Laidback Travels in Amami Oshima by Quek Ying Yan (CIR from Singapore)

Some time back, I went to Amami Oshima Island to visit a friend who has transferred there. We became fast friends on our first business trip together to the same island, and since then we would talk to each other about anything and everything from work to our personal lives. Flights connecting Kagoshima and Amami Oshima have become more frequent with the entry of a low-cost carrier in August, but I chose to take the overnight ferry instead. On the ride there, I had an enjoyable time chatting with my elderly roommates until bedtime, and on the way back my roommates and I all shut our curtains and cooped up in our own private worlds.

Although it was my third trip to Amami Oshima Island, it was the first time I went sightseeing at my own pace. With no itinerary to follow, we carefreely and leisurely explored Amami Oshima’s nature. At a fishing port, we took countless photos of turtles surfacing to exhale and watched with bated breath the battle between a crab walking dangerously near the water surface and a puffer fish closely following its every step below. On the beach we observed hermit crabs and picked seashells, and at night we drove slowly down a mountainous road and came across Amami rabbits, a feral cat and even Ryukyu wild boars.

I had a great time sightseeing and chatting with my friend the whole time, but the most memorable part of my trip by far was snorkelling off Kakeromajima Island. The sea on the western side is so beautiful its colour – “Saneku blue” – is named after the beach, and it was there we headed to by fishing boat and then bus.

We were the only passengers on both legs of the outward journey. The bus driver, a young man from Osaka who had come to live on Kakeromajima, talked about the island the whole time, and we keenly felt his love for his second
hometown. When we finally arrived at Saneku Beach, we were so impatient to see the coral reefs we spared no time for the scenery, hastily putting on our snorkelling masks and life jackets and diving into the chilly waters. Alas, it seemed like we made no progress however hard we kicked our legs. Some fellow beachgoers probably took pity on us, for they generously invited us aboard their motorboat and brought us to a spot with pretty coral reefs.

The view there was like something from a BBC nature documentary. Corals grew over one another in mounds in the crystal clear sea water and fish of all sizes swam gracefully about. I traced the outline of reefs and swam after fishes. It was a truly blissful moment.

Later, we returned to the boat for some cruising around nearby rock outcrops. We sang and danced to party songs, and I sharpened my senses to remember the touch and smell of the breeze and imprinted in my mind the wide expanse of the sky, the hues of the sea and the shapes of the jutting rocks and islands. Everything was so utterly wonderful words failed me. At the end the motorboat sped up back to Saneku in time for our bus. I never got to know their names, but these merry people will stay in my memory forever.

It is thanks to my (cute) friend that I was able to experience so much in my three-day trip. Her kindness touched me; she brought me around Amami Oshima while battling with heat fatigue, and even though her car broke down on the last day she still drove me to the ferry terminal with the replacement car. Amami Oshima Island is aiming for registration as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the year 2020. I am envious of my friend for living in the midst of such pristine nature, and this island has captivated me so much that I want to go back again and bring my friends and family the next time. Do visit Amami Oshima Island one day if you have the chance.

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Latest Kagoshima News

The Meiji Restoration 150th Anniversary Commemorative Symposium was held in Kirishima City

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The “Meiji Restoration 150th Anniversary Commemorative Symposium” was held in Kirishima City Kaikan on the 13th of October.

At the symposium, Professor Hiroshi Mitani from Atomi University and Professor Toru Hoya from Historiographical Institute, the University of Tokyo gave lectures on the Meiji Restoration in the context of world history, following which a panel discussion was held on the theme of “Evaluating the Meiji Restoration in the Context of World History”.

Utilising Japanese historical documents as well as those from abroad, the discussion explored incidents and events such as the Namamugi Incident, the Anglo-Satsuma War, the dispatch of Satsuma Students to the United Kingdom, and the participation of Satsuma Domain in the Paris Universal Exposition against the backdrop of world affairs at that time.

On the 6th of November, Tuesday, a symposium titled “The Meiji Restoration as Seen by the World” will be held at Kagoshima Prefectural Citizens Exchange Center. We look forward to your participation.
Kagoshima International Exchange A-Z

The Guinean Ambassador to Japan and Japanese Ambassador to Guinea visited Kagoshima

On the 9th of October, Guinean Ambassador to Japan Mr Senkoun Sylla and Japanese Ambassador to Guinea Mr Hisanobu Hasama paid a courtesy visit to Kagoshima Prefectural Government.

For over 20 years, Mishima Village and Guinea have conducted exchanges based on the traditional Guinea djembe drum.

Furthermore, Mishima Village was registered as the Host Town of Guinea for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and Paralympics Games in June this year.

Ambassador Sylla spoke of his appreciation for the exchanges so far including djembe-related exchanges and the construction of clinics in Guinea by Mishima Village, and expressed his hopes to develop exchanges in the field of agriculture in the future.

Kagoshima Prefecture explained that its agricultural output is 3rd in the country, and that it has many aspects that are Japan’s number 1 including Wagyu beef and Kurobuta pork. It also reiterated its gratitude for the exchanges with Mishima Village through djembe.
Introduction of Kagoshima Specialty Products
The Kagoshima New Specialty Products Contest was held on October 10 (Wed)

On the 10th of October, awards including the Governor’s Award were handed out at the “2018 Kagoshima New Specialty Products Contest”.

This contest is held every year to promote the creation of popular products that cater to increasingly diverse consumer needs.

A total of 173 products were entered in the two categories of food products and crafts/lifestyle goods this year, of which 22 products received awards. This year, many new products were released to coincide with the 150th anniversary of the Meiji Restoration and the airing of period drama “Segodon”. Kagoshima Prefecture will promote and advertise our wonderful specialty products and souvenirs not just within Kagoshima, but also to the rest of Japan and abroad.
A Note 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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