



What's up, OITA!

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



2022 Oita Prefecture Scholarship Students Study Tour No. 1!



Xavier Honpo



Ozai Container Terminal



Internship Fair

A study tour was held for Oita's Prefectural Scholarship students on Sat. July 15. Its aim was to enhance the students' understanding of Oita Prefecture, as well as aid with promoting it on social media. The students visited Xavier Honpo (a snack factory) and Ozai Container Terminal. Afterwards, they attended an internship fair.

Students who participated were asked to post about the study tour on social media. Hopefully, we can expect some great posts about the wonders of Oita!

What's Up in Oita? 国際交流員だより

◆ Fire Flower

American CIR Austin Vaughn

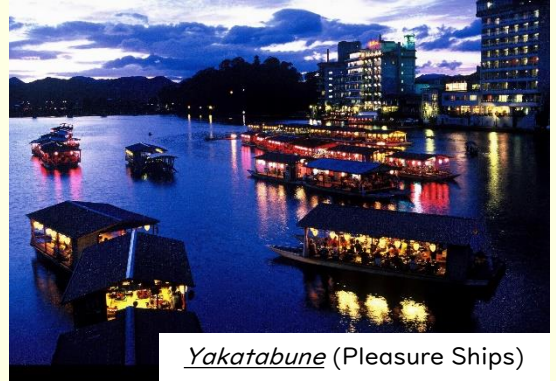
Hanabi (Fireworks) are very pretty. Both the thing, and the name, which is literally "flower fire." Obviously "flower fire" is nothing like a certain game series' "fire flowers," but I think that fire with the beauty of flowers is much more alluring than a flower with the power of fire. At any rate, I also think that who you watch fireworks with is also a very important part of the experience. When I was in America, I always watched them together with my family. We stopped our car somewhere on the roadside, and looked up at the sky. Since I was with my family, no matter how many times we did that, I never got bored. But at the Beppu Fireworks Festival, I was able to get a taste of a different fireworks experience. One where everyone got excited, lined up in long lines, ate shaved ice, got lost, but then came together to look at a beautiful night sky.





The Water-Polished City

Hita is a scenic town in the center of Northern Kyushu surrounded by water and lush greenery. Hita has been blessed with great bountiful waters since time immemorial and from that is also known as the "city of water." Located at the headwaters of the Chikugo River, it's located in a valley surrounded on all sides by mountains. One hallmark of the summertime is sitting on a boat floating on the Mikuma River, and enjoying the graceful figures of the cormorants used by fishermen for fishing.



Yakatabune (Pleasure Ships)

Festivals in Hita

In Hita City, summer is brought in with the "Hita River Opening Festival" in May. In July is the "Hita Gion" festival, with over 300 years of history.. November has the "Hita Tenryo Festival," letting you get a taste of the prosperous Edo period. Finally in February is the "Tenryo Hita Ohina-Matsuri" festival, heralding the beginning of spring. These four festivals are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the many wonderful festivals held throughout the year in Hita.

~May~
Hita River
Opening



~July~
Hita Gion



~November~
Hita Tenryo Festival
and Sennen Akari



~February/March~
Tenryo Hita Ohina-Matsuri



All Work and No Play



Kids Just Being Kids

Recently, I've been going out to a lot of places for work. Probably because COVID has settled down (at least "officially"), the "International Relations" part of "Coordinator of International Relations" is finally getting a chance to shine. Although, to be perfectly honest, I've never been all that good at getting in front of people and holding presentations or doing events. But over my time here, I've definitely gotten a lot better at it. Now, instead of outright hating it, I can at least tolerate it. Or well, actually, even have fun doing it.

The first visit I did was to a club that gathers elementary schoolers together during the summer. My only mission, to think of some fun games to play with the kids. But first, I decided it would also be fun to get some real cultural exchange going, and introduced my little, six-year-old brother to everyone via video chat. They talked about video games and messed with filters, and before we knew it, 30 minutes had passed. Honestly, it made me think that more cultural exchange between kids from different countries at this age would be both fun and really helpful for their future development. But that's something for the educational system to figure out.

Back to the club. After we talked with my brother, I got everyone together for a rousing game of Duck, Duck, Goose. There's a game a lot like it in Japan, so luckily explaining the rules was very simple. Some people got to be "it" a bit too much, so some kids got a bit upset, but all in all, everyone had fun. After that, we played Red Light, Green Light. It was a bit harder to explain, since there is a game like it, but it was *just* different enough to confuse everyone a little. Unfortunately, we ran out of time just when it was getting started. Hopefully, there's a next time.

A couple days after that, I visited Oita Prefectural Library for English Story Time. A few weeks prior, I picked out a bunch of books from my childhood to read to some kids in both English and Japanese. To be honest, I mostly just picked books I wanted to read again, like "No, David!" and "Harry the Dirty Dog." But I also picked one I had never seen before, "Would You Rather..." which had a lot of weird choices for the kids to make. They really got into it, getting right up to the book and pointing out that they'd rather have a cat to box with than a pig to ride.

I always thought that I wasn't cut out for working with kids. That's why when I decided to move to Japan, I did my best so I wouldn't be an English teacher. But maybe I was wrong. It was fun.



All Work and No Play



Utah, This is the Place

Finally, a few days after that, on Saturday, I was able to take a break from the kids and instead taught to some adults. Every month, I do a Free Talk Class for the Oita International Plaza, but they also hold another type of talk, "International Exchange Lectures." At these lectures, people talk about their home countries or their experiences in other countries. And it was my turn to give one of these lectures.

After talking with a *lot* of people, I decided to talk about my home state of Utah, rather than my home country of the United States. Mostly for two reasons. The first being, and some of my coworkers have gotten mad at me for saying this, but America big, yo? You can't talk about the whole place in 90 minutes. Everywhere's too different. Which leads into reason number two, for the type of people who are already interested in international exchange, they almost definitely already know a ton about the things that America *does* share between states. American culture is just too "everywhere" to ignore. It makes it hard to decide what to say and what to not. It can't be something people everyone knows, or you'll just bore everyone to tears.

So instead, Utah. People know the name. They know Mormons. But not much else. But it's one of the most unique places not just in the United States, but in the world. So I thought it would be fun to teach about its history, culture, and places. There's so much beautiful land, and the culture is very different from most states. Plus, it's state numero uno according to U.S. News & World Report. I basically had to show that off to everyone. It was my duty as a Utahn.

The only thing about the Exchange Lecture was that it was entirely in Japanese. Honestly, I was nervous about that. All the lectures and such I had given so far had mostly been in English, so I wasn't sure if I would be able to properly communicate my thoughts. Luckily, I was able to get through it. And I didn't even rely on my notes as much as I thought. Hopefully the more I do presentations in Japanese, the more I get used to them, just like I did with presenting in general.

On the other hand, there weren't that many people at the lecture to begin with. Around 35 people originally signed up, but nearly a third of them got sick and weren't able to make it. I was a bit under the weather too, but my COVID test was negative, so the show went on. Japanese summer really is a killer. But I'm glad I was able to share my home state with so many people.



Oita International Plaza Homepage

