Member Shimura Rikio Nakajima (left)→





Nakatsu Brand Oyster: The 'Higata Bijin'



The 'Higata Bijin' is the first variety of oyster in Japan that has been successfully farmed on tidal flats, adopting Australian oyster farming techniques. These delicious-looking oysters are raised in specialised cages, where their shells collide with each other as the tide ebbs and flows, giving them a polished finish. As the seawater dries up twice a day when the tide is out, the 'Higata Bijin' have to fight to keep their shells closed. As a result, the oyster tightly strains against its shell, condensing a striking sweetness in its flesh that marks these oysters as 'Higata Bijin'.

Winter Activities in Nakatsu City



Core Yamakuni Ice Skating

The appeal of this outdoor ice skating rink complex surrounded by beautiful nature lies in the feeling of exhilaration like no other that you get from flying against the wind. There are restaurants and hot springs accessible by foot from the ice skating rink, so you can relax and spend a leisurely day at your own pace.

Yasuragi no Sato Yamakuni





Austin Vaughn

A Portal Back in Time

To say the Showa era lasted a long time would be an understatement. The reign of Emperor Hirohito, or as he's now known in Japan after his death, Emperor *Showa*, spanned from 1926 to 1989. From the birth of television to the dawn of the internet, countless technologies, trends, products, media, and of course, people, were born, lived, and died in this era. But relatively speaking, it really wasn't that long ago. There are still many, *many* people in Japan today that hold a fondness in their hearts for the Showa era, and Showa Town (*Showa no Machi*) promises to rekindle that flame and pass it onwards to newer generations.

In a country where buildings are not viewed as an "investment," but instead as something to actually be *used* and replaced within a few decades, Showa Town is one of the few places you can see what a real Japanese town looked like back in the Showa 30s (1950s), just the same now as it was then. But the real fun part is what's *in* the buildings. Treasure troves of pop culture and Showa life. From uniquely Japanese things like recreations of old-style Japanese homes and stores, to exhibits of some of its most famous cultural exports like *Astro Boy* and *Godzilla*, as well as even Western cultural icons of the time that you would never expect to see in Japan, there really is something for everyone.

Everyone, including me. Just as one of many examples, I found the exhibits of technology of the time: radios and TVs, Japanese typewriters and computers, very interesting, even nostalgic, despite being a "Heisei kid". If you're ever in Oita, I highly recommend that you visit Showa Town and dig up your own memories. Or maybe even find something "new" to make memories about.





Forwarding Address: 1950s Japan!

Block red-and-white street signs swinging from ornate, one might say tacky, green and yellow lampposts; telephone wires criss-crossing a gaudy welcome arch spelling out the words 'eki doori shotengai'; traditional buildings housing fridges, television sets, and vending machines so vintage they almost look futuristic to the modern eye. This is Showa Town, or 昭和の町, a time-capsule located in Northern Oita Prefecture that will send you back to Showa period Japan (1926-1989).



Swara Fife



Perusing the toys, electronics, pop-culture merchandise, and other such nik-naks in the museum evokes memories of the Post-War period, where Japan's world-famous pop-culture story began. Browsing through this archive was a trip down memory lane for this journalist, as many of the relics that can be found in Showa Town had similar equivalents in the UK.

Towards the end of my wanders through the eerily quiet streets of a town trapped in time (I highly recommend weekdays for the most leisurely perusal of all Showa Town has to offer), I noticed a

familiar face more than once: the tall, deep red, handsome countenance of the humble postbox, which traces its origins back to 1850s England. Soon after, they made their way across the seas to Japan during its widespread adoption of Western technologies. The frequency of their appearance, as pictured, is an indication that these postboxes hold a certain image, one that brings to mind the period of the 1950s onward in Japan, in the same way that they act as a representative symbol for the UK to this day. These tidbits of shared culture were unexpected, but made for a trip tinged with both nostalgia and fascination in equal parts. Wherever you hail from, I do believe that you will be able to find a thread of familiarity that you can follow through the meandering streets of Showa Town.



~ Showa Town Details ~

Opening hours: 10:00~16:00 (weekdays)
9:00~17:00 (weekends)

Entrance fee: Adults: 850¥; Children: 640¥
(includes entry to 2 museums and the Team Lab Gallery)

Car park fee: 400¥ (under 30 mins free)

Guided Tours for groups are available, but you must book in advance.
Please fill out the application form available via the following link:

<https://www.showanomachi.com/special/syowa.html>

Guided tours cost 2000¥ per group and last 60 minutes.

