Latest Kagoshima News

Meiji Restoration 150th anniversary commemorative time capsule buried

On 13 March, a ceremony to bury the Meiji Restoration 150th anniversary commemorative time capsule was held in the grounds of Kagoshima Prefectural Government.

With the attendance of the chairman of Kagoshima Prefectural Assembly Mr Shibatate, about 60 children from nearby nurseries, elementary and junior high schools attended the event.

After the children read out their messages of hope and dreams for the future, their messages to the future and a message for the governor 50 years from now were put in the capsule and buried.

This time capsule will be opened again 50 years later in the 200th year of the Meiji Period.

Our children of today will have become adults, and we hope they will have pride in their hometown Kagoshima and high aspirations and carve out a bright future and lead our prefecture and our country.
Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) Column

Sudden Disappointment? Sudden Satisfaction! – 3 days and 2 nights in Amami Oshima Island by Huang Bo (CIR from China)

In the blink of an eye a year has passed since I came to Kagoshima. For my last contribution to this email newsletter, I had the chance to visit an island to write an article about it. This was an opportunity that I had looked forward to, yet anguished about for an entire year. Yakushima Island was unmissable, but I also wanted to see Yurigahama Beach on Yoron Island. In the end, I eventually decided to go to the island with the largest land area and a rich culture – Amami Oshima Island.

My itinerary was fixed three weeks before I went. From then on, my expectations of the trip grew. I want to ride on a propeller plane, see the blue seas from the beach, explore the underwater world on a glass-bottom boat, fly in the sky on a paraglider… I can go on and on about my wishes.

One week before, I started obsessively checking the weather forecast for Amami Oshima Island more than three times a day. It is a well-known fact that the weather on islands changes often, and similarly my moods fluctuated according to the weather icons for those three days.

Sudden Disappointment!

On the day of departure, I woke up to a disappointing weather forecast. It was predicted to be cloudy on all three days. I thus began my trip in a downcast mood.

I consoled myself with the knowledge that I would still have my first experience of riding on a propeller plane, but after arriving at the airport, checking in and reaching the departure gate, I was met with another unexpected let-down. I had the impression that all aircraft to the islands were propeller planes, but the Japan Airlines aircraft I would board was a jet-engine plane! This was the second blow of the day.

The plane landed at Amami Airport about an hour after taking off. The sea I saw from the plane was beautiful, but I still rued the fact that it would have been even more beautiful in finer weather. I left the airport, met up with Oshima Branch Office Section Chief Nagano who had come to welcome me, and began on my journey of Amami Oshima Island.

The weather was gloomy as expected. The sun came out occasionally, but the blue seas I had hoped to see were not to be found. To make matters worse, it rained on the second day when I was exploring Uken Village. I held an umbrella while strolling around, but holding a camera and trying to keep it dry were challenges, and I wasn’t able to take pictures to my heart’s content.

Not All is Lost

Luckily, the weather wasn’t too harsh on me the whole time. I was lucky to be able to see Kikaijima Island from the observatory at Amami Park. My plan for the last stop of the first day was to take pictures of the sunset from Ohama Seaside Park, but as it was cloudy the whole afternoon Mr Nagano and I had discussed forgoing the photoshoot and returning home early. But we did not throw in the towel and decided to go ahead. When we reached Ohama Seaside Park at about 5pm, the sky was covered in a blanket of clouds and we could see nothing beyond. Nonetheless, on Mr Nagano’s recommendation that we wait and see, rather than give up...
and regret, we decided to leave it to fate. Who would have thought the skies would clear up and we would be able to catch the setting sun! In fact, thanks to the clouds the entire sky was bathed in shades of sunset, making for a spectacular scene.

A similar thing happened on the second day. It had rained continuously from the morning, and even after the rain stopped the sky remained heavy with clouds. But from around 3pm the clouds cleared all of a sudden, and we headed to Yuidake Observatory that we had earlier skipped. I was finally able to enjoy a panoramic view of Kakeromajima Island, Ukejima Island, Yorojima Island, and even distant Tokunoshima Island. As further proof of my good luck, this window of sunny weather was extremely short, and by the time I descended the hill to return to Amami City, the sun had completely disappeared again.

An Interesting Urban Tour

It wasn’t just the scenery that I enjoyed. Having nearly ‘conquered’ all the municipalities on mainland Kagoshima, in similar fashion I chose to cover all five municipalities on Amami Oshima Island. Firstly, Tatsugo Town. The first thing I thought of when I arrived was that it was “colourful”. I wouldn’t be surprised if the local residents did not realise that, but I was pleasantly surprised by the reds, blues, and greens of the houses, and glad that I had come to such a distinctive place.

Yamato Village and Uken Village have entirely different moods to Tatsugo Town. They are still, as if time has stopped and one can almost feel a sense of eternity there. The place emanating the stillest mood is the avenue of garcinia trees in Kuninao. Walking down the avenue was like entering a fairy tale world. Also, reading the messages written on leaves praying for one’s family’s good health warmed my heart.

Going to Setouchi Town, I felt an atmosphere of liveliness despite the peaceful surroundings at the port with rows of fishing boats. I could easily imagine a bustling port, with boats bobbing in the crystal clear sea and fishermen bringing in fresh catch with wide smiles on their faces.

Learning Experiences

The first spot I visited after arriving was Amami Park, and I thoroughly enjoyed the facility under the guide of Director Tashiro. The main hall had on display information about the Amami Islands, photographs of everyday life and festivals in bygone days, and visitors could also freely listen to shima uta, traditional local folk songs. Mr Tashiro gave detailed explanations, and showed me local marine and forest life using the augmented reality functions on a mobile app.
The Tanaka Isson Memorial Museum also left a deep impression. The building itself was extremely pretty, but more than that, I was most impressed by his art style that changed with the times. Viewing his work, even someone like me who doesn’t usually get fine art understood the artist’s passion for innocence, and I thought it was helpful in improving my photography. By the way, I have decided to submit a photograph to this year’s Kagoshima Prefectural Art Exhibition. I don’t know if it will be selected, but do visit the exhibition if you have the chance.

After gazing at Kikaijima Island from Amami Park’s observatory, we next headed to Oshima Tsumugi Mura to unravel some mysteries. A few months ago, I had to translate some documents on Oshima Tsumugi silk fabric. I understood the meaning of the words, but I could not imagine how the processes of mud-dyeing or warping are done. At Oshima Tsumugi Mura, I finally was able to see for myself the actual methods of production and tie up all mental loose ends. In addition, I chanced upon a panel in the lounge explaining the origin of the name “Amami”, which answered yet another of my questions.

I also visited the Amami Museum to observe the shells and crabs living on the seabed around Amami Oshima Island, touched the Amami rabbit and Amami spiny rat at the Amami Wildlife Conservation Center in Yamato Village, and learned about the habits of pit vipers at the Habu Center. My curiosity was sated with all the various knowledge and trivia as if I had just eaten my favourite yakiniku grilled meat.

Hands-on Experiences

The first CIR column that I translated for was my predecessor Ma Yan’s article on her trip to Amami Oshima Island. The charms of the island had left an impact on me since then. Of course, I tried to visit places that she didn’t, but powered paragliding was something I really wanted to experience, so I did it on my third day there. In the morning, I received notice that the activity could not be done at 1pm due to the weather, but was possible at a later time at 3pm. But after reaching the beach I had to wait a further 30 minutes for the wind to calm down. As the idiom goes, the road to happiness is paved with hardships. It was a truly wonderful experience. I flew, soaring and swooping above the sea, and I saw everything from a sea turtle swimming leisurely, the edge where the seabed suddenly drops off, to a bird’s eye view of Kasarizaki Lighthouse. I somewhat understood the joys of being a bird. I regretted not replacing my camera battery before flying; I could have taken more photographs.
Before taking off like a bird on the paraglider, I was a fish the day before in Setouchi Town. The previous day, I had boarded a glass-bottom boat on an underwater sightseeing trip to observe the brightly coloured fish swimming here and there among the coral reefs, and even caught sight of a sea snake. The cruise naturally allowed me to experience how profound the sea is. The coral reefs that grow only a few metres deep under the sea were host to such varied and numerous living creatures it made me wonder how awesome the middle of the Pacific Ocean must be.

After the cruise, I visited Honohoshi Beach on Mr Nagano’s advice. I presumed it would be a normal seaside coast, but I was enthralled by the crash of waves on the rocks and the ASMR-like ‘music’ of the waves as they recede from the pebbly coast. I must have stood at the beach with my eyes closed to enjoy the sounds for a very long time.

I had yet another experience at Miyakozaki. I could not see my much-yearned-for blue seas, but it was interesting path to the tip of the cape. At first, the road was visible between grasses, but as I walked the path gradually disappeared among encroaching waist-high grasses. I felt as if I had blended into the natural surroundings, and it relieved me of all my exhaustion and worries.

Unexpected Encounters

Travels mean new encounters and separation. Unexpected encounters are the highlight of a trip. On the third day, I had two hours of free times resulting from the change in paragliding time. After discussing with Ms Kohama and the driver what to do, the driver brought me on a trip along the coast from Naze to the northern part of the island.

We passed through Daikuma-cho, gazed at the city of Naze from the Daikuma Observatory Park, drove through Japan’s second shortest tunnel, toured Saigo Nanshu’s site of exile, and headed to the observatory of Kamozaki. On the way, I saw stunning scenery, learned about the local religion and Saigo Takamori’s exile. And I thought I was truly lucky when I climbed the Kamozaki Observatory. From there, I could see a sweeping view of the three bays of Tatsugo Town, and even the Pacific Ocean beyond the island. If the paragliding session was not delayed, I would not have been able to enjoy such sights.

From Kamozaki Observatory on our way to the beach near Kasarizaki for the paragliding session, a cattle farm appeared out of nowhere in front of me. The cows all turned as one to face me as if in greeting, and stared with piercing gazes. “Sorry to bother you!” I said, and we continued on our way.

Warm Amami

Amami Oshima Island is warm. I was hot even after removing my down jacket at the airport. But the people of Amami had hearts that were even warmer. Mr Nagano brought me around for the first two days, gave me many recommendations, and even waited for me as I took the sunset. Ms Kohama, who accompanied me on my third day, took many photographs as I rode on the paraglider. Even the driver taught me much: that the tunnel is a sunset viewing spot, a restaurant for good keihan (traditional local chicken rice), and stories about a church and a power plant. Mr Tashiro of Amami Park and the guide at Oshima Tsumugi Mura kindly answered all my questions. To them, the people of Oshima Branch Office who
greeted me with warm smiles, the uncle of the yakiniku stall who served me large portions of my favourite meat, and all those who I cannot name individually, thank you all for your kind hospitality.

Last Words

I have made so many memories in Amami Oshima Island. Even Mount Okamiyama in the rain and the delicious tofu from Shimatofu-ya that reversed a month’s diet were memories I would treasure forever. On reflection however, my trip to Amami Oshima Island was not the only memory to be cherished. In my one year here, I have travelled not just the islands, but also almost all the regions from the north to the south of mainland Kagoshima. I have seen much, learned much, and met so many people. This one year in Kagoshima has been an unexpected trip of a lifetime, and everything I have encountered here were unexpected experiences. I was slightly nervous before I came, but now, I am truly glad that I made the journey here. I am grateful to have met everyone. To everyone in Kagoshima Prefecture who have given me such precious memories, I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart.  

Aigatosagemoshita! Oyattosaa!

Seasonal Tourism Information
Shibushi Oshaka (Buddha) Festival

A festival held since the Edo Period to celebrate the birth of Buddha, worshippers pour cups of hydrangea tea over the Buddha statue, the number of which corresponds to their age (counted in the Japanese way: one turns one at birth and grows a year older on New Year’s Day), to pray for good health.

The festival features the shan-shan-uma parade, with brides riding horses led by the bridegrooms, a lively dance parade where local residents and visitors can participate, making it one of Kagoshima Prefecture’s most prominent festivals.

Address:  6539 Cho, Shibushi Town, Shibushi City, Kagoshima Prefecture
Tel: 099-472-8028 (Oshaka Festival Executive Committee (Shibushi City Tourist and Specialty Products Association))
Dates: 28 April 2019, Sunday (Zenyasai; Eve of Festival)
       29 April 2019, Monday (public holiday; Festival)
Venue: Homanji Park, downtown area of Shibushi City
Access: 20 minutes by foot from JR Shibushi Station
         30 minutes by car on prefectoral road 63 after getting off at Soo-Yagoro IC
Parking: Available
Introduction of Kagoshima Specialty Products
Banana Fibre Cloth Tool Case

Recipient of the Governor’s Award at the 2018 Kagoshima New Specialty Products Contest – Crafts and Household Goods Category.

21,600 yen (tax incl.)
20cm x 30cm x 2cm (unfolded), 20cm x 10cm x 6cm (folded)

This roll-up tool case is made from a combination of banana fibre cloth and cow leather. It can also be used as a pen case or a makeup pouch. Available in the following colours: Yakusugi cedar dye, safflower dye, unbleached.

Nakae Silk Textile Ltd.
892-4, Miyanoura-cho, Kagoshima City, 891-1305
Tel: 099-294-2002
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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