



# What's Up, OITA!

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

From January 12-13, 2026, an integrated promotional campaign was held in Taiwan to promote international and economic exchange, attract tourists, and expand exports of prefectural products.

## ~Taiwan Promotion~

### 〈Main Activities〉

- Oita Prefecture Business Attraction Seminar in Taipei
- Official Reception “Evening of Oita”
- Visit to the Taiwan-Japan Relations Association
- Visit to the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association
- Top-Level Sales Promotion of Oita Prefectural Products



A Japanese amberjack filleting show was also held at “Evening of Oita”



Oita Prefecture Business Attraction Seminar in Taipei



Visit to the Taiwan-Japan Relations Association



Prefectural Products Fair at Department Stores



Visit to the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association



# News from Beppu City

Beppu City  
Homepage



## Beppu: A City Where You Can Enjoy Art Anytime

### Art Project [ALTERNATIVE-STATE]

Beppu: one of the world's leading hot spring tourism cities. Did you know that it has now become a place where you can enjoy art whenever you visit?

Public artworks by renowned artists that make you want to take a photo are installed throughout the city. In addition, audio works composed of dialogue performances, poetry readings and music, like a collection of short stories, are available in both English and Japanese. As you stroll around Beppu City, you can enjoy these works alongside viewing the public art. Add art to your usual hot spring trip and discover a new side of Beppu unlike anything you've experienced before.

#### ■ Participating Artists

Michael Lin/目[mé] /Kuribayashi Takashi/Utsumi Akiko /Nakazaki Tohru/Tom Furin/Saito Seiichi/SARKIS/Okachimachi Kite

■ [ALTERNATIVE-STATE] Official Website <https://alternative-state.com/>



Photo by Shintaro Yamanaka (Qsyum!) ©Mixed Bathing World Executive Committee

# News from Nakatsu City

Nakatsu City  
Homepage



## New Attractions are Born!

### “Karaage Monument” and Japan’s Only Flower Castle



A new symbol has been born in Nakatsu, the holy land of karaage fried chicken. Take a photo with the “Nakatsu Karaage Monument”, which has appeared at Michi no Eki Nakatsu, with Mt. Hachimen in the background, and you're guaranteed a great shot!

“Nakatsu Castle”, one of Japan's 3 greatest water castles, has been renewed as Japan's only flower castle! It was designed by the world-famous garden designer Kazuyuki Ishihara, allowing visitors to enjoy seasonal flowers and the castle at the same time.



## 10,000 Fireworks Light Up Hita's Night Sky



### The 79<sup>th</sup> Hita Kawabiraki Kankosai

Dates: May 23 (Sat) • May 24 (Sun)

#### Main Highlights

2 Nights of Spectacular Fireworks: Thanks to the basin-like terrain, the echoes of the fireworks reverberate powerfully, creating an experience that resonates deep within your body.

Events Unique to a Water Town: The Mikuma River becomes the stage for events such as the “Hangiri Genpei Battle” and boat races, along with many other river-themed activities.

2 days filled with excitement mark the beginning of summer in Hita!



In Saiki City, “Saiki Bluefin Tuna”, farmed in the local waters, has been promoted as a spring delicacy since 2023. This year, even more delicious seafood has been added to the campaign, “Spring Saiki: A Region-Wide Fish Tour”, which showcases Saiki City’s proud local fish dishes. During the event, visitors can enjoy tasting the 7 different flavours of “tuna, fugu, flounder, sea bream, bigfin reef squid, horse mackerel, and oysters” at 16 restaurants in the city.

Please come and enjoy!

\*Event Period: 14<sup>th</sup> of February (Saturday) - 12<sup>th</sup> of April (Sunday)



# Introducing your activities!



This time, we introduce Yoshihiro Kawakami, originally from Usa City, Oita, now living in London.

**“From Oita, you can pursue opportunities abroad” – making that choice feel more natural.**

## ◆ Self-Introduction

Hello everyone in Oita. My name is Yoshihiro Kawakami (Yoshi) from Usa City. After graduating from university, I spent 4 years working at Oita Canon Inc., and around 3 and a half years at Oita City Hall, before studying at a graduate school in the UK. Having built my career in Oita for so long, you might wonder why I’m now in London. Let me share a little about that story.

## ◆ Making the route “from Oita to overseas” a little more familiar

I have interacted with over 50 Japanese people studying abroad at some of the world’s top graduate schools. However, something there left me with a bittersweet feeling. Most were from major cities in places like Kanto and Kansai, and almost no one had followed the path of “studying in Oita, working in Oita, and then going abroad”. For people from regional areas, overseas can feel far away. I want to change that, even just a little. That’s my starting point.



## ◆ Graduate studies and my connection to “Nakatsu”



I studied abroad at King’s College London. It is said that this university served as a model for Keio University. And in Oita, there is a place where you can sense the origin of that learning. It is the former residence and memorial museum of Yukichi Fukuzawa in the neighbouring city of Nakatsu. There are materials there that offer a glimpse into how Yukichi Fukuzawa studied and how he viewed the world at the time. It feels as if Oita and London are connected somewhere across time. When you think of that, doesn’t it make you a little excited? By the way, my name is “Yoshihiro” (using the same characters as Keio University), and even I find this connection rather mysterious.

## ◆ English Language Teaching (TESOL) and current activities

At graduate school I majored in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), systematically studying second language acquisition mechanisms and English teaching methodologies. During my practical training at a language school in London (International House London), I also gained experience teaching English to students from over 10 different countries, including Italy, Ukraine, and Brazil.

Currently, I work at the London research office of a Japanese institution, collecting the latest development trends in Europe’s maritime sector and sharing them with Japan. At the same time, I share on X (formerly Twitter), the insights I gained by investing the money I saved over about 7 and a half years, including “tips for learning English”, “studying abroad in graduate school”, and “finding work overseas” etc.

(Yoshi | 英語のすゝめ@Yoshi\_in\_UK)

@Yoshi\_in\_UK→



## ◆ In closing



I miss Oita’s hot springs, delicious food, and its dialect! I whole heartedly cheer on those who want to learn English and those who want to challenge themselves abroad. If you’re planning to go from Oita to London, or want to learn more about going abroad, please feel free to reach out.

From Oita to the world.

I hope even one more person will take that step.

This section provides information on topics such as the activities of the prefectural associations and updates on international student alumni to Oita Prefecture-related individuals worldwide.

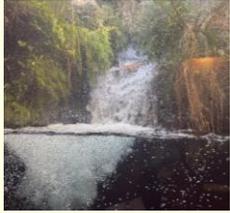




British CIR  
Rosa Boutelle

# Banjo Osakanakan & Yayoi no Yu

In search of a fun-filled day out, I visited the "Banjo Osakanakan" aquarium and "Yayoi no Yu" public bath in "Michi no Eki Yayoi". They offer a value set ticket with the aquarium and bath included, ensuring a great day out.



## Banjo Osakanakan



Banjo Osakanakan opened in 2001, showcasing local freshwater fish from the Banjo river and tropical freshwater fish from abroad. The fish live in a nature-adjacent environment, with some tanks partially outside.

### Connecting the Community and Nature



From the locally treasured and national special monument Oita Salamander, to rare fish from abroad, the vast array of exhibits makes this aquarium one which conveys the true wonder of nature.

Oita Salamander

Furthermore, through river fishing and bird watching experiences, you have the chance to engage in nature even outside of the exhibitions.



The Banjo River is very nearby!

### The fish painted as a "villain"?



You've got it all wrong...

Red-bellied Piranha

Although often portrayed as violent, Piranhas are actually rather cowardly! According to the aquarium director, they run away every time he cleans their tank!

### Banjo "Ura" Osakanakan



(Photo Source: Banjo Osakanakan)

Currently, as part of a special exhibition peaking behind the scenes of Banjo Osakanakan (until 10.5.26), you can learn about the staff's daily activities and enjoy seeing their real work tools.

There are also experiences to "smell fish food" and "change the tank water", which can be enjoyed by children and adults alike.



## Yayoi no Yu



Large bath 2 (on opening day)



Loyly (upon completion)

(Photo Source: Yayoi no Yu)

Yayoi no Yu, located on the Michi no Eki Yayoi premises, is known for its Japanese and Western style baths which rotate daily, and its Finnish-style sauna (Loyly) which opened in 2022. I enjoyed looking at the scenery from the spacious indoor baths and outdoor cold bath, and relaxing in the sauna.

Looking at the locally-made products and three-generation families visiting, I could feel a real warm sense of community.

Visiting Banjo Osakanakan and Yayoi no Yu, I felt their commitment to the local community and environment. These peaceful, hidden spots truly captured Oita's natural beauty and local atmosphere.



Rosa



## Christian Cave Chapel



Inside the chapel

The adjacent cave



Kirishitan (Christian) refers to Catholics in the Edo Period. Currently Christian's (Protestant + Catholic) make up less than 1% of Japan's population, yet interestingly the history of Kirishitan quietly lives on in Oita Prefecture. The cave chapel, discovered in 1953 (Showa 28), was a place where Catholic believers and missionaries hid during the Edo period, when then ban on Christianity had been imposed across Japan. Today, it is registered as an "Oita Prefectural Historic Site".

About a 10-minute walk from the Taketa Christian Museum, I arrived here to find that the only sounds were birdsong and the wind, with soft sunlight quietly filtering through. As the sun began to set, walking through the quiet cave, I could feel the depth of their unwavering faith.

"He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."  
— Jim Elliot (American missionary)



In 1549, the arrival of the missionary Xavier in Japan led to the rapid spread of Christian missionary activity. However, later persecution intensified under the ban of Christianity, and believers became "Hidden Christians", passing down their faith in their own unique ways. The Taketa Christian Museum opened in 2016 (Heisei 28) to preserve and exhibit the history of these Hidden Christians and artefacts related to the history of Kirishitan. The museum director recalled that, before the COVID-19 pandemic, the museum welcomed many visitors from Kyushu and even from overseas. He hopes that this part of history will not be forgotten and that the number of people visiting the museum will begin to grow again.

### Various Exhibits



First Missionary  
Francisco Xavier



Taketa, a town where 15,000 Kirishitan once lived. Traces of Kirishitan history can be seen throughout the town.

**Ban Christianity!**



Kirishitan hid crosses and statues of Jesus inside Buddhist statues during the persecution under the ban on Christianity

## Taketa Christian Museum



581 Taketamachi,  
Taketa City, Oita  
Prefecture,  
878-0012



# Tenryo Hita Hina Matsuri

American CIR  
Aliciana Lin



Did you know that every spring there is a hina matsuri in Hita?  
I visited Hita during the Tenryo Hita Hina Matsuri (2/15~3/31), when about 5,000 hina dolls are displayed at around 15 locations, including historic homes and museums, attracting visitors from Japan and abroad. On my way to Hina Goten, one of Japan's largest hina doll museums, I admired the hina dolls and lanterns decorating the old streets of Mamedamachi.



## Hina Doll Museum Hina Goten

The “Okiage Hina” dolls displayed here are made of paper and cloth and were popular among common people. It is said that they were made by local women from the late Edo period to the Meiji period. The dolls are supported by thin bamboo sticks. Each doll in this room featured detailed clothing and delicate facial expressions. Because they were handmade, each one must have taken a long time to create. They were beautifully crafted.



The Golden Room features one of Japan's largest permanent ten-tier hina doll displays. This room showcases a wide variety of hina dolls, along with many different hina accessories. The tiny tableware, futons, kimono, and even miniature instruments are especially cute. You can clearly see the care and effort that went into creating each piece.



It was my first time seeing tachi-bina, or “standing dolls.” The female doll is wrapped in layered robes, which makes her look very warm. The male doll stands with his arms extended, perhaps to appear more dignified or to symbolically protect her.

Recently, hina dolls featuring popular characters have become more common.

The hina doll museum continues to display the dolls even after the festival ends.

With spring on the way, be sure to stop by!



Address: 13-6 Mamedamachi, Hita, Oita

Opening Hours: 9:00~17:00 (Last entrance at 16:45) ※ Closed: 1/1

Entrance fee: Individual ¥300, Group ¥200 (20 people+)

※ For more information, please contact the facility



# Farewell Message

Chinese CIR  
Jin Hanyu



As the spring-like breeze brushes my cheeks, I find myself reflecting, “Another year has come around.”

This past year has been like a highly refined sake—small in quantity, yet rich in depth—making it difficult to capture in words, but I would like to offer my final greetings with sincere respect.

## “I’m glad I came to Oita”

After a spring spent getting used to things, school exchanges became more active as summer arrived. Watching the children get along and talk together, I found encouragement in my work as an interpreter and was reminded of the aspiration that first led me to pursue interpreting in university. The monthly free talk sessions were my oasis. Although I was called, “Teacher,” in truth, all of you were the teachers who enriched my life. Through interviews and visits within the prefecture, I slowly came to know Oita and gained a friend called “Oita.” Whenever I see a sign for toriten outside the prefecture, I stubbornly insist, “Toriten is from Oita!” (lol)

## “A Deeper Understanding”

One morning, a Japanese coworker said to me, “I noticed there was still water left in your cup, so I poured it out because I thought it might be dangerous if an earthquake occurred. Was that alright?” Things that hardly attract attention in China are considered common sense in Japan when preparing for disasters. Feeling embarrassed, I realized that cross-cultural understanding may take root in everyday moments like this. From then on, I always made sure to empty my cup whenever I left my seat. As my understanding of another culture deepened, so did my understanding of my own. Whenever I introduce China through topics such as the Spring Festival or Chinese characters, I feel comforted by the familiar “scent” from my memories. At the same time, I became aware of the limits of my knowledge and began asking around and researching materials to learn more about my own country. Though I am far away, I have never felt as close to my homeland as I have this past year.

Looking back, living in a different culture may not be about big events, but the accumulation of daily moments. Maybe I’ll experience reverse culture shock when I return home (lol). But that too is part of intercultural exchange!

## “Thank you. See you next time!”

I still clearly remember the excitement of writing my greeting message when I first arrived, yet my time to depart is already approaching. Through the encounters of this past year, I have grown, and through farewells I have become richer. I hope to carry my life in Oita with me as I move forward, so let us say goodbye with a smile.

Lastly, I would like to thank the land of Bungo, as well as to my colleagues and the people of the prefecture. I sincerely wish for the continued growth and prosperity of Oita. With this, I conclude my farewell message.

Thank you, Oita.

See you next time!



# From Our Reporters



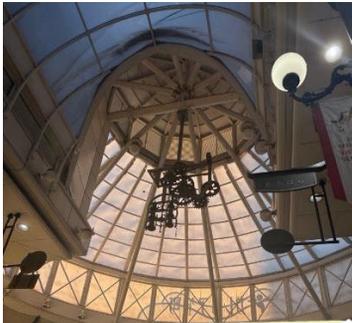
## Going in Search of the Positives (≧▽≦)!

British CIR  
Rosa Boutelle



Recently, while reading a psychology book, I learnt about a way of thinking where, “by consciously looking for positive things each day they become easier and easier to notice”. Since then, I have been making a conscious effort to think of each day as an “opportunity to find something positive”. When I’m walking around town, I find myself at peace as I see the light streaming through the shopping street’s arcade, the animal statues lining the streets, and a cat coming to greet me from an alleyway.

Since I was born and raised in London, I don’t have much experience relaxedly walking through calm towns like Oita. At first, I was a little worried as to whether I could really live somewhere like this, but I now realise that precisely because Oita is so calm, it’s somewhere where I’m able to notice the small things which would usually just pass me by. I can’t wait to keep taking my time relaxedly soaking in Oita’s charms.



Morning light through a dome



So gentlemanly!



Can you spot the cat?



## When I hear “Oita”

Chinese CIR  
Hanyu Jin



Ever since I decided to end my CIR job this year, I’ve felt small feelings of loneliness and unease somewhere in my heart. I even wondered, “Did staying just one year really have any meaning?”

Amid those thoughts, one day I heard a voice on the radio say, “Next is ○○ from Oita.” At that moment, without even realizing it, I thought, “Ah, it’s Oita!” and looked up. It’s the same feeling as when you suddenly turn around after hearing your hometown’s name in a crowd. I see! “Even a chance meeting can lead to a deep bond.” For me, “Oita” means everyone’s smiles, the quiet streets, and the sunlight in the office.

Although I thought toriten belonged to Oita, I somehow feel annoyed when I see it elsewhere... (haha). Oita has become a dear friend that brings back one-of-a-kind memories. In this vast world, I gained one more wonderful connection.



Real toriten from Oita



Subconsciously reacting to “大分”(Oita) characters



The Sonic that took care of me

# From Our Reporters



## Strawberries, a sign of refreshing spring!

Korean CIR  
Suyoung Ahn



For me, the moment when I feel cold winter giving way to spring is when I see strawberries. As we wait for spring, their white blossoms bloom, serving as a gentle sign that refreshing spring is approaching. Originally, strawberries bloomed from spring to summer, but recently greenhouse cultivation has become mainstream, and they are no commonly seen even in December. They are filled with vitamin C and thought to be good for preventing colds and your health. Their sweet and sour taste and scent of spring makes strawberries my favourite fruit. While differing in shape and taste, Japanese and Korean strawberries are both incredibly fragrant and delicious, so it's hard to say which is superior. Specifically, Oita's brand strawberry "Berryts", which was developed over 8 years, has the perfect balance of sweetness and tartness, so you might find yourself finishing them in no time!

So, why not buy some strawberries to prepare for the arrival of spring, and get a boost of Vitamin C at the same time?



Korean strawberries (ddalgi)



Oita-grown strawberries

A letter from the previous CIR  
**Noh Jiyoung (2020 – 2025)**



Beloved people of Oita! I'm currently working near Seoul, in a job that connects language and content, but my love for Oita hasn't changed. With those feelings in mind, I wrote this article.

Will you accept my confession?

《Clair Seoul

Another Sky - My Second Home -》



## A Year to Be More Careful!

American CIR  
Alicean Lin



My mom often says, "The zodiac year you were born in is the most dangerous year for you." She would also tell me to be extra careful with my health, watch my surroundings and don't do anything dangerous. I used to think it was just another Chinese superstition, but this year feels different.

I rarely lose important items, yet in January alone, I lost two. First, I left my wallet at an arcade after getting too excited about winning a lot of chocolate. Then, just the following week, I dropped my phone at a bus stop, and it was run over by passing vehicles. Thankfully, I got both items back, but my phone is no longer usable. (sad)

These experiences have made me believe that maybe I really do need to be more careful this year. So, if you were born in the Year of the Horse, let's be extra careful this year!



Still in great happiness here 🎵



Safely returned with nothing missing!



Damaged phone wrecked by cars