

**01 Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) Column**

-By Ben Moran (CIR from the UK)-

- CIRs big day out

02 Activities of the Governor

- 3 Nov: Attendance at the 40th Anniversary of the Japan-China Friendship Association of Kagoshima City and the 20th Anniversary of the Japan-China Friendship Association of Kagoshima
- 4 Nov: Visit by the Chinese Ambassador to Japan and the Consul General in Fukuoka
- 4 Nov: Visit by Members of the Kagoshima Kenjinkai of Brazil

03 Events Happening in Kagoshima

- 2-3 Nov: The 74th Ohara Festival
- 22 Nov-14 Dec: Tarumizu Senbon Ichou (Thousand Ginkgos) Festival
- 25-26 Oct: The 32nd Yoron Marathon
- Nov-Jan: Illuminations Across Kagoshima Prefecture

01 Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) Column

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●CIRs big day out●

In mid-December, all of the CIRs from across Kagoshima prefecture met in Kagoshima City for our yearly Kagoshima prefecture CIR orientation. Our two-day orientation was split up into a learning day and a visiting day.

On day one, we attended the Prefectural Government Office in Kagoshima City for seminars and to network with other CIRs. We were lucky enough to receive a lecture on Kagoshiman history which put us in good stead for our sightseeing on the second day.



The second day started slightly too early for some of our CIRs who had been out the night before.

Regardless, we set off from the Prefectural Government Office at 9am heading towards Ibusuki Shuzo, a shochu distillery, for our first stop of the day. It was my job to do announcements on the bus; however, the bigger challenge at this point in the day was keeping myself and everyone else awake.



At about 10:30, we arrived at Ibusuki Shuzo and were greeted by our tour guide for the morning. We were then taken inside the distillery where we were immediately hit with the smell of shochu (no surprise, really, given this was a shochu distillery). We were then shown the process of shochu distilling from start to finish. We learnt about the ingredients that go into shochu which was when I learnt that it wasn't just sweet potato and water.

We were then taken through the process of dealing with koji, a fermentation starter in shochu, as well as the differences between yellow, white and black koji and their effect on the taste of the end product. Then we were taken to the where the shochu sits in huge vats where we were subjected to a smell test of various shochus that Ibusuki Shuzo produce. We would gather around a large vat, the metal lid would be unscrewed and we would peer down into a cavernous vat full of shochu. A member of staff would then use a hand fan and waft the smell towards all of us for quite a period of time. Having not eaten breakfast that morning, this



was quite an intense experience.

Shortly afterwards, we got to try the real thing: taste testing. We were taken to a room containing 12 different shochus that we could taste and compare. Suffice to say, we took great advantage of this opportunity. Then followed a dicey bus journey to our destination for lunch, Tosenkyo Somen Nagashi.



For those who aren't familiar, Somen Nagashi is somen noodles that are served to customers flowing in a fresh stream of water. Customers then pick noodles out of the fast flowing water. Tosenkyo Somen Nagashi in Ibusuki is special because, unlike other somen nagashi restaurants, it is open not just in the summer, but year round. I indulged in the grilled trout; however, I was so hungry that I forgot to take a photo, so please take my word for it.

The drinking water at Tosenkyo Somen Nagashi is a treat in itself. It is the same water used for the flowing noodles and was tremendously refreshing, especially given our activities that morning.

Once everyone had finished up, we travelled to Nishi Oyama railway station, Japan's most southernly railway. From the station you can see the astonishing Mt Kaimon. As we learnt in our seminar on the first day of orientation, Mt Kaimon functioned as a waypoint for sailors that they had finally reached Japan.



We finished off the day with a trip to Saraku Sand Bath Hall on the coast of Ibusuki City. This was a real treat where we could all relax and indulge in the Ibusuki speciality of a sand onsen. For those that have never been, you get changed into a yukata (a type of robe) and then you are buried in hot sand for about 10 minutes. As you sweat under the sand, the worries and stresses of your day start to fade away. Afterwards you hop in a traditional water onsen to cool off.

We spent quite a while in the onsen and our journey back to Kagoshima City was a quiet one as CIRs fought to stay awake. We arrived back to the Prefectural Government Office and all the CIRs started their journeys back to their respective towns, cities and islands.

To all the CIRs: see you next year for what could be an even better orientation!

To the reader: if you have any recommendations of places we could go for next years orientation, please do let us know!

02 Activities of the Governor

○ 3 Nov: Attendance at the 40th Anniversary of the Japan-China Friendship Association of Kagoshima City and the 20th Anniversary of the Japan-China Friendship Association of Kagoshima

I attended the commemorative ceremony marking the 40th anniversary of the Japan-China Friendship Association of Kagoshima City and the 20th anniversary of the Japan-China Friendship Association of Kagoshima, where I had the honor of delivering greetings as a guest.

I expressed my respect to the past and present officers and members of the associations for serving as a bridge between Kagoshima Prefecture and China and for their continued dedication to the development of friendly relations between Japan and China.

On this milestone occasion, I sincerely hope for the continued growth and success of both associations, as well as for the further deepening of exchanges between Kagoshima Prefecture and China and the continued development of friendly relations between them.



▲Delivering remarks at the ceremony



▲Commemorative photo with participants

○4 Nov: Visit by the Chinese Ambassador to Japan and the Consul General in Fukuoka

Ambassador Wu Jianghao of the People's Republic of China to Japan and Consul General Yang Qingdong of the People's Republic of China in Fukuoka paid a courtesy visit to the Kagoshima Prefectural Government.

Ambassador Wu spoke about the historically deep ties between China and Kagoshima and expressed his hope to further promote exchanges and cooperation in the future, including regional-level exchanges.

I stated that we would like to continue building exchanges in a wide range of fields, including youth exchanges, cultural exchanges, and economic exchanges.



▲ Commemorative photo with Ambassador



▲ With members of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Japan and the Consulate General in Fukuoka

○4 Nov: Visit by Members of the Kagoshima Kenjinkai of Brazil

Members of the Kagoshima Kenjinkai of Brazil, including those who studied in Kagoshima through the prefectural scholarship student program, paid a visit.

This program aims to accept descendants of people who emigrated from Kagoshima Prefecture to Brazil and other countries, encourage them to pursue their studies, and, after returning home, serve as a bridge between their countries and Kagoshima by promoting mutual economic and cultural exchange. Since its launch in 1970, the program has accepted 96 participants from Brazil.

Members of the Kagoshima Kenjinkai of Brazil shared their impressions of participating in the Ohara Festival, as well as their enjoyment of shochu and local cuisine during their stay.

I expressed my gratitude for the fact that younger generations of the Kagoshima Kenjinkai of Brazil continue to cherish their ties with Kagoshima Prefecture.

Going forward, I hope to further develop exchanges and cooperative relations with the Kagoshima Kenjinkai of Brazil, building on the connections that have been established over the years.



▲ Commemorative photo with former Chairperson Uezono



▲ with members of the Kagoshima Kenjinkai of Brazil

03 Events Happening in Kagoshima

○ 2–3 Nov: The 74th Ohara Festival

The Ohara Festival, held every year on November 2 and 3 in the Tenmonkan area, is the largest festival in southern Kyushu and has been celebrated since 1949.

Centered on the *So-odori* (grand group dance), in which participants dance through the streets to traditional Kagoshima folk songs such as *Ohara-bushi*, *Kagoshima Hanya-bushi*, and *Shibuya Ondo*, the festival features a wide variety of events and performances.

On November 2, during the *Night Festival*, events such as the *So-odori* (grand group dance) and the Ogojo Daiko drum performances are held.

On November 3, the *Main Festival* features the *So-odori*, Ogojo Daiko performances, marching bands, and the dance program *Ohara 21*, bringing lively crowds to the entire Tenmonkan area.

The *So-odori*, with each dance group dressed in vibrant and colorful costumes, is truly a spectacular sight. In the days leading up to the festival, illuminated *Hana Densha* (flower streetcars) also operate, further enhancing the festive atmosphere.

The term “*ogojo*” means “woman” in the Kagoshima dialect, and the powerful yet graceful performances of the Satsuma Ogojo Daiko, accompanied by drums and flutes, are another highlight not to be missed.





▲ Scenes from the “Night Festival” and the “Main Festival”

Photo courtesy: Kagoshima City

○ 22 Nov–14 Dec: Tatumizu Senbon Ichou (Thousand Ginkgos) Festival

With more than 1,200 ginkgo trees planted throughout the grounds, this iconic spot in Tatumizu City is transformed into a sea of golden yellow at the height of the season. Known as a “Golden Paradise,” it was created over more than 40 years by the owner and his wife, who worked side by side to reclaim and cultivate what was once a barren mountain.

During the event period, the trees are illuminated at night, allowing visitors to enjoy a magical and dreamlike atmosphere.



Golden-hued ginkgo-lined avenue

Photo courtesy: © K.P.V.B.

○ 25–26 Oct: The 32nd Yoron Marathon



Held annually on Yoron Island, the southernmost island of Kagoshima Prefecture, this marathon takes runners around the entire island.

Although Yoron is small and relatively flat, the course is demanding due to its many undulations and curves. That said, the route offers countless highlights, including stretches along the brilliantly blue ocean and nostalgic scenery that evokes a

strong sense of nature. As runners circle the island on the coastal road, there are many

breathtaking spots that make you want to stop and take it all in. The warm hospitality of the islanders, who welcome participants with heartfelt cries of “Welcome home,” is a major attraction, drawing many repeat runners and participants from all over Japan.

○Nov–Jan: Illuminations Across Kagoshima Prefecture

Illumination events are held across Kagoshima Prefecture, including at Amu Plaza Kagoshima in Kagoshima City, Sogi Falls in Isa City, and Flower Park Kagoshima in Ibusuki City.

In addition to electric light displays, Kagoshima’s nights are bathed in a rich variety of lights, such as lanterns, candles, and illuminated objects. Visitors can enjoy the magical nighttime scenery of Kagoshima, which offers a completely different atmosphere from that of the daytime.



▲ Scenes from illumination events across Kagoshima Prefecture ▲

(Left: Amu Plaza Kagoshima / Right: Flower Park Kagoshima)

🐱 Coming UP! – Event Information for January & February 2026

◆ January

- **Jan 11** – Ibusuki Nanohana Marathon (Ibusuki City)
- **Jan 25** – 25th World Sakurajima Daikon Contest (Kagoshima City)

◆ February

- **Feb 16** – Kagihihi Festival (Kanoya City)
- **Feb 22** – Shochu Tourism Kagoshima 2026
(locations: Ichikikushikino City, Hioki City)

We hope you’ll take the opportunity to visit these events! 🎵



Editor's note

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

The holiday season is in full swing—how have you been?

With only a short time left in the year, how would you describe your 2025?

Here's a quick quiz!

Google has released its list of keywords that saw the biggest increase in searches nationwide from January 1 to November 20 this year.

Among the keywords searched together with “Kagoshima,” what ranked *No. 1* in the “rapidly rising searches of 2025”?

The answer is “**meteor fall.**” ✂

Late at night on August 19, a bright light—believed to be a meteor—lit up the sky, sparking widespread curiosity and leading many people to search for more information.

(Source: Minami-Nippon Shimbun)

What would be on *your* “Top Events of 2025” list?

We will continue working to bring you a wide range of news from Kagoshima again next year.

Please look forward to it! (^_^)/~~

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: ☞

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