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○Winter in Kagoshima

Yimin Wong, Kagoshima Prefecture Singaporean CIR

At the southern tip of mainland Japan, Kagoshima Prefecture has a humid subtropical climate with hot summers and mild winters, and is known more for lush greenery compared to white icy landscapes.

However, do you know that there are still unique aspects that can only be experienced during winter here in Kagoshima?

Today, let's have a look at some of them.



Japan's top crane wintering ground

Every winter, over 10,000 cranes from Siberia and China fly to and winter in Izumi City, which is the largest migratory ground in the whole of Japan.

In 2021, the Izumi Wintering Habitat of Cranes was named Japan's 53rd Ramsar Site, a wetland of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention.

The numbers of cranes peak in December and January, but these wintering cranes and other wild birds can be seen in the area throughout November to March.

Throughout the entire season, over 10,000 to 12,000 cranes are expected, and the glorious sight of such a large number of cranes in the sky is a symbol of winter in Izumi.





In the day, you can easily watch the birds in their natural environment, doing daily activities such as pecking at the ground for food, tending to their wings or dancing.

However, the best time to visit would be in early morning around 6:30-7:00am, where the cranes are fed daily at the Izumi City Crane Observation Center.

There, they will take to the skies in a breathtaking surge, filling the skies with countless cranes against the soft glow of dawn. It is really a sight to behold, and well worth the early hour!



Winter illumination

Even though Kagoshima might not have snow and ice festivals unlike some of the northern prefectures in Japan, but there are still beautiful light illuminations that can be enjoyed.

One annual affair is the illumination at Minato Odori Park, with numerous lights draped around the trees in the park. It might not cover a big area, but the illuminations are easily accessible as they are right in the middle of the city and make for a beautiful after-dinner stroll.



There are also larger illumination events held at Yoshino Park, a sprawling park slightly in the outskirts of Kagoshima City.



I went to one such event some years ago, and the entire park was dotted with magnificent illumination displays.

There were also rows of bustling food stalls at the entrance, adding to the warm atmosphere. There were many people just strolling about and admiring the dazzling illuminations while enjoying piping hot food and drinks in the cold of winter.

Many of the illumination displays were also related to Kagoshima, with accompanying explanatory signboards. For example, there was a display of Saigo Takamori and his beloved dog, and also a panoramic view of Kinko Bay with a majestic snow-capped Sakurajima.



There was even an area with giant inflatable dinosaurs, a nod to the dinosaur fossils unearthed in Koshikijima Islands!



Snow-shrouded Kagoshima City

Lastly, snow might be rare here but if the weather conditions are perfect, there will still be one or two days when it snows.

There was one such morning where Kagoshima City woke up to a pristine covering of white blanketing everything.

The nearby neighbourhood park had flowers and leaves delicately topped with snow, and delighted children were running around in joy.



There were also cute little snowmen and figures all around, and there was even a little snow city tram, adorned with vibrant flowers and leaves.

On these rare occasions of snowy weather, you can also see a very rare sight; a snow-capped active volcano!



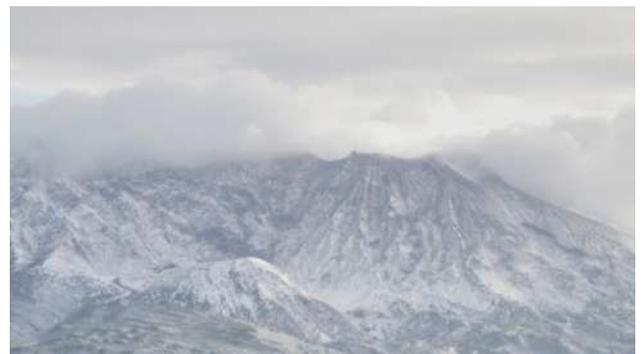
You can also literally see the difference between the two peaks of Sakurajima.

After the snowfall have stopped for a while, the inactive dormant peak of Kitadake (North Peak) can be seen to have a visibly thicker snow covering, while the highly active peak of Minamidake (South Peak) can be seen to have a thinner snow cap.

Coming from sunny Singapore with its eternal summer, being able to see snow is always a delight.

Living in an area with heavy snowfall is a totally different story and would definitely be a very challenging one.

However, occasionally being able to experience snow even here in southern Kagoshima is something I always enjoy, like a little small gift from winter.



02 The Governor's Activities

○Meeting with the Singapore Satsuma Association (15th Jan)

I met with members of the Singapore Satsuma Association (*Kagoshima kenjinkai*) in Singapore.

The Association was founded primarily by individuals from the prefecture. This year marks its 40th anniversary, and over that period the Association has made tremendous efforts to promote exchanges between Kagoshima and Singapore.

Kagoshima Prefecture will continue to develop exchanges between Kagoshima and Singapore and further deepen our bonds, with the continued support and cooperation of the members of the Singapore Satsuma Association.



◀With the Singapore Satsuma Association

○Visit to the Embassy of Japan in Singapore (16th Jan)

On my visit to the Embassy of Japan in Singapore, I talked about Singapore-Kagoshima exchange and discussed the economic situation in Singapore.

I consulted with Ambassador Ishikawa Hiroshi on furthering tourism initiatives and the sale of produce from our prefecture, such as Kagoshima Wagyu, tea, yellowtail, amberjack and shochu.

I will work on improving awareness of our prefecture and its produce in Singapore as well as expanding sales opportunities and strengthening efforts to attract tourists.



▲With Ambassador Ishikawa Hiroshi

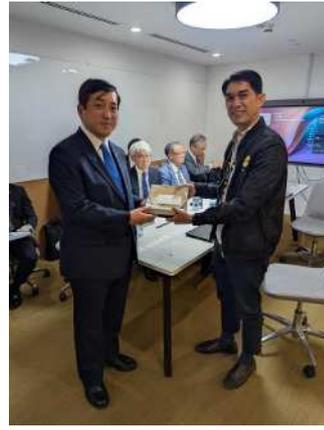


▲Commemorative photo at the Embassy in Singapore

○Visit to Scoot (16th Jan)

Along with our delegation made up of representatives from the Prefectural Assembly and economic groups from the prefecture, during the 22nd Singapore-Kagoshima Conference I paid a visit to Scoot, an airline operating under the Singapore Airlines umbrella. I held discussions with Scoot regarding the possibility of charter or direct flights to our prefecture.

I spoke about the increase in tourists to our prefecture from Singapore and spoke of the charms of our prefecture and its cuisine. I also conveyed our request for charter flights, and looking further forward, scheduled flights between Singapore and Kagoshima.



▲ Visit to Scoot

○22nd Singapore-Kagoshima Conference: Round Table Meeting (16th Jan)

We held a Round Table Meeting at the 22nd Singapore-Kagoshima Conference, marking 60 years of diplomatic relations between Singapore and Japan.

In the 40 years since our first conference in 1982, Kagoshima and Singapore have developed exchanges across a variety of fields, including economy, tourism, arts, culture and youth exchange. Myself, as well as representatives from the Prefectural Assembly, economic organisations in the prefecture, the Singapore Government and a variety of other fields, held a meeting; the result of which was the agreement that we should continue our various and wide-ranging exchange efforts and that the next conference should be held in Kagoshima in 2027.

As a one of the world's leading global cities, functioning as a logistical, financial and information hub in Southeast Asia, Singapore remains a very important country for our prefecture, not just in attracting tourism but also in selling produce from the prefecture.

Through the opportunity that this conference provides us, I will continue to work to further deepen the friendly relationship between Kagoshima and Singapore.



▲ With Minister Gan at the reception



▲ Commemorative photo with attendees

○22nd Singapore-Kagoshima Conference: Governor's Reception (16th Jan)

I welcomed around 120 guests to a dinner reception of Kagoshima Wagyu, yellowtail and other iconic Kagoshima dishes. My guests included the participants from our Round Table Meeting, the Japanese Ambassador to Singapore and individuals in the food, logistics and tourism sectors.

At the event, we promoted Kagoshima's *honkaku shochu*, tea and black vinegar; as well as tourism in the prefecture, Satsuma Kiriko glasswork and *Shirasu* volcanic soil.

Through events such as this, I plan to further the prefecture's name recognition and work towards increasing export channels and attracting tourists to our prefecture.



▲Raising a toast



▲Reception hall

○Kagoshima Tourism Seminar in Singapore (17th Jan)

I held a tourism seminar in Singapore aimed at people interested in travelling to Japan. I highlighted Sakurajima and Yakushima, sand baths, Kagoshima's distinct seasons and more.

Attendees were able to get a taste of Kagoshima through the shochu and black vinegar tasting and Satsuma Kiriko glasswork workshops we had in the conference hall.

In addition, when we announced a travel package taking participants around the prefecture over the course of 7 nights and 8 days, some participants made reservations on the spot, sparking interest in the prefecture and furthering others' desire to travel.

I will continue to work to further increase tourist numbers from Singapore.



▲Highlighting the prefecture's appeal



▲In the hall

○Attending the reception for the 77th Republic Day of India (26th Jan)

I attended a reception at the Consulate General of India, Fukuoka celebrating the 77th Republic Day of India. I believe that Indian Republic Day is a celebration of the wisdom and bravery of the Indian people who chose democracy, freedom and dignity and a celebration of their various religions, languages and cultures. In my speech, I conveyed my congratulations to the Republic of India and its people and expressed my desire to deepen ties between Kagoshima and India.



◀My speech at the Reception

○2024 Kagoshima Evening (29th Jan)

Around 500 people attended the 2024 Kagoshima Evening at the Cerulean Tower Tokyu Hotel in Tokyo's Shibuya City. Attendees included our Satsuma Ambassadors in Kanto as well as relevant parties from department stores, mass market buyers, the food logistics sector and tourism sector. With the theme of 'making money in the treasure trove of Japan', Kagoshima's treasures, Japan's No.1 Wagyu beef, farmed yellowtail, tea and traditional *honkaku* shochu, were exhibited by local businesspeople.

On stage, the event was livened up by a *shimauta* (traditional island folk music) performance by Setouchi Town-born Sato Arisu and a performance by Kawanaka Miyuki of *Danryusakura*, a song written by Kagoshima City-born songwriter Kyo Eriko.

This year, I will continue to work in cooperation with business to raise awareness of Kagoshima Prefecture's wonderful treasures, expand sales channels both domestically and internationally,

promote the attractions of the prefecture and to attract more tourists.



○Visit to cruise companies: MSC Cruises Japan and Carnival Japan (30th Jan)

I paid a visit to MSC Cruises Japan and Carnival Japan, two cruise companies that are increasing port calls in Kagoshima.

I expressed my gratitude to both companies for their continued port calls to Kagoshima. I also discussed the use of prefectural produce onboard their cruise ships and the further increase of port calls and tourist excursions.

Both companies spoke of the appeal of calling at Kagoshima and expressed their desire to increase the number of port calls. Going forward, I will continue to work to increase the number of port calls to our prefecture and to spread the economic effects.



▲Visit to MSC Japan



▲Visit to Carnival Japan

03 Kagoshima events information

○Ibusuki Nanohana Marathon (11th Jan)

Ibusuki Nanohana Marathon is the earliest marathon held each year.

The people of Ibusuki turned out in droves to support the runners, standing alongside the route giving out cheers, *zenzai* red bean soup and steamed sweet potatoes.

Participants were surrounded by the stunning rape blossoms in full bloom against Lake Ikeda and Mount Kaimon.

After the marathon, runners could relax in the famous steam sand baths, allowing them to fully enjoy Ibusuki all in one day.

The Fun Run Lake Ikeda course, held from 2024-onwards, is held at the same time and has the stunning Lake Ikeda as its finish line with Mount Kaimon in the distance.



◀Runners by Lake Ikeda surrounded by blooming rape blossom

○26th World's Best Sakurajima Daikon Contest (31st Jan)

Well nurtured, large and beautiful Sakurajima Daikon (radish) were gathered from all across the country for the contest. In addition to the contest, the lively event also featured a Hinoshima Taiko performance, a Sakurajima Daikon guess-the-weight contest, and an all-you-can-pack vegetable event.



▲The contest, taken from Kagoshima Prefecture Website

Events coming up in March and April

◇ March

1st: Kagoshima Marathon 2026 (Kagoshima City)

8th: Kagoshima Jingu, Hatsuuma-sai (Kagoshima City)

◇ April

25th to 26th: Kagoshima Spring Festival Dai-Hanya
(Kagoshima City)

Please pay a visit!



Editor's Note (Director, International Affairs Division, Tourism, Culture and Sports Department, Kagoshima Prefectural Government)

Dear reader,

It snowed recently in Kagoshima, but the weather has since warmed so unseasonably that it's hard to believe that it's still winter. You often hear of *sanka shion* (three cold days, four warm) around this time of year, referring to the cyclical changes in temperature. Recently, it has come to describe the weather from the end of winter through to early spring.

'It's raining cats and dogs' is a famous English phrase to describe heavy rain. Our British Coordinator for International Relations recently taught me the phrase "four seasons in a day", a phrase accurately describing the volatile and changeable British weather.

What phrases to describe the weather do you have in your country?

In this season of changeable weather, I do hope you stay happy and healthy.

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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Kagoshima Prefectural Office:

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Discover Kagoshima- Official Travel Guide:

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

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