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Flying in the Skies of Kagoshima

-By Wong Yimin (CIR from Singapore)-

Have you ever wondered how it would feel to fly free in the sky, especially in the beautiful skies of Kagoshima?

It has always been on my bucket list to try paragliding, and I was thrilled to have the opportunity to do so on Amami Oshima, a gorgeous island in Kagoshima that is registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site!



Paragliding!

Trip to Amami Island

I have been wanting to visit Amami Oshima for a while, and I finally had the chance during last winter! My main purpose for going during winter was to do whale-watching, and at the same time was hoping to be able to try out paragliding.

Thanks to my dear friend there who hosted me and brought me around, I managed to do both of them, along with a whole host of fun activities that made this trip very memorable.

That would be a tale for another time though! For now, allow me to share with you my amazing experience of paragliding.



The magical experience of whale watching

Aimi Paraglider School

On Amami, there are various places where tandem paragliding can be done, with no prior experience necessary! Aimi Paraglider School is one such place, and I was introduced to it by my friend who had a great time with them.

The weather plays a huge role when it comes to paragliding, and normally the peak season for it is in summer where the weather and winds are more suitable.

Winter season has more unstable weather, and I got a first-hand experience where we had to reschedule the dates several times due to the erratic weather!

However, Aimi School was patient and constantly kept an eye on the weather for me, and thankfully we managed to squeeze in a flight near the very end of my trip.



*Unstable (but still beautiful) weather in
the past few days*

Pre-flight

The day dawned bright and sunny, and a gorgeous cerulean blue sky greeted us on the hilltop where we were to take off from.

The instructor, Ms. Aimi, had spent all morning checking that the weather conditions were suitable, the windsock was showing good winds and the landing site was all in order

Thereafter, she met us at the foot of the hill and led us up to the takeoff site. After checking again that everything is in order and all equipment are ready, she then gave me a detailed safety briefing and explanation on what to expect.

Next, she started strapping me into the equipment, doing final checks and then getting herself ready too.

Her professional manner and experienced demeanor were extremely reassuring to a first-timer like me! At that time, my heart was racing in anticipation as I waited for everything to be ready.



Beautiful weather and views on paragliding day



Preparing for takeoff



Takeoff site on the top of a hill

Into the Sky

Finally, it is time! I was instructed to run off the edge of the hill, which is as scary as it sounds to be honest. However, the winds caught the canopy really quickly, and pretty soon I was running on air as we have lift-off!

Once up in the air, calm descended as the breathtaking vista of Amami unfolded below us. There is virtually no sensation of speed, just a very gentle floating feeling as we drifted among pure blue and bright sunshine.

Along the way, Ms. Aimi also pointed out the sights below; it was a real treat to enjoy the view from a literal birds-eye view! It felt so unreal that I was expecting to wake up any moment.



Running off the edge



A day in the life of a bird (probably)



(Tilted) airborne view

Back to Earth

As we coasted lower, the glittering sea slowly unfolded below us. The waters are so clear and vibrant, and you can see right to the bottom!

Slowly but surely, we approached the landing site on the beach. The golden expanse of sand grew larger and larger and before I knew it, we landed with a gentle thump and we are back to the firm embrace of gravity.



Views of the mountains behind us

Thoughts

The entire experience felt like a dream; the flight was supposed to last about 15 minutes but it felt at once endless and instantaneous. As a first-timer, I was expecting paragliding to be exciting and thrilling, but in fact after that initial excitement of running off the hilltop, the rest of the ride is extremely peaceful and tranquil.



Over crystal-clear waters

Approaching the landing site

In addition, the views of Amami Oshima from up above was so stunningly picturesque that it feels almost unreal. It was almost like looking down from a plane right before landing at an airport, but even more intimate with the feel of wind and sun on your face.

Many thanks to Aimi Paraglider School for the amazing experience, and to my friend for recommending it and coming along!

I enjoyed it so much that if given the chance, I would be keen to do it all over again. Highly recommend to anyone who would like to try something new outside of your comfort zone!

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Thank you Amami!



Enjoying an avian experience

02 Activities of the Governor

11 Sep: Attended the Opening Ceremony of the Joint Exhibit by 7 Kyushu Prefectures at the Osaka-Kansai Expo

At the Osaka–Kansai Expo, there was a joint exhibition by the seven Kyushu prefectures held from 3-5 September with the concept of “Bringing Kyushu’s Treasures to the World.” The Governor attended and promoted Kyushu’s rich food culture and tourism attractions.

At the booth, items such as the Kyushu Treasure Bento were offered, which are packed with each prefecture’s signature dishes including Kagoshima Wagyu roast beef, alongside Kagoshima shochu highball and Ibusuki Onsen cider. The event space also featured live Amami folk music performance by Marina Hirata and other singers from Amami Oshima, which greatly enlivened the atmosphere.

At Kagoshima’s booth, the prefecture’s attractions were showcased through displays and hands-on experiences related to its three World Heritage sites, traditional crafts, and food culture. Visitors also enjoyed tastings of Kagoshima Wagyu beef and local shochu liquor.

Over the three days, the joint Kyushu booth welcomed about 47,000 visitors. Many people were able to experience the rich nature, history, culture, and specialties of The Treasure of the South, Kagoshima.

We will continue to make the most of every opportunity to share the charm of Kagoshima and to attract more visitors to our prefecture.



▲ During the Greeting at the Ceremony



▲ Explanation about Oshima Tsumugi silk by Ms. Marina Hirata



▲ The Kagoshima Booth



▲ Live Performance of Amami Folk Songs

11 Sep: Visit by the Japanese Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago

His Excellency Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Dr. Akima Umezawa of the Embassy of Japan in Trinidad and Tobago paid a courtesy visit to the Governor of Kagoshima Prefecture.

Ambassador Umezawa expressed his gratitude for Kagoshima's acceptance of ALTs (Assistant Language Teachers) from the areas under the Embassy's jurisdiction. He also mentioned that Kagoshima is a very popular placement among ALT applicants and requested the prefecture's continued cooperation in accepting them.

The Ambassador also shared that there is currently strong public interest in waste management issues in Trinidad and Tobago, and that local media there have shown great interest in initiatives such as those in Osaki Town.

We hope that this visit will further strengthen the relationship and exchange between Kagoshima Prefecture, Trinidad and Tobago, and the other areas under the Embassy's jurisdiction.



▲ During the visit



▲ Taking a Commemorative Photo

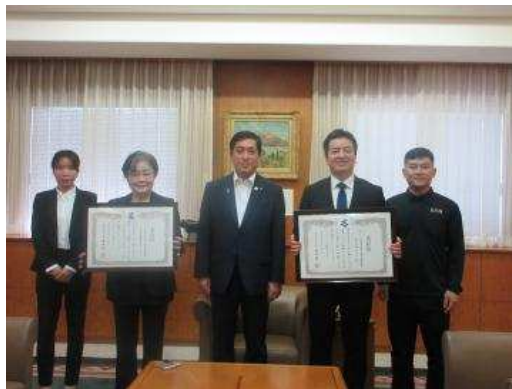
25 Sep: Presented Awards to Kagoshima Companies

Excelling in Accepting Foreign Talent

The Kagoshima Foreign Talent-Friendly Company Awards was held to recognize companies, organizations and groups in Kagoshima that are making efforts to create workplaces where foreign talent can work comfortably.

This year, we honored two companies for their outstanding initiatives in supporting the retention and development of foreign talent: ACG Co., Ltd. (medical and welfare) and Kajiki Sangyo Co., Ltd. (manufacturing).

We extend our congratulations to the award recipients and look forward to their continued success. The prefecture will continue to widely share these exemplary initiatives to improve the environment for accepting foreign talent in companies throughout Kagoshima.



▲Taking a Commemorative Photo

03 International Relations of Kagoshima

Conducted Awareness Activities to Promote Sign Language in conjunction with Sign Language Day (23 Sep) and International Week of the Deaf (22-28 Sep)

Based on the Kagoshima Prefectural Sign Language Ordinance which was enacted in March 2020, we carried out activities to promote sign language and increase understanding of deaf people during Sign Language Day on 23 September and International Week of the Deaf from 22-28 September.



1. Sign Language Day Festa (Awareness Event)

- Date and Time: 23 September (Tue), 10:00 am–12:00 pm and 1:00–3:00 pm.
- Location: Aeon Mall Kagoshima, 3rd Floor in front of Ikka Lounge
- Content: Sign language experience booths, panel exhibits, etc.

2. 「Blue」 Light-Up

- Date and Time: 23 September (Tue), after sunset
- Location: Amu Plaza Kagoshima (Amuran), CenTerrace Tenmonkan (CenTerrace Square, exterior logo), Salaria Nishitetsu Hotel Kagoshima, Nishidabashi Bridge, Takamibashi Bridge

3. Panel Exhibitions

- Display Locations and Periods:
 - 22 - 29 September: Kagoshima Prefectural Office Main, 1st Floor Atrium Staircase
 - 19 - 29 September: Aeon Mall Kagoshima
 - Mid-late September: Regional promotion bureaus, branch offices and 19 cities and towns within the prefecture, as well as Kagoshima Prefectural Library and Amami Prefectural Library



▲ During the Sign Language Day Festa



▲ Panel exhibition at Aeon Mall Kagoshima



▲ 「Blue」 Light-Up

Left: Amu Plaza Kagoshima / Right: Takamibashi Bridge

19-28 Sep: Dispatch of a Youth Soccer Team to Changsha, China

Wings for Youth is a program where Kagoshima City sends young people to its overseas sister and friendship cities. As part of this program, a soccer team of 20 second- and third-year junior high students was sent to Changsha, China for the first time. The purpose of this trip is to deepen exchanges through sports.

In addition to visiting sites around Changsha and local junior high schools, the team also participated in the 2025 Hunan Changsha International Friendship Cities Soccer Tournament.

04 Events Happening in Kagoshima

7 Sep: Akusekijima Boze Festival

Boze is a visiting deity that appears at the end of the Obon festival, and is said to cleanse villagers of impurities. The deity wears a peculiar mask with large ears, eyes, and mouth, a long nose, and has a body covered in palm leaves, giving it a unique appearance.

During the festival, three young men dress as Boze and chase women and children with long sticks coated with red soil called Bozemara, where it is said that being touched by this soil brings blessings.

The festival is believed to have started over 500 years ago. In 2015, it was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural



▲ The unique appearance of the Boze deity

「© K. P. V. B」

Property of Japan under the name Boze of Akusekijima, and in 2018, it was inscribed as part of the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage under Visiting Deities: Masks and Costumes.

22 Sep: Sendai Great Tug-of-War 2025

This is a traditional event held in Satsumasendai City every year, on the day before the Autumn Equinox in September.

On the day of the event, about 1,500 people will spend more than half a day to twist 365 ropes into a single large rope. During the nighttime tug-of-war, approximately 3,000 men called Hadaka, will wrap their upper bodies with cloth and pull a rope that is the largest in Japan; it has a length of 365 meters and a weight of 7 tons. The intense clash of bodies, especially between the men in the pushing team who try to drive the opposing team into their territory, creates a dramatic and powerful spectacle.

The event has a long history, marking its 426th year this year. It is recognized as an intangible folk cultural property of Kagoshima Prefecture and was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property of Japan in March 2024.

This year, 782 participants joined forces together in the largest parade of rope carriers, successfully setting a Guinness World Record.



▲ The grand clash between the upper and lower teams
「© K. P. V. B」



▲ Governor Shiota giving a greeting
before the start of the tug-of-war event

Editor's note

(International Affairs Division, Kagoshima Prefecture, Tourism, Culture and Sports Department)

We have refreshed the layout of our newsletter from this issue; what do you think?
Having passed 200 issues, we aim to continue delivering enjoyable and engaging content, serving as a bridge to share the latest happenings in Kagoshima with the world.

In this month's issue, we feature festivals in Kagoshima.
Kagoshima hosts many festivals throughout the year, and among them, the Ohara Festival is said to be the largest in the southern Kyushu region. This year, it will be held again in November as usual. Lanterns are being displayed throughout the city, and the flower-decorated city trams have started running, bringing a gradual festival atmosphere.

Do you have festivals in your own area?
If you have a favorite or unusual festival, we would love for you to share it with us!

We hope you enjoy this issue, and look forward to seeing you in the next one.

The Kagoshima Southern Wind Tidings is accepting submissions on the following topics:

☆Kagoshima Photo Gallery

We are looking for photos that have a Kagoshima feel to them, or photos of Kagoshima you have found overseas.
Please send them with a brief description of the photo (e.g., Mountain of volcano ash collection bags).
We are also accepting any other information or stories you would like to share with our readers.

▲▽ Submissions · Inquiries ▼▲

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-Discover Kagoshima- Official Travel Guide:

<https://www.kagoshima-kankou.com/>

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