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For the 14th time, the long running ‘Kansai Kagoshima Fan Day’ event, hosting a grand promotion of the beauty of Kagoshima was held again this year on April 15th (Sunday) at the Kyocera Dome Osaka.

On the day of the event, the greeting from the chairman of the Kansai-Kagoshima Prefectural Association, Kazuo Inamori (read by proxy) started the opening ceremony, and Governor Mitazono, as well as Prefectural Assembly Chairman Shibata, and others at the event continued with big promotions of Kagoshima’s appeal, such as its specialty products and tourism.

At the product display area Governor Mitazono gave strong encouragement to the booth operators, and talked to visitors to the area while helping sell products.

There were over 320 booths proudly selling their specialty products from all over Kagoshima Prefecture, and the number of people attending the event had increased...
by 4,000 over the previous year for a total of about 35,000 visitors who were enthusiastic about Kagoshima filling the entire dome with a Kagoshima atmosphere.

Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) Column

Amami Oshima Island—A trip here I was soothed by nature—
by Ma Yan (CIR from China)

For a 2 night 3 day trip to collect information, I went to Amami Oshima Island, which is in the process of becoming registered as a Unesco world natural heritage site. My coworker who accompanied me, Ms. Otono, who lived in Amami for three years and naturally knew a lot about the island, shared stories and participated in many activities with me. Thanks to her, I made another unforgettable memory from the year I spent in Kagoshima.

We landed on Amami Oshima Island at 11:30am on March 1st. I can’t put into words the feeling I had as we drove away from the airport. I felt as though I received a welcoming hug from the tropical trees lining both sides of the road and the warm spring breeze. ‘I don’t want to go home!’ I said aloud, to which Ms. Otono said ‘we just arrived and you are already saying that?’ ‘yes!’ I said, both of us having a good laugh together.

After having a quick lunch at a little restaurant by the sea, we immediately set out on our tour to discover the beauty of Amami. We got off to a good start heading south on Prefectural Road 82 in our rental car, where, after emerging from the forest and continuing about 10 minutes we easily found the Heart Rock. Heart Rock is a hidden heart shaped tide pool on the east shore of Akaogi Village, Tatsugo Town that is only revealed at low tide. It is a well known power spot on Amami Oshima Island, and draws many visitors as such. I stood next to it making a heart shape with my arms, and while Ms. Otono took my photo I make a wish for happiness in my heart. We had about 30 minutes
until our canoe tour at the mangrove park, so with a quick signal to each other we headed to the Mabe pearl shop in Setonai Town to see some Amami pearls.

Mabe is the biggest pearl oyster in Japan, and lives mainly in the waters from Amami Oshima Island to Okinawa. There are not many of these oysters and they are very difficult to harvest, and because of their rarity their pearls are known as phantom pearls. With a shimmer like moonlight, each and every one of these gold pearls is beautiful, and on our last day we both picked out our favorite pearl and bought it to commemorate the trip.

The canoe tour we did next was the most fun canoe tour out of all the ones I've done. While paddling through the mangrove tunnel I could feel the difference between low tide and high tide in just 5 minutes. While paddling through I had a sudden realization that the blessings and hardships of life are a natural thing just like the tide, which should be handled with composure.

On a night tour led by a local guide we were able to see some of Amami Oshima Island’s wild animals and plants. We saw Amami black rabbits and Amami woodcock, but the most impressive things we saw were the smallest owl in Japan called Ryūkyū scops-owl, and the world’s largest bean called modama giant bean. The little owls we found in the thick of the pitch black forest did not immediately run away, but just stood there looking at us as if they were saying ‘hey, who are you guys?!’; they were so charming. I was also surprised by the modama giant bean pods which were about as long as an elementary kid is tall (about one meter). The seeds (beans) from the modama that grow along the gullies get carried by sea currents and wash up on distant shores. A long time ago this mysterious seed that wasn’t recognized was mistaken for the seed of some sea plant, and came to be called ‘modama’ (seaweed ball). Because of their rarity
as well as the old story, they are also called ‘lucky beans’ because they are thought to bring blessings of special encounters and happiness.

On the morning of the second day we went to see the whales. We spent 4 hours looking for whales in the still cold ocean. Since I was still a little tired from our first day, being in the rocking boat made me feel a little out of it. After two and a half hours and still not seeing any whales, we were about to give up. But as though the whales could hear our thoughts, just as we were waving goodbye they appeared off in the distance. Upon receiving this unexpected delight, we quickly got out our cameras and took a burst of photos. After saying ‘Thank you kind whales’, we went home very satisfied.

That afternoon was the activity I was most excited about: motor paraglider sightseeing! The reason we chose paragliding is not because I’m a daring person, on the contrary, I’m a pretty conservative person, so I wanted to challenge myself. The weather was cloudy with some clearing, so I was a little worried, but was really happy we were able to take off and fly around before the rain came. Seeing the emerald coast, and sea turtles swimming in the perfectly clear ocean water from the sky was so touching I thought I was going to cry.

The weather was forecast to be clear on the third day, but it suddenly turned to rain. It turns out the weather forecast for the islands can only be made based on the present conditions. However, the saying ‘the weather forecast is never right’ is similar to ‘life doesn’t always go as we plan’, however this could be reason to be optimistic. Saying we will have to wait and see until tomorrow is true for tomorrow’s weather, and saying we will have to wait until we arrive at that point to see how things unfold is also true for life. We were definitely lucky that we finished all of our activities the previous day.
At 10:30 am we met a woman named Ms. Sayaka Hongo at a café in Amami City for an hour interview. Ms. Hongo is from Shanghai (her Chinese name is Liu XuDong), and moved to Amami 21 years ago. She obtained her Amami Special Interpreter Guide Certification, and is working as a tourism guide. For years she has been putting in a lot of effort entertaining Chinese tourists, and doing PR for the Amami Islands. The three of us sat and discussed many aspects of Amami’s tourism. Amami’s current tourism situation is that there is a lack of human resources and facilities. In order to attract foreign and domestic visitors, marketing and promotions are the most pressing thing needed. Further, by increasing employment opportunities in Amami, and getting young people to settle in the islands, it will be possible to increase the population. She also spoke of the need for balance between the resident’s feelings about the islands and tourism resource development.

With just one month left before the day I was scheduled to return home, receiving this big present (this lovely memory) made me realize how lucky people in Kagoshima are. I made a lot of memories that will stay with me for the rest of my life. I hope I will be able to meet you all again sometime someplace.

Kagoshima International Exchange A-Z

The 2018 Government Funded Overseas Students Arrived in Kagoshima

Every year Kagoshima Prefecture welcomes a few of the descendants of people who emigrated overseas from Kagoshima in the past, as study abroad students at Universities in the prefecture. During an 11 month study program the students learn Japanese language and another field of knowledge they specialize in, and also gain a deeper understanding of Japanese culture and Kagoshima Prefecture. After returning to their respective countries it is hoped they will become the cross cultural agents that will strengthen ties between Kagoshima and their home countries.

This program began in 1970 and is currently in its 48th year. As of last year, the number of students brought to Kagoshima were 86 from Brazil, 20 from Argentina, and 27 from Peru, for a total of 133.

This year two students from Brazil, and one from Peru were welcomed to Kagoshima Prefecture as government funded foreign students. In the beginning of April the students departed from Brazil and Peru, and after long flights of approximately 30 hours the 3 students arrived in Kagoshima, where they were taken to attend the Kagoshima University entrance ceremony, and start their lives in Kagoshima. They will stay until February.
Although this is the first time in Kagoshima for all three of them, they explained their aspirations to study hard and use the things they learn in the future, as well as experience many things in their ancestral home Kagoshima.

Over the 11 months in Kagoshima, the Government Funded Foreign Students will not only be studying, but will also visit their ancestor’s home areas and meet with their relatives. By doing so they will have a more meaningful time in Kagoshima and we think they will grow and learn very much.

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Seasonal Tourism Information

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*The 15th Kirishima City Wake Park Wisteria Festival*

The 100 starts of 23 different varieties of wisteria that were donated by Wake Town, Okayama Prefecture in March 2000, and have been well cared for and cultivated to fruition in good faith by the local residents will be displaying their beautiful blossoms from the middle of April to the beginning of May. Every year during this season a flower festival called ‘Fuji Matsuri’ is held where local specialty products are sold, and on the weekend local arts including Kirishima City’s spring poem are presented, drawing many visitors from within and outside of the prefecture.
From the Editors (Kagoshima Prefecture International Affairs Division)
What did you think of this month’s “Kagoshima Southern Wind Tidings”? The editors will continue to strive to make this prefectural foreign language newsletter a source of information and a bridge to connect all of you to Kagoshima. We’d like to ask our readers to provide their opinions, suggestions, article contributions and Kagoshima–related news.

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