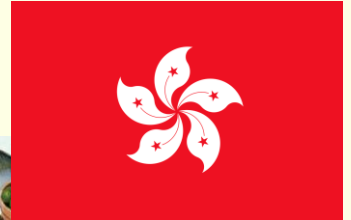




# What's up, OITA!

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

## Oita Fair in Hong Kong 2023



The "Oita Fair in Hong Kong" was held from November 16 to December 15 at "Beppu Menkan," a restaurant in Hong Kong. At this event participants were able to taste the flavors of Oita through a special menu using products made in Oita. "Oita Fair in Hong Kong" is an event organized by Beppu Group (led by Oita Overseas Goodwill Ambassador, Lui Wai Kwong) and Oita Prefecture.

The aim of the event is to let the people of Hong Kong get a taste of Oita's fresh foods and traditional cooking and learn more about its appeal. At Beppu Menkan, customers are able to enjoy ramen based on Beppu's "Hells" and, during the event, were able to enjoy special menu items using Oita Wagyu, Kabosu-Buri (Yellowtail), Hita Pears, and other ingredients from Oita.

## What's Up in Oita? 国際交流員だより

### ◆ Wooden Jupiter

American CIR Austin Vaughn

In my hometown of Farmington lies the only amusement park in all of Utah. In it is a wooden roller coaster simply called "Roller Coaster." As you might be able to tell from the name, the thing is old. In fact, it's the seventh oldest roller coaster in the world. Because it's a wooden roller coaster, when I heard that Kijima Kougen had the first wooden roller coaster in all of Japan (Jupiter), I just had to ride it. And the other day with my friends, I did. Many times. It was a bit more violent than The "Roller Coaster," but it was still really fun.





## A Visit to Bad Krozingen, Germany Taketa's Sister City



From July 13 to 20, 2023, a delegation from Taketa City paid a courtesy visit to Bad Krozingen, Germany, Taketa's international sister city. Exchange between the two began on November 23, 1989, when the late Manichi Iwaya, mayor of the former Naoiri Town, and others decided to observe how carbonic acid springs were utilized in each city. A total of 11 people, including Mayor Masahiro Doi, Chairperson Miki Sato, Superintendent of Education Tetsuya Shiga, and other citizens of Taketa, visited Bad Krozingen.

Since the inauguration of Mayor Masahiro Doi in 2020, exchange between Taketa and the city of Bad Krozingen had been put on hold due to the global spread of COVID-19, but as the travel ban was relaxed at the end of last year, Mayor Kieber of Bad Krozingen kindly invited Taketa to the "Festival of Light," enabling exchange to finally take place. The "Festival of Light" uses the smoked bamboo from Taketa's "Bamboo Lantern Chikuraku" event.

In Bad Krozingen, the delegation were able to experience homestays and develop a deep bond with the local citizens. They also experienced firsthand the world-class carbonated springs at "Vita Classica," which is a "sister hot spring" with the Nagayu Onsen Medical Care and Culture Museum, "Gozenyu."

About the visit, Mayor Kieber said the following, "I have been waiting for the day we could meet. I am thrilled that you were able to come from so far away to meet with us face to face. I look forward to deepening our relationship in the future." Next year, Taketa City is scheduled to receive a delegation from Germany, and further exchange can be expected between the two cities in the future.

Since this year marked the 120th anniversary of the death of Rentaro Taki, the delegation also visited Leipzig, where Rentaro spent part of his life, and sang "Kojo no Tsuki" ("The Moon Over the Ruined Castle") in front of the monument at the site of Rentaro Taki's former lodgings. In addition, they were able to visit the music school that Rentaro Taki attended and the Mendelssohn House. Finally, they visited with the staff in charge of Leipzig's international relations, which allowed everyone to once again experience the wonderful nature of face-to-face exchange.



Austin Vaughn



## Bongo, Bongo, Bongo (I Don't Want to Leave Bungo)

On November 16, 2023, the Oita City Tourist Association held their first ever tour, the "Discover Oita" bus/walking tour. I'm lucky enough to have a connection in the association, who kindly invited two of my fellow international colleagues and me to participate. I wasn't sure what to expect going in, but coming out of the experience I can say that it was one of the best tours that I've been on in all of Oita. (And I've been on quite a few.)

Our day started at Oita Station, where we gathered together and introduced ourselves. A large number of people were from China, but there were also two Americans (the Oita City CIR and myself) as well a few people from southeast Asia. One person was a bit late, but as soon as they arrived, off we went in a little charter bus to our first destination: Oita City Art Museum.

I've been to OPAM (the Prefectural Art Museum) numerous times, but this was my first time going to the City Art Museum. We didn't enter the museum, but we did get a good look at all the art around the outside, which was honestly good enough. The massive elephant statue, and numerous "bolt dogs" were all really fun to see. (Try to count the dogs if you can!) There was one other statue that I probably am not allowed to post a picture of, due to its "interesting" shape. If you're on the roof of the museum, see if you can find it! You won't be disappointed.

After, we returned to the bus and were off to our next destination, which I've actually talked about before: The "Namban BVNGO Koryukan" (See W.U.O. Vol. 79). I was planning on skipping over this part of the tour. However, there was a special surprise waiting for us that I never expected. One that made it one of the best parts of any tour I've been on: Samurai. With guns.

When I say guns, of course I don't mean pistols or machine guns, but rather matchlock rifles. The Oita City Tourist Association organized three samurai dressed in traditional garb to give a demonstration where they shot the guns as one big firing squad. They had to literally light the fuse on fire in order to "fire" the guns. Afterwards, we were able to dress up as samurai and hold the guns ourselves. And I got interviewed for the TV news like that. Kind of embarrassing...

To top off the first half of the tour, we all went to *Kotsu Kotsu An* and were able to eat a ton of traditional dishes, like Bungo wagyu, fugu, toriten, and ryukyu. I don't usually eat seafood, but I tried out the fugu. It was good. A testament to Oita's seafood industry.





## Nō Tea, Nō Life

Like the great President Lincoln, after war comes theatre. (Too soon?) Our next stop was the Heiwa Shimin Park Noh Theatre. Noh is a traditional Japanese style of theatre that uses masks, dances, traditional costumes, and a very structured format. Western theatre usually prides innovation and change, but the big thing about Noh is that it does *not* change, and hasn't since it started way back in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. You always enter the stage with your left foot, main actors always enter from the left, actors who have finished their roles leave from the right. The stages themselves are even near identical between theatres.

At the theatre, we were able to get a backstage look at all the different facets behind the curtain, like where the actors relax before going on stage, as well as how they get on stage. (If you're not a main actor, you need to duck through a little hole.) We also dressed up in the traditional garb of Noh and were allowed to choose a mask to hold to our faces. I have no idea how the actors see through those things. Apparently, they also need to wear far more layers than we did, so I also have no idea how they move. Just from that, it's obvious that it takes a lot of training to do Noh. One day, I think I'd like to see an actual show at the theatre.

Speaking of tradition, after exploring the stage, we were able to experience a traditional Japanese tea ceremony. In the lobby of the theatre, several tables were set up with tea powder, hot water, handkerchiefs, whisks, spoons, and small tea bowls. Teachers of tea ceremony taught us how to fold the handkerchiefs, scoop tea into the bowl, whisk it, and the proper way of drinking the tea. I had drank tea from a tea ceremony before, but this was my first time going through all the motions of *sado*, which was a very enlightening experience.

Finally, after we had all become a bit more cultured, we head out on a walking tour around Oita City to experience even more. Around Oita are various works of art and interesting architecture. Many are things you would pass every day, but never really stop to take a good look at. I think my favorite things to see were "Algorithm," a mural drawn on a wall in Funai-machi and the Oita Castle Ruins. "Algorithm" was a surreal piece of art that had more to discover with each time you look at it, and while I've been to the ruins, many, many times, I will never get tired of what remains of what was surely a great castle. I wish it was more than a parking lot though.

