



What's up, OITA!

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

Oita Kenjin of Brazil Cultural Association Celebrates 70 years since Founding



A ceremony for the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Oita Kenjin of Brazil Cultural Association was held at the Miyagi Kenjin Association Building in Sao Paulo, Brazil on Sunday, October 23.

Vice Governor Kenji Ono and Yoshio Mitarai, Speaker of the Prefectural Assembly, visited from Oita to participate in the festivities. The event was a great success, with nearly 300 people in attendance, including many involved with the association.

At the ceremony, four Nikkei social welfare organizations were presented with celebratory endowments and four people were recognized as persons of merit for their achievements within the Cultural Association.

The Oita-Brazil Connection

The first immigrant to Brazil from Oita arrived in 1912. By World War II, about 300 families from Oita had immigrated.

On October 4, 1952, 29 families of immigrants together formed the Oita Kenjin of Brazil Cultural Association. Today, it has about 300 members. Along with its usual friendship activities, it also sells Oita specialties at the annual Japan Festival in Sao Paulo.

↓ Association Members! ↓





Oita Native, Emi Ono, Will be Going to Bolivia as a Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer!



JICA Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer

Emi Ono

○ What are the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers ?

"Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers" is a volunteer system operated by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) funded by the national ODA budget. It receives dispatch requests from developing countries and recruits individuals who have their requested skills, knowledge, and experience, and who want to use them to help people in developing countries. After being selected and receiving training, they are then sent to the country as a "JICA Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer."

Volunteers live with, work alongside, and speak the same language as the people of the country they are dispatched to. They work to encourage the locals self-independence and promote mutual understanding.

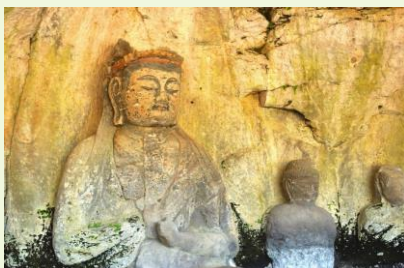
Ono-san will be using her experience as a midwife to support other midwives in Bolivia as well as to help support learning workshops for new mothers and fathers. She will be in Bolivia for two years, starting in November 2022.



News from around Oita

Headlines for October

- Wagyu Olympics! 16 representatives from Kagoshima and Oita Prefectures participated, vowing to offer Japan's No. 1 beef
- 'Yamaga odori' dance commentary video uploaded to YouTube by conservation society to preserve tradition
- Usuki City Buddhas paraded as part of Perm Festival; highlights to be found on social media
- Senzai Craft Beer Garden grand opening: Come and taste the freshness!
- Oita Prefecture Eiken pass rate for primary and middle school students No. 1 in Japan; reasons for such rapid progress are yet unclear
- Oita Uenogaoka High School's Chemistry Department wins excellence award in pursuit of iodine starch reaction process
- Hime Island 'VANcation' experience tour offers a vehicle office in nature
- Anime Films 'Boku Ai' and 'Kimi Ai' released 7th October, featuring many scenes of Oita City
- Fundokin Shoyu begin foreign sales of halal products



Usuki Stone Buddhas



Oita City



Himeshima

News from Bungo Ono

豊後大野市からのお知らせ

Bungo Ono City declared a 'Sauna Town'



With its highly valued cultural inheritance, rich land, and abundant nature, Bungo Ono City is recognised as the only 'Geo Park' and 'Unesco Eco Park' in Kyushu.

Here, there is a long-standing culture of steam baths in stone caverns: ancient inhabitants of Bungo Ono City dug holes in the bedrock, cooked medicinal herbs, and used them in steam baths in these stone caverns.

Against this cultural backdrop, outdoor saunas that make use of the abundant nature of the area have been utilised as a resource for tourism, which has thereby lead to the declaration of Bungo Ono as a 'Sauna Town'.



Scan the QR code for further details:

There are many saunas within Bungo Ono City. There are saunas where you can enjoy the beautiful nature of the mountains; emerald green clear streams; and cold baths in limestone caves, amongst many others!

Recently, Bungo Ono has been receiving attention nationwide as a sacred outdoor sauna location!

Bungo Ono City: 'Sauna Town'

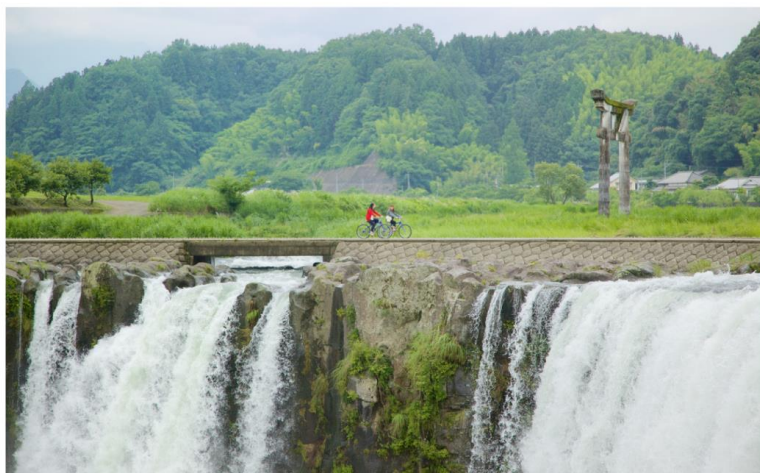
https://www.bungo-ohno.jp/categories/gaiyou/si_kankou/sauna/

The exciting outdoors in Bungo Ono!!

There are many ideal cycling courses and famous sites in Bungo Ono City.

Take a short break
at Ono Cycling Park

There is also a foot bath!



Scan the QR code for further details:

Bungo Ono City cycling facilities

<https://www.bungo-ohno.jp/docs/2022051100032/>

African Safari... In Oita?!



When one thinks about an Safari Tour, one may think of open plains the colours of the sunset, with a lone four-wheel drive, battered and dusty, cutting through the impressive gaping space. One does not, however, imagine a mountain range surrounding somewhat of an open space, with a caged bus in the caricature shape of a wild animal rolling through a clean-cut path. This, however, is what you can experience at Oita's very own African Safari!

We arrived bright and early and went straight to line up for the jungle bus - we would be starting our day with a bang, or should I say, a roar! Entering the gates to the animals' home, we held our tongues at the ready, brandishing a large tray of goodies for our furry friends. Along the windy road surrounded on all sides by mountains, we encountered bison, lions, deer, elephants, zebras, giraffes, and tigers! To come face-to-face with such magnificent animals was breathtaking

- the lions, kings of the African plains - were but half a metre from my face. I could feel the force with which they bit down on the tongs in grabbing the raw chicken meat I held out for them; it was both scary and fascinating.

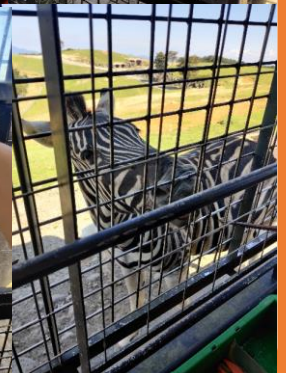
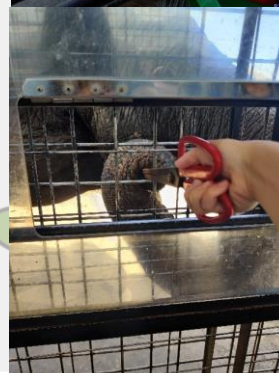
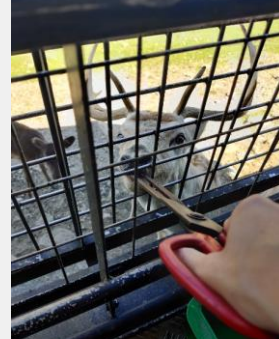
The most memorable friends we encountered on the safari, however, were the elephants. They were, against all expectations, graceful, stomping on over to where we held out chopped carrots for them. The way their trunks curled around the carrots, scooping them into their mouths, was endearing. The whole experience was so intimate, their big eyes with lush lashes almost parallel with ours through the caged bus; they were so gentle and lovely.

I searched for a 'Swará', both my name, and the word for 'gazelle' in Swahili, however they did not feature amongst the many sub-Saharan deer-like animals in residence at the African Safari: a shame, but I had a wonderful time nonetheless.

The safari experience of feeding the animals on the bus was the main experience on offer, however it was by no means the only fun to be had at the African Safari. After the safari experience, we had a bite to eat at one of the restaurants before heading to the petting zoo area, where we held a round and warm lump of fur that turned out to be a hamster. From there, we passed by a pony, the squirrel monkey forest, a bundle of hedgehogs huddled under a heat lamp in a deep slumber, and the kangaroo enclosure, where the muscled gang were out in numbers, chilled

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Relations



out underneath the afternoon sun. Some interesting postures were on display, and I half wondered whether their spines were okay, however they looked relaxed enough!

Finally, we stopped at the dog and cat salons respectively. The cat salon was first: the cats were right in the middle of perhaps their fifth nap of the day, so were languid and curled up in various cat trees, baskets, and chairs. We could not sit down, as the sofas and chairs were decorative and for the cats' exclusive use, of course. This was not an issue, however, as I went around, bothering the various slumbering lumps dotted around the room. All the cats were very pretty and fluffy, and were so exhausted they barely lifted a paw despite my intrusions. I was in heaven. The therapeutic remedy of petting a sleeping kitty never fails to heal my soul, no matter the level of grump displayed on their small, soft faces. It brought back memories of my cat back in the UK, although there was no cat who resembled Jackson; he is, as I am aware most cat owners boldly claim, one of a kind!

Finally, the dog salon provided a little more TLC for my heart, as the staff scoop up a dog for you, who then settled on your blanketed lap for a little snooze and cuddles. Although I am not as big a fan of dogs as I am cats, I had a wonderful time rubbing bellies and scritching behind ears. My only qualm was that there was no miniature schnauzer - my favourite breed. After buying a lottery ticket in a lottery where you always 'win', and winning the lowest prize, we ambled back towards the entrance, ready to head back after a long but truly joyful day.



African Safari



Price:
¥2,600/adult
¥1,500/middle school and below



Jungle bus:
¥1,100/adult
¥900/child

Opening hours:
9:30-16:00
(March-Oct)
10:00-15:30
(Nov-Feb)



Mount Takasaki



Austin Vaughn



Monkey Mountain

Between Beppu and Oita, at the base of Mount Takasaki is the Takasakiyama Natural Zoological Garden. That's a bit of a mouthful, so I've taken to calling it by another name, "Monkey Mountain." On Monkey Mountain are (were?) three troops of Japanese macaques, A-Troop, B-Troop, and C-Troop, with quite a bit of history behind them. In the 1940s, the monkeys of Mount Takasaki were wreaking havoc on the towns and crops below. At first they were hunted to protect the crops, but when that ended in failure, the mayor of Oita City at the time instead decided to feed the monkeys and turn the area into a tourist attraction. This led to the area being officially opened as the Zoological Garden on March 15, 1953. But that's just the human side of things. What's really interesting is monkey history. When the park first opened, there was just A-Troop, with about 200 monkeys. This eventually ballooned to over 2,000 monkeys and three different troops by 1996. But in 2002, after intense fighting between A-Troop and C-Troop, the original A-troop retreated into the mountain, their exact status unknown to this very day. Now only B-troop and C-troop share the park, trading places at around 1:00 PM every day, and C-troop might be in trouble. B-troop nearly chased them out in 2017, and in 2019, nearly 200 monkeys left C-troop and haven't been seen since. And that leaves us at the present day. There's still plenty of monkeys to see on Monkey Mountain, more than 900. I went when C-troop was out and there were still many monkey shenanigans to behold. Baby monkeys riding on their mothers, all the monkeys frenzied over feeding time, and lots of fur grooming. After getting my fill of the monkeys, I left the park and went to the Monkey Building to learn even more about their history, but unfortunately, I also learned that the monkey troops had switched as soon as I had left. Hopefully I'll get a chance to see B-troop next time I go to the monkeys.

Admission:
(Elem. to Jr. High)
Child ¥260
(High School or above)
Adult ¥520
Monkey Monorail:
¥110

Website



Mount Takasaki



Tall Promontory

After barely missing B-troop and learning about the history of the disappeared A-troop, I set off to explore the “mountain” part of “Monkey Mountain.” I was hoping that maybe I would be able to see a member of the hidden troop, but unfortunately I didn’t see a single one. Honestly even if I had found one, it probably would have been impossible for me to tell which troop they belonged to anyway. So instead of searching for a lost monkey civilization, I just enjoyed the climb to the top of the mountain. The first three quarters of the climb was on a normal paved road, but it was a road with a lot to see. A small village in the mountains, winding paths going who knows where, shrines, a temple. You can drive up most of the mountain, but taking your time to walk up it is worth it. The view of the seaside is also absolutely spectacular. Just don’t make the same mistake I made and bring your bike, unless you’re ready to really get a workout. I had to park it behind some bushes about a quarter of the way up. You never really think about it when you’re pushing them up a hill for only a short period of time, but bikes are heavy. Walking one up a mountain: not recommended. Near the end of the paved road is an interesting sight—a gate. Normally a gate is a sign for you to turn around and go back the way you came, but this gate was the first one I’ve ever seen that invited you to come right in, so long as you remember to close the door behind you. It and the fences are meant to preserve the natural ecosystem of the mountain, rather than to limit visitors to authorized personnel only. A bit after the gate is the beginning of the Mt. Takasaki Therapy Road, one of several “therapy roads” throughout Oita that are meant to offer an easy hike through the forest that relaxes and rejuvenates you through the nature surrounding you. Whether that actually works probably varies from person to person, but I can say that at least for me, it was nice to have a good calming walk through the mountain woods. The summit of Mt. Takasaki isn’t too far from the beginning of the therapy road. And from the summit you can look down on nearly all of Oita from one side and all of Beppu from the other. There’s a word that comes to mind whenever I look down on a city like that: “sonder.” The realization that every person has just a vivid and complex life as your own. It’s such a simple thing, but looking down and thinking “everyone *lives* there,” just always boggles my mind, at least a little bit.



from our Reporters 国際交流員だより



Swara Fife

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TAO Summer Festival 2022

During the dying days of summer, I made my way over to the Kuju Mountains, where the TAO Summer Festival was held. I had watched Drum Tao perform in May in Kuju's mountainous basin, and had been mesmerised by their coordination, charm, and cool. After hearing about their summer festival, I decided I simply must go! It was a hot day with the sun blazing down on us with an intensity matching that of the performers' eyes. We were greeted with twinkling smiles and smooth lines at various stalls at which the performers were making food and drinks. I split a wagyu steak plate with my friend - it was pricey but worth it to watch our meat grilled by such a dreamy performer! Perhaps it is due to my lack of ability to cook, but above all, the most attractive feature in a man is being able to cook well. After relaxing in the sun and filling up leisurely throughout the day, we headed down to the stage for the final performance of the day. With double the number of members as normal and with the addition of elegant female performers, we were captivated, entangled within the finely woven melodies of taiko drums, cymbals, flutes, and shamisen. Paired with tantalising fan service from the male performers, who drummed whilst lowering their torsos to an almost horizontal position over the edge of the stage - at close quarters with the audience, I might add - the day has been well and truly etched into my memory as one to remember.

Video Killed the Radio Star

Everyone remembers VCRs, right? You know, those things from the 80s/90s that played VHS tapes? Even though the last VHS in America was released in 2006, and I was born in 1997, for some reason I was always something on video tape as a kid, all the way up until high school. And because of that, I went and did it again. I bought a "new" piece of retro equipment. Unlike retro video games, there's really almost no reason to get VHS tapes when you compare them to the HD streaming services of today. But nonetheless, I still bought a VCR and the tapes to go with it. I don't really have anything I can say in my defense beyond, "I was feeling a bit nostalgic." By the way, the trailers at the beginning of the American version of Toy Story and the Japanese version were exactly identical, down to the order they were shown in. I watched that movie as a kid hundreds of times, so I was able to tell just from watching the Japanese version once.

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