

Multilingual Electronic Newsletter

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かごしま南の風便り

Kagoshima Southern Wind Tidings



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## Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) Column

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### ● Pioneer Prefecture, Kagoshima ●

- By Joseph Snowden (CIR from the UK) -

Kagoshima: treasure of the south. Despite its many charms, the prefecture is often overlooked by international tourists planning their first trip to Japan, who tend to favour Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka.

Perhaps this is because Kagoshima is nestled down at the southern edge of Japan's mainland, far from Tokyo. But while other prefectures may receive more attention, there is something undeniably special about Kagoshima. For centuries, it has also been at the cutting edge – Japan's pioneer prefecture.

Imagine this: it's the year 1865, and you, a teenager from the Satsuma Domain, are staring out from the rocky coastline in Hashima, waiting for a boat to arrive from beyond the horizon. Your order papers instruct you to inspect some of the domain's outlying islands, but you know that your real mission is to make a secret, months-long voyage to study in a foreign country on the other side of the globe, risking death if caught violating the national seclusion policy.



*The Hashima coast*

This is the story of the Satsuma Students, who left their families behind to study western technology in Great Britain. I often wonder how those brave young people felt throughout their journey, from leaving home, to the new places, people and technologies they encountered.



*The students left Japan for the other side of the globe*

They certainly would have seen some surprising things: countless gas lamps illuminating the Hong Kong night sky, a steam locomotive "as fast as the wind" on tracks stretching across Egypt, and at their final destination, London, the world's first underground railway. Because of the undersea telegraph cables that Britain had laid to Bombay (now Mumbai) in India, the students' accommodation arrangements had already been completed well

before they arrived in England. This would have stood in marked contrast to the months they spent in Hashima, waiting, unsure when their boat would arrive.



*Group photos of the Satsuma Students*

But the story didn't end in England.

Many of the Satsuma Students returned to Japan and played key roles in the country's modernisation. Terashima Munenori became known as the "father of telegraphy", overseeing the connection of Tokyo and Yokohama by the first Japanese telegraph system as Governor of Kanagawa Prefecture, and ultimately became Foreign Minister. Godai Tomoatsu became a pillar of Osaka's financial circles, founding the Osaka Chamber of Commerce and the Osaka Stock Exchange. Machida Hisanari, inspired by the British Museum, was appointed as the Tokyo National Museum's first director. These Satsuma pioneers had a huge impact on the country's development.

Today, the story of the Satsuma Students is memorialised and retold at the Satsuma Students Museum in Ichikikushikino City. Located precisely at the site of the students' departure and full of historical artefacts, the museum is a must-see for anyone interested in how Kagoshima gained its title as the birthplace of modern Japan.



*The Satsuma Students Museum*



But the prefecture’s pioneering spirit is not confined to history. It lives on, and Kagoshima’s pioneers have turned their gaze upwards.

Since the 1960s, Japan’s national space agency, JAXA, has been launching and tracking rockets from its two bases in Kagoshima: the Uchinoura Space Center (Osumi Peninsula), and the Tanegashima Space Center (Tanegashima Island). These are the only two sites in the country with the ability to launch satellites into orbit, earning Kagoshima its title as Japan’s “gateway to

space”. In fact, Japan’s first successful satellite, put into orbit in 1970, was named Ohsumi, after the region of Kagoshima from which it was launched.

These launches continue today. On 7<sup>th</sup> September 2023, I watched a rocket scream through the sky from my apartment in Kagoshima City, moments after it lifted off from Tanegashima. The excitement I felt stayed with me for weeks, and I can still remember the feeling of the rocket’s raw power.



*The rocket piercing through the Kagoshima sky*

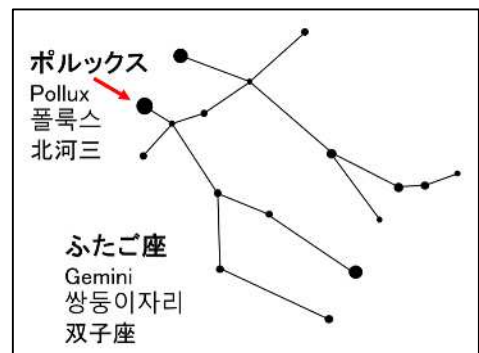
Now, just months later, the contents of that rocket are on the surface of the Moon. The lunar probe SLIM (Smart Lander for Investigating Moon) secured Japan’s place as one of only five nations to have landed on the Moon, and it was launched from one of Kagoshima’s islands.



*The parabolic antennas at Uchinoura  
(L: 20-m, R: 34-m)*

And it doesn’t stop at the moon. The 34-m parabolic antenna at Uchinoura Space Center was built in 1998, so some of the first signals sent at the time have now been travelling through space at the speed of light for almost 35 years. They passed our nearest star in 2003, and last year, they reached Pollux, the brightest star in the Gemini

constellation. So, next time you look up on a starry night, find Gemini. Signals that originated in Kagoshima are now all the way out there.



The Uchinoura Space Center is open to visitors, so I took the opportunity to visit for myself. Looking up at the antenna, it's quiet. The only thing I can hear is the hum of electrical equipment. You might not think it, but this quiet place is where history is being written, and new frontiers are being explored. Here, in the undulating hills of the Osumi countryside, the pioneering spirit of Kagoshima lives on.



*The Uchinoura Space Center*



## The Governor's Activities

### ●11<sup>th</sup> February: Holding the Kagoshima-Vietnam Tết Festival●

The Kagoshima-Vietnam Tết Festival was held in Kagoshima. Given that Kagoshima is home to over 5000 Vietnamese people as well as a diverse group of other foreign nationals, the festival was held as part of the prefecture's aim to become an appealing place in which foreign residents can live comfortably.

At the opening ceremony, participants celebrated the Vietnamese Lunar New Year (Tết), with the Governor also taking part in the ringing of a bell to wish for happiness, a Vietnamese test of luck to welcome the New Year. During the stage event, the audience was treated to both Vietnamese and Japanese culture, including Vietnamese traditional dancing and a calligraphy performance by the Shonan High School Calligraphy Club. The venue was bustling, with many Vietnamese nationals and prefectural citizens in attendance.

We were also pleased to welcome staff from the Japan Association for the 2025 World Exposition, who promoted the Osaka-Kansai World Expo, with Myaku-Myaku, the Expo's official character, also making an appearance.

Moving forward, we hope to continue working to make Kagoshima a place where foreign residents from Vietnam and all over the world can live comfortably as members of the local community.



Opening remarks by the Governor



World Expo Talk Show



Vietnamese folk dance performance

## Kagoshima's International Relations

### ●22<sup>nd</sup> January: A Kagoshima delegation visited Taiwan's Pingtung County and signed an MOU (Exchange Agreement)●

A delegation from Kagoshima visited Pingtung County in Taiwan for the signing of an MOU (Exchange Agreement).

Chou Chun-mi, Magistrate of Pingtung County, expressed her gratitude for the Kagoshima Prefecture visit in September last year, as well as her hope that the signing of the MOU would serve as an opportunity for the promotion of even further exchange between Kagoshima and Pingtung.

Governor Shiota conveyed his desire to use the signing of the MOU to continue promoting exchange with Pingtung County across a wide range of areas, including youth exchange, arts and cultural exchange, tourism exchange, and economic exchange.

Furthermore, as a commemorative gift to mark the MOU signing ceremony, Magistrate Chou was very pleased to be presented with kumquats grown in Kagoshima.

To date, most efforts to attract tourists and to expand sales channels for prefectural produce have been focused on Taipei and northern Taiwan, but moving forward, with the signing of the MOU, it is anticipated that these initiatives will be extended to southern Taiwan.



*Governor Shiota with Magistrate Chou Chun-Mi of Pingtung County, Taiwan*



*Signing of the MOU*



*Presentation of Kagoshima kumquats*



*Commemorative photo*



## Seasonal Tourism Information



*Photo credit: Flower Park Kagoshima*

### ● Flower Park Kagoshima (Ibusuki City) ●

“A symphony of flowers, wind, and light”—operating under this theme, Flower Park Kagoshima was founded in order to offer a place to get in touch with flowers and other plants, for producers and consumers to meet, and as a charming center for tourism. Located near Cape Nagasaki-bana on the southernmost tip of Kagoshima Prefecture’s Satsuma Peninsula, and making use of the warm climate and the groves of pine trees which naturally encircle the park, this garden allows visitors a chance to enjoy plants from all around the world.

The expansive 36.5-hectare grounds feature plants from subtropical locations such as South Africa and Australia.

Visitors can also experience Flower Square against the backdrop of Mt. Kaimondake, look out across Kinko Bay from the Observation Galleria, and enjoy the European feel of the Western Garden and the openness of the Indoor Garden, while the Greenhouse is home to an array of vibrant colors, featuring the red sealing wax palm, the jade vine, and the rose grape, along with other tropical plants.



