

Multilingual Electronic Newsletter

多言語メールマガジン

かごしま南の風便り



Kagoshima Southern Wind Tidings

VOL.165

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By Kim Hyojin (CIR from South Korea)

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Latest Updates

- 25, 26 December: Shochu Experience (Cultural Heritage × Shochu × Jazz) ●

The event “Shochu Experience” was held for two days at Sengan-en and Ishibashi Memorial Park in Kagoshima City, where the former is a daimyo (feudal domain lord) garden built about 350 years ago and is representative of Japan. At this event, authentic shochu (a Japanese distilled beverage), food and music were enjoyed.

During the event, a wide range of shochu brands were available, hailing from 112 breweries who are members of the Kagoshima Sake Brewers Association. Soda and black tea mixer options were also provided. Participants enjoyed the food of Kagoshima while listening to live music by famous jazz musicians from both Japan and abroad.



Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) Column

● A Beautiful and Sacred Nature ●

Kim Hyojin (CIR from South Korea)

Yakushima is a place that is famous even in Korea as the setting for the movie “Princess Mononoke”. This place should be familiar to Koreans who love Japanese animation, including fans of Studio Ghibli!

For me, this was how I got to know of Yakushima. Back when I was still in Korea, I happen to come across a documentary which told the story of a foreign mountaineer who was travelling in Yakushima. At that time, the magnificent nature and mysterious beauty of the moss-covered scenery left a deep impression on me, and I wanted to visit it at least once in my lifetime.

A few years later, I was able to come to Kagoshima as a Coordinator of International Relations (CIR), and even though I thought that this would finally be the chance for me to be able to fulfil my heart’s desire of visiting Yakushima but alas! Each time I attempt to plan a trip, it would always be foiled by new appeals to refrain from going out due to the new coronavirus. As a result, unfortunately I had to resign to fate.

However, in the midst of this situation we were able to seize a window of opportunity when the situation of the new coronavirus improved, and was finally able to achieve my long-desired dreams of visiting Yakushima!

As the readers of this column, you would have already known but at the International Affairs Division in Kagoshima Prefectural Office where I am working at, the “Kagoshima Southern Wind Tidings” is a multilingual electronic newsletter which is released every month. It shares the latest information and tourism activities of this prefecture and is issued in multiple languages. The CIRs from each country working here post content in the form of columns that share the charms and experiences of Kagoshima from their perspective. For that purpose, I will be visiting and covering Yakushima.

The duration will be for 3 days 2 nights from 24 to 26 November, and I visited Yakushima together with another CIR from Singapore.

【Day 1】

We are finally off! We boarded the high-speed ferry departing from Kagoshima around 7:30AM and headed towards Yakushima. Before we left, I have heard many mentions of how “depending on the weather, the waves may be high and the ferry will rock”. But as I did not have much experience boarding ships, I was not even sure if I will get seasick.



After we boarded, for around the first 30 minutes I was enjoying the view from the windows without any hint of seasickness. Perhaps it was because I let my guard down, but suddenly I started experiencing symptoms of seasickness; I had a splitting headache and felt dizzy and nauseous. Thereafter the journey continued on painfully like that for about an hour and half later before we finally arrived at Yakushima! Of course, after we arrived the symptoms of seasickness subsided immediately. We were refreshed with the crisp air of Yakushima, and commenced on our coverage promptly.

This coverage of Yakushima was supported by the Yakushima Prefectural Office, and thanks to them we were able to have a variety of experiences. On this day, we were kindly received at Miyanoura Port by Section Chief Mr Tanaka and staff Mr Yonehara from the Yakushima Prefectural Office.

■ Yakusugi Museum

For those who want to know more about Yakushima and Yakusugi, this would be the first place to go!

In this museum, branches from cedars such as Jomonsugi (Jomon Cedar Tree) and Kigensugi (Kigen Cedar) are on display. If you consider the fact that these are just part of the branches, the sheer overwhelming size of the actual tree can really be felt.

In addition, there are also exhibits such as maps and topographical models of Yakushima along with panels explaining about the geology and rocks of the area. There are also experience corners where you can shave off Yakusugi wood to smell their aroma, or try your hand at counting their numerous tree rings. Hence if you are new to Yakushima like me, I recommend some prior learning here first!



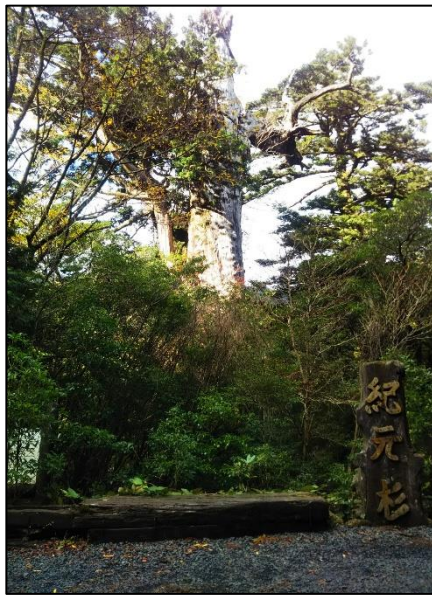
■ Yakusugi Land

You can choose your desired hiking course according to your interests and physical ability!

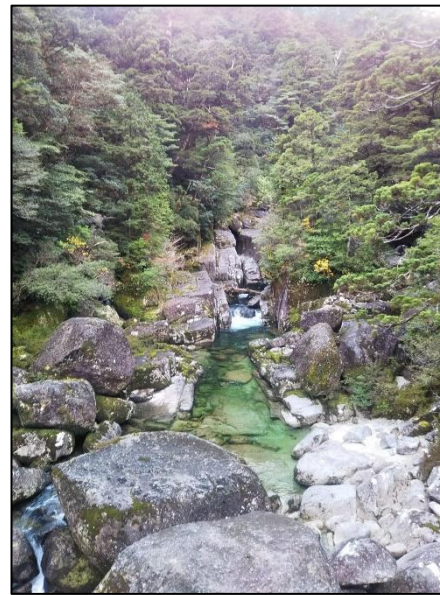
There are five courses in all, ranging from 30min, 50min, 80min, 150min and 210min within this forest that stretches from 1000 to 1300m above sea level.

This time, we explored the 80min course. Actually, I had the thought of having this as a sort of warm up for tomorrow's climb in Shiratani Unsuikyo, but this was a far more full-fledged mountain climbing than I had expected. If you are a beginner to mountain climbing like me, it would be better to be mentally and physically prepared.

In this hiking course, it is possible to see various Yakusugi cedars such as the Sennensugi (Millennium Cedar), Buddhasugi (Buddha Cedar), Kugurisugi (Wicket-gate Cedar) among others. Buddhasugi is also called Shakyamunisugi (Gautama Buddha Cedar), and it is said that this name was given as the appearance of the hump on the trunk is reminiscent of the face of Buddha. In this way, the name of each Yakusugi reflects each of their own unique characteristics well. Hence if you were to do trekking here, do take note of their characteristics with their names in mind!



This was easy! Kigensugi tree along the road.



It's a beautiful valley so I snapped a photo!

【Day 2】

It is finally the day where we will climb Shiratani Unsuikyo! On the morning, we met in front of the hotel at 8:00AM and bought lunch in advance from a bento shop that Mr Tanaka often frequents.

This time we will be embarking on a round-trip Taikoiwa course of approximately 4 hours, and we left for Taikoiwa at around 9:00AM.

■ Shiratani Unsuijyo 「Taikojwa Trekking Course」

After passing through a well-maintained road, what I could only imagine up till now finally became reality! For a few years back, each time when I see photos and videos of Yakushima, I had always thought to myself, “What a mysterious beauty! Will it also be like this in reality? Were these photos just enhanced?” But in fact, it was indeed a magnificent view in reality.

This time, the spot I was the most interested in was Kokemusui Mori (Moss-covered Forest). Ever since it became the model for the setting of the movie Princess Mononoke, it has become a place that is already familiar to Ghibli fans overseas. Though I headed in excitement for Kokemusui Mori with the thought of “this time, I will definitely see this mossy forest!” in mind, but along the way I was also able to see magnificent and mysterious scenery created by nature. Roots stretching across the ground, a trunk that has been hollowed out with a gaping hole, undulating trunks, a second-generation cedar growing on a stump from fallen seeds (Nidaisugi), fallen cedars and so on; there was beautiful and sacred nature everywhere.



Eventually, we arrived at Taikoiwa, and the view from the top of the mountain was enough to relieve us of all the accumulated fatigue. Taikoiwa is often covered with clouds and fog but on this day, it was perfect for climbing. As a result, we were able to see a sweeping view of huge mountains from Taikoiwa! This includes Miyanoura-dake, which is Kyushu's highest peak.

Here is a useful piece of information; if you are a beginner climber like me or a visitor from overseas, please take a chance to hug this Himeshara tree (tall stewartia) if you encounter it in the mountains. You can get a tranquil sense of mind from its velvety-smooth trunk!



Himeshara tree (tall stewartia)



**The mysteriously beautiful
Kokemusu Mori
(Moss-covered Forest)!**

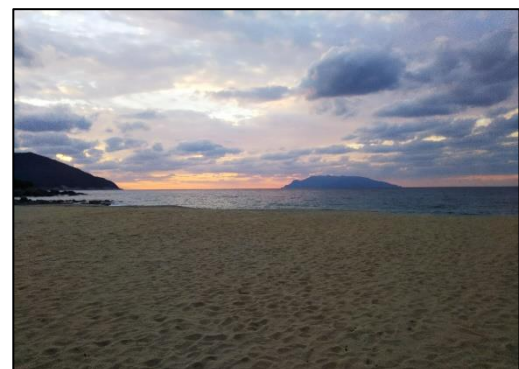


The view from Taikoiwa

■ Nagata Inakahama Beach

Initially, the original plan was to climb Taikoiwa, descend around 1:00PM and go on a drive around Yakushima. However, perhaps that is impossible for beginners like us as by the time we finally descended, it was almost 4:00PM. Even though we were a little disappointed, but we put those feelings behind us and decided to drive around until sunset.

Thereafter, we arrived at Nagata Inakahama after a half hour drive along the coastline. This is a beach known as Japan's largest sea turtle spawning ground, with a spawning period from early May to late July. Of course we were unable to see them spawning right now, but I left the place hoping that one day I would have the chance to visit again.



**The beautiful
orange-tinted sunset**

【Day 3】

My legs felt like lead...! When I woke up in the morning, I felt like my legs have become as heavy as lead. I arose with difficulty while acutely feeling the lack of exercise in my life.

On this day, we met in front of the hotel at 8:30AM and headed for the last destination in this trip: Suginoya.

■ Yakusugi Crafting 「Suginoya」

Suginoya is a place which manufactures and sells Yakusugi crafts directly, and it is here that you can experience “Sennin-san’s Chopstick-crafting Experience”. This is a workshop where you can utilise all five senses in the crafting experience, from chiselling at the thousand-year Yakusugi wood to enjoying its aroma.



The process is as follows:

Firstly, the Yakusugi wood is chiseled and shaped. After it has been shaped to some degree, the wood is then polished with an Uzuki brush. It is a bundle of reeds that is used to buff soft wood parts such as those in wooden boards or pillars. When polished with this brush, the oils of the Yakusugi will ooze out and the wood will develop a sheen. With this, it is completed!

Through this experience and with the tactile feeling and aroma of Yakusugi wood, I was able to refresh myself from the fatigue due to the mountain climb the day before. Why don't everyone also have a go at this chopstick-making experience that satisfy the senses at the end of your trip? I'm sure it will be able to relax your tired body!





Yaku-jinja Shrine

【Cuisine】

■ **Flying Flying Fish Set Meal**

The very interestingly-named “Flying Flying Fish Set Meal” was the restaurant’s signature dish. All three of us ordered the same but the moment it came, we all burst into laughter.

This is what the “Flying Flying Fish Set Meal” looks like. As the name suggests, it really resembles a flying fish in flight.



According to the old lady manning the restaurant, “For this fried flying fish, even the wings can be eaten.” I had a moment of hesitation as I had never eaten the wings of a flying fish before, but I thought since I came all the way here to Yakushima, I want to try Yakushima’s way of eating it. Hence, I took a careful bite.

What is the taste as a result...?

That’s right. I’m glad I tried it! With a crispy and fragrant mouthfeel, it is the best deep-fried dish I have ever tasted so far!

■ **Flying Fish Hitsumabushi**

When it comes to the hitsumabushi style of cuisine, it is usual to have it with kabayaki unagi (soy-grilled eel). However, this time at Yakushima I tried flying fish hitsumabushi! For me who is a fan of firm foods with a bite to them, I find the springy texture of flying fish to be much tastier than that of unagi.





The taste of bento eaten among nature is the best!



Flying fish·amberjack·akitaro (Indo-Pacific sailfish)



A huge bowl of warm-hearted katsudon (pork cutlet and egg rice bowl)

This time, we were able to have a valuable experience with the gracious support of the Yakushima Prefectural Office! We thank you deeply from the bottom of our hearts.

In addition, we would also like to thank Section Chief Mr Tanaka, staff Mr Yonehara and the driver from the Yakushima Prefectural Office for their kind guidance to each of the locations.

Through this coverage of Yakushima, I was able to learn many valuable lessons such as about the splendour of nature and the ways of interacting with nature! I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks for this valuable opportunity given.

※ My fellow traveler, Yimin CIR from Singapore will have her column introduced in the next edition.



Website of Kagoshima Prefectural Government

<http://www.pref.kagoshima.jp/>



Editor's Note (International Affairs Division, Kagoshima Prefectural Government)

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How did you find this month's edition of Kagoshima Southern Wind Tidings?

We as editors will continue to strive to have this prefectural multilingual newsletter be a bridge of information that connects Kagoshima with everyone.

▽ First sunrise of the year from Yoshino Park in Kagoshima City

I was able to enjoy the dazzling beauty of the sunrise with clear skies as far as the eye could see.



I hope that this year we will be able to return to normality where we could come and go freely...

We look forward to your kind support in 2022 too!

「Kagoshima Southern Wind Tiding's bulletin board」 is looking for the following content!

☆Kagoshima Photo Gallery

We would like to invite you to send us photos that remind you of Kagoshima, or photos of Kagoshima that you might have seen overseas. Please also attach a brief description along with the photo. (e.g. a mountain of volcanic-ash bags)

☆Knowledge about living in Kagoshima

Please share with us information related to life in Kagoshima. (e.g. delicious ways to enjoy fried fish cakes, or how to deal with volcanic ash.)

We also welcome any other information that you would like to share with our readers.

▲▽▲▽ Inquiries ▲▽▲▽

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