

Multilingual Electronic Newsletter

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Kagoshima Southern Wind Tidings

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Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) Column

- Plum blossoms, the Harbinger of Spring ●

- By Wong Yimin (CIR from Singapore)

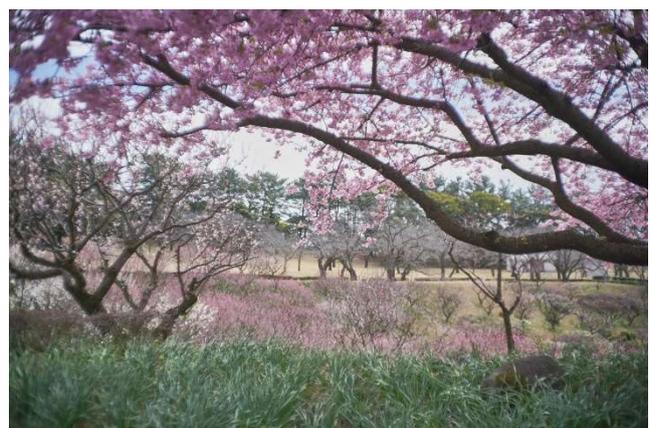
Spring is finally upon us!

As the seasons change from the cold greyness of winter to the vibrancy of spring, it is again the time of warmth, new life, and flowers.

I visited Yoshino Park in Kagoshima City during the plum blossom season recently, and was enamored by the gorgeous blooms there.

Every year come spring, there will always be much talk and speculation about the cherry blossom season, best viewing periods and flower viewing parties known as *hanami*. It can even be said that the cherry blossom is the representative flower of spring in Japan, especially in the eyes of foreigners.

But do you know that there is another similar flower that has equally deep roots in Japan culture and history?



Plum blossoms, or *ume*, are associated with the start of spring as they are some of the first blossoms to bloom after winter. In Kagoshima, they can be seen around February to March, depending on the varieties. Like cherry blossom trees, plum blossom trees come in many varieties. Most plum blossoms have five rounded petals and range in color from white to dark pink.

In addition, there is a deep scarlet type called Kagoshima Beni, which is representative of dark colored plum blossoms.

On the other hand unlike cherry blossoms, plum blossoms do not have notched petals and also have a strong, sweet fragrance.

They were originally introduced from China to Japan during the Nara period (CE 710 to 794), and rapidly became popular due to their beauty and symbolism.



Kagoshima Beni

In China, plum blossoms signify endurance, courage, perseverance and reliability. In addition, they represent the thawing of winter and the welcoming of spring. As this also welcomes the farming season, plum blossoms symbolize prosperity too and hence is a motif commonly used during Lunar New Year celebrations.



This is also true back home in Singapore, where you can see plum blossoms used as one of the common motifs in decorations during Lunar New Year.

In Japan, the plum blossom is considered by historians to be the original flower that started off the tradition of *hanami* in Japan.

Plum blossoms were seen as the customary flower of spring well into the Nara period and to the earlier years of the Heian era, but by the mid-Heian period, cherry blossoms has taken over its place.



I also learnt of an interesting proverb related to cherry and plum blossoms. Directly translated, it says that it is foolish to prune cherry trees, but it is foolish to not prune plum trees.

The meaning is that although they may look visually quite similar, each type of tree requires its own care procedures. Indeed, at first glance both types of flowers do look very alike, and it is indeed easy to mix them up!

As I left Yoshino Park, I turned back to enjoy a last look at the vibrant plum blossoms swaying in the gentle breeze.



After their turn, the baton will be passed next to the cherry blossoms waiting patiently in line and the cycle continues. Till the next year!



Activities of the Governor

● 23 Nov: 「Vietnam Fair in Kagoshima 2023」 was held to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Vietnam ●

The event 「Vietnam Fair in Kagoshima 2023」 was held to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Vietnam.

Along with being a celebration for this 50th anniversary, this event is also aimed at promoting exchanges between Vietnamese residents living in Kagoshima and Kagoshima prefectural residents.

On the day of the event, H.E. Mr. Phạm Quang Hiệu, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam attended the opening ceremony along with many Vietnamese and prefectural residents, and the venue was very lively.

After the opening ceremony, the Governor and Ambassador Hiệu jointly wrote a message wishing for further development of friendship between the two countries and hung it on the Message Tree within the venue.

It is our wish to continue strengthening our relationship with Vietnam and strive towards creating an environment where Vietnamese people can live and work with peace of mind as part of the local community.



Greetings from the Governor



Presenting of Commemorative Gift



Message Tree

International Relations of Kagoshima

- 21-23 Nov: The 21st Singapore-Kagoshima Conference was held along with a visit by the Singapore delegation ●

The 21st Singapore-Kagoshima Conference was held from 21 to 23 November, with a visit by the Singapore delegation led by Mr. Sam Tan, Former Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Social and Family Development of the Singapore Government.

This Conference has been held every 2 years in alternating locations since 1982, and holds discussions aimed at promoting mutual exchanges between Singapore and Kagoshima.

At the Conference, agreements were reached on 8 items with topics including economy, tourism, culture and youth exchange. As Singapore is one of the world’s leading global cities, we can expect to be able to expand sales channels for local products and to further promote tourism.

We hope that this Conference will serve as an opportunity for the bond between Kagoshima and Singapore to further strengthen in the future.



◀ During the Conference



Group photo ▶

Tourism Information in Kagoshima

- Izumi City Crane Observation Centre ●



Photo: Kagoshima Prefectural Visitors Bureau

This observatory stands in front of the reclaimed land where the cranes roost, and is the core of Izumi's winter tourist attractions.

These cranes are designated as a national treasure. Hailing from Siberia, the first group arrive every year in mid-October and over 10,000 cranes overwinter here until around March.

Their graceful dances and food foraging can be seen from the observation decks on the 2nd floor and rooftop. The cranes that can be seen in Izumi are mainly the hooded cranes and white-naped cranes, and in recent years their numbers have been confirmed to be over 10,000.

It has been said that Izumi is the only place in the world where such large numbers of cranes spend their winters in such close proximity to human settlements, and seeing entire crane families in the rice fields and soaring into the sky is a sight to behold.

Every day, there are large numbers of tourists from all over the country who come to see these elegant cranes up close.



Website of Kagoshima Prefectural Government: <http://www.pref.kagoshima.jp/>



Editor's Note (International Affairs Division, Kagoshima Prefectural Government)

Hello everyone! It has already been a month and half since the start of 2024; how have you been doing? February is commonly said to pass in a blink of an eye, and all the more because it passes so quickly, I feel that it is important to make the most of each day as we look forward to the warm embrace of spring's arrival.

I hope 2024 will be a wonderful year for everyone.

Till the next issue!



「Kagoshima Southern Wind Tiding's bulletin board」 is looking for the following content!

☆Kagoshima Photo Gallery

We would like to invite you to send us photos that remind you of Kagoshima, or photos of Kagoshima that you might have seen overseas. Please also attach a brief description along with the photo. (e.g. a mountain of volcanic-ash bags)

☆Knowledge about living in Kagoshima

Please share with us information related to life in Kagoshima. (e.g. delicious ways to enjoy fried fish cakes, or how to deal with volcanic ash.)

We also welcome any other information that you would like to share with our readers.

▲▽▲▽ Inquiries ▲▽▲▽

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