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Looking back on my time in Kagoshima

Chen Yun, Kagoshima Prefecture Chinese CIR

I arrived in Kagoshima in May, during the hydrangea's full bloom: the start of a very unusual journey. The season of cherry blossoms in full bloom and the season of farewells have arrived in the blink of an eye, but I can recall the scenery from my first visit to Kagoshima as if it were yesterday. If you asked me before, I would say that cherry blossoms represent romance, the blooming of spring and the blossoming of new hopes and aspirations. However, this year's cherry blossom has been touched with melancholy and farewells.



Flicking through my phone, I can see that I have somehow taken over 23,000 photos during my roughly 10 months in Kagoshima. These photos have become my record of Kagoshima's four seasons and of an unforgettable chapter in my life.

I will forever look back fondly on this irreplaceable experience. As I look at my photos, I get sent back in time to my colourful, exciting life in Kagoshima.

Summer in Kagoshima is draped in greenery and bursting with energy. When I first arrived in Kagoshima, I was a bundle of excitement and nervousness, but thanks to the support of my colleagues, I quickly settled into my job and my life here.



Looking back now, I can remember clearly the exhilaration I felt speaking at the Japan-China Friendship Association's general meeting, and the nervousness I felt when I interpreted for the Prefectural Governor during the welcoming of delegates from Tsinghua University. Thanks to experiences like these, I have been able to improve both my Japanese ability and professional skills.

After finishing work, I would sometimes take a different route on my way back home. It would make me feel like I'm on a fun, little adventure. Sometimes I would take some time out for myself, go to a coastal path and just gaze at Sakurajima for a while. Other times I went to Taichi

Shoten in Kishaba and have myself ramen piled high with meat (which I strongly recommend). Or I would go up to the observatory on the 18th Floor of the Prefectural Government Office and look out over the beautiful skyline at dusk. Doing all these things gave me many new experiences over the course of the summer.

However, the most fun thing I did was go out to the coast fishing with my friend. In the stifling 36-degree heat, ourselves along with a few older people, stood wordlessly on the pier praying for a quick catch. Watching the older people around us catching fish after fish worried us somewhat. Yet, in that moment, my fishing rod started to shake violently as I had realised that a fish had caught on my line! I used all my power to get it out of the water and in that moment it broke through the water's surface, a cheer of congratulations broke out all around me. It was the biggest catch of the day! When the staff saw the fish; however, they warned me not to touch it as it appeared to be ill. Even so, when I look back on that day now, I feel sense of real achievement and a truly fun day out.



As autumn rolls around in Kagoshima, the smell of tea olive fills the air and the season of abundant fruit is upon us. As Kagoshima is located so far south in Japan with its temperature climate, the autumn visits me a bit later than I'm used to at home.

One day at work, I suddenly notice a very familiar smell. It's the smell of tea olive! Autumn has finally arrived in Kagoshima. On that day, I happened to be teaching Chinese at the Kagoshima International Association, so I took the opportunity to make tea olive the theme of that class and chatted to



everyone about it. Unlike in China where it is often used in cuisine, tea olive isn't really consumed in Japan. After introducing everyone to the various uses of tea olive, in alcohol, dumplings and more, the class told me that if they ever visited China that they'd love to try it.

It's these sorts of moments that make working as a CIR really meaningful. Holding these classes is an important part of the job as a CIR, and for me, probably my favourite duty and the one that I look forward to the most.

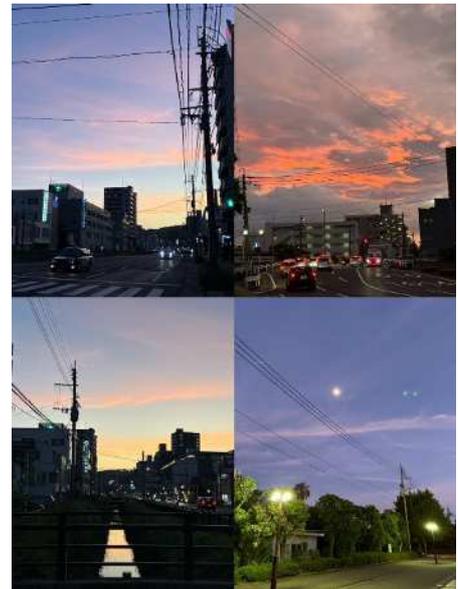
In the Chinese classes held at the Kagoshima International Association, I'm able to chat with local people in a congenial atmosphere. In the Chinese classes at the Prefectural

Government Office, participants are very busy, so those that do come make a point of squeezing it into their schedules; something I find heartening and deeply encouraging. And, in the classes for junior high school students, the kids would flock around me and ask me many questions about China. Such innocence and energy really makes me smile.

In the Chinese classes for the new Prefectural Office recruits, I was reminded of my first days working in Kagoshima as I saw these people, with a mix of anticipation and nerves, stepping into the world of work.

For me, the Autumn was a busy but fruitful period. What stays with me the most from Autumn was working as an interpreter for the Prefectural Governor at the joint 40th Anniversary of the Kagoshima City Japan-China Friendship Association and 20th Anniversary of the Kagoshima Prefecture Japan-China Friendship Association. It was my first interpretation of such a grand meeting and my heart was beating through my chest; although, I am happy to report that, whilst challenging, all went without a hitch. I also felt really honoured to introduce Wu Jianghao, the Chinese Ambassador to Japan, and guests to Kagoshima's famous products over the reception dinner.

Winter in Kagoshima is blue, wrapped in a subtle melancholy and with a unique warmth. I had adjusted to my life in Kagoshima, and for the most part, my job. As everyone was eagerly anticipating the new year, something unexpected happened and my peaceful everyday was disrupted. To those who know what happened, I appreciate all your support. The speedy arrangements for me to go to hospital, those who asked after me, those who told me not to worry about work; I felt really looked after. Everyone's warmth and consideration were like a torch in the dark winter, easing my pain and fighting the sadness. Since coming to Kagoshima, I have been blown away by people's warmth and kindness here, like stars in the sky, lighting up my life. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their kindness and support. I have been very lucky to meet you all.



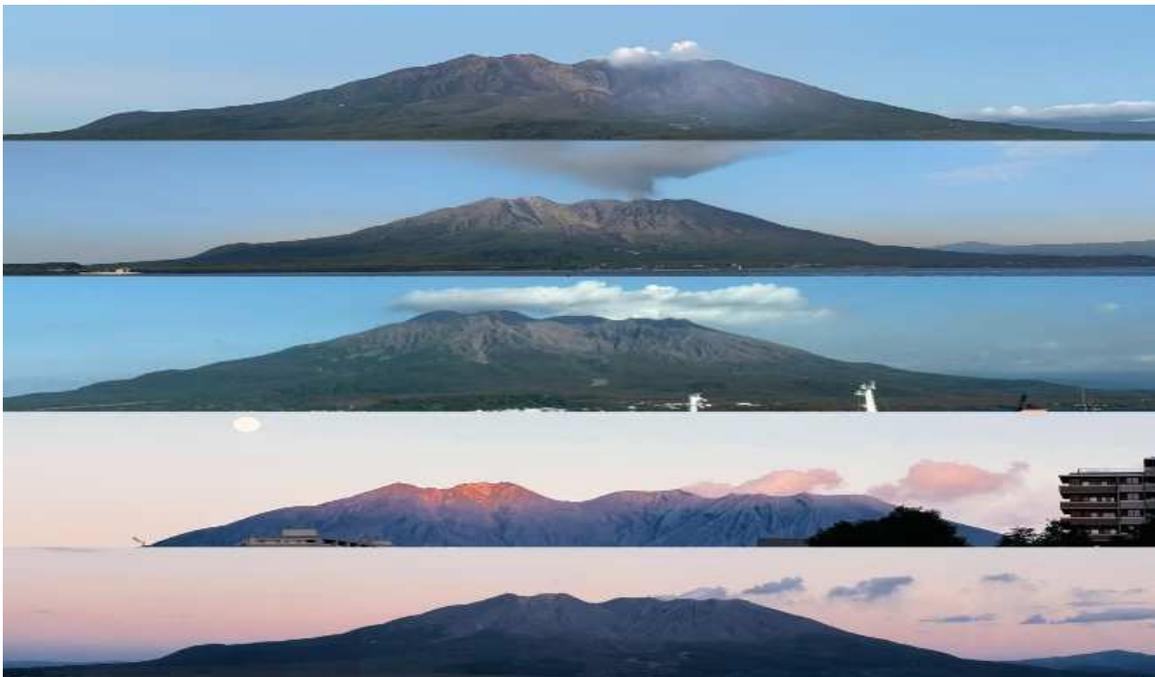
Spring in Kagoshima is dyed pink; the cherry blossoms in full bloom signifying a new start. My home town of Yancheng is the only city in China without any mountains, let alone a volcano. That's why, during my time in Kagoshima, I have made efforts to visit Sakurajima on many occasions. In the visitors' centre, I have learnt a lot about the history of the formation of the volcano and how it erupts. I think it's really interesting that due to the volcanic ash ejected from the volcano, this area is home to Japan's largest daikon (Japanese radish) and its smallest mandarin fruits.



Under the blistering summer sun, I have soaked in steam-filled onsens and sweat like a waterfall. In Autumn, I ate mandarin ice cream, which was in season, in a Sakurajima speciality shop. The taste of it still lingers in the mouth. I would take a stroll around Sakurajima in the gentle spring breeze, blinding spring sun and peaceful surrounds. For me, Sakurajima holds so many wonderful memories.

Time flies by and I realise that it's time to say goodbye; however, no matter how hard I try, I just can't get the word out. My time as a CIR has ended but this is not the end. The relationships that I have formed with everyone here have just begun.

I am really so grateful for everyone who has shown me such kindness and support. I sincerely wish you all happiness in the future.



02 The Governor's Activities

○Visit from Kagoshima Joho High School (6th Feb)

Representatives from Harada Gakuen Kagoshima Joho High School, which maintains exchange ties with Pingtung County in Taiwan, visited the Prefectural Government Office to report on their participation in the Kenting Marathon held in the county last November and their exchange activities with National Pingtung University.

Our prefecture and Pingtung County in Taiwan signed a friendship and exchange agreement in 2024 and have been engaging in exchanges across a wide range of fields, including youth programmes and arts and culture. The school has been engaging with Taiwanese institutions, such as National Pingtung University, and on this occasion, a total of 69 teachers and students visited Taiwan.

The headteacher spoke about the growth demonstrated by the students who visited Taiwan, whilst the students themselves told me of their experiences of interacting with local people and the differences in food and culture that they encountered during their exchange abroad.

I look forward to seeing the exchange between the school and Pingtung County deepen in the future.



▲Myself and Kagoshima Joho High School representatives



▲Our chat about the visit to Taiwan

○2026 Vietnam Tet (Lunar New Year) Festival in Kagoshima (15th Feb)

The 2026 Vietnamese Tet Festival, celebrating lunar new year, was celebrated in Kagoshima.

The festival, held during the Lunar New Year (Tet, in Vietnam) in Kagoshima since 2019, is held in order to give Kagoshima's Vietnamese residents a taste of home and to provide a chance to mix with other residents of the prefecture.

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Vietnam to Japan, Pham Quang Hieu, recorded a video message for the festival. The lively celebrations, enjoyed by people of all ages and nationalities, also featured stalls selling Vietnamese food and products, and Vietnamese dance

performances, including the Vietnamese Lion Dance.

The Prefectural Government is working to further its relationship with Vietnam; and through the Tet Festival, we hope to provide a pleasant and safe environment for Vietnamese people to live in our prefecture as members of the community.



▶Delivering a speech at the Tet Festival

○ Pink Shirt Day (18th Feb)

Members of the Kagoshima YMCA paid a visit to the Prefectural Office to talk to me about Pink Shirt Day, an anti-bullying movement.

In 2007, a pair of university students in Canada wore pink shirts to signify their opposition to bullying. Thus, began Pink Shirt Day where people can wear pink shirts or anything else pink to signal their opposition to bullying.

The movement, which has now spread to roughly 180 countries, is now an international campaign. With support from YMCA Japan, the event is held on the last Wednesday of February each year.

This year's event is on Wednesday 25th February. I hope that it will be an opportunity for people to raise awareness of bullying and to show solidarity to those being bullied.



▲ Commemorative photo in our pink shirts



▲ Commemorative photo with YMCA members

○Visit Kagoshima campaign: visit from MOL Sunflower Ltd. (20th Feb)

As part of their 'Connected by Sunflower: Southern Kagoshima' tourism campaign, representatives from MOL Sunflower Ltd paid a visit to the Prefectural Office.

The company is planning trips to promote the charms of our unique prefecture, including our people, food and unique tourism experiences through a variety of promotions and campaigns.

Furthermore, in order to increase tourist numbers from Taiwan, a new sightseeing package combining air travel and ferries has been proposed.

I hope that this campaign will bring many tourists to the prefecture.



▲ Commemorative photo with representatives from Sunflower



▲ My chat with Sunflower's representatives

03 Events in Kagoshima

○Kagoshima Marathon (1st Mar)

The Kagoshima Marathon has two courses: the Marathon (42.195km) and Fun Run through the city (8.9km).

During the competition, participants ran past the active volcano, Sakurajima and the calm waves of Kinko Bay, Southern Kyushu's best shopping district, Tenmonkan, the Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution Heritage sites, Saigo Takamori statues and so much more. As they ran, participants enjoyed delicious Kagoshima food and got a sense of the Meiji revolution spirit fostered in this city.

On the day, the weather was good and runners put on a powerful show, boosted by the support of

those cheering along the course.



◀The runners and their supporters
「©Kagoshima Marathon executive committee」

○Hatsu-uma Festival (8th March)

This festival, believed to have begun around 470 years ago during the Muromachi period, is a celebration of prayers for a bountiful harvest, familial safety, livestock, and protection from evil. It attracts many spectators from both inside and outside the prefecture.

The festival is a lively day, featuring over 20 horses and 2,000 dancers. The horses, adorned with decorations on their backs and bells around their necks, lead dance troupes, dancing to drums and shamisen music, much like mambo, which is uncommon in Japan.

With over 100,000 attendees annually, it is a popular Kagoshiman festival.



▲Many people celebrating the festival

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Events coming up in April and May

◇April

25th Kagoshima Hanabi (Kagoshima City)

25th – 26th Kagoshima Daihanya 2026 (Kagoshima City)

◇May

3rd Sand Festival in Minamisatsuma
(Minamisatsuma City)

More info ↓



Please pay a visit!



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

Have you ever heard the saying, "January goes, February flies by, March is gone"? This saying describes how quickly time passes from January to March, and how each day flies by in an instant. Amidst the hustle and bustle of daily life, before you know it, March is already here.

March is a season of departures and farewells; a time that can feel bittersweet; however, feeling lonely is proof that you've shared precious time together. Beyond the farewells, new encounters surely await.

With that in mind, and with gratitude for what came before, I would like to welcome the coming season.

I look forward to your continued support in the coming year.

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, tourism site

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



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