



# 県と在外県人会との ホットラインメール

Kagoshima Prefecture-Overseas Kenjinkai Presidents  
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## Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) Column

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### ●A deep green jewel shining over the Pacific: Amami Oshima (Part 2)●

(Continued from issue 141)

By Joseph Snowden (CIR from the UK)

#### (5) Fukugi Namiki and Cape Miyakozaki

Full of anticipation for my second day on Amami Oshima, I woke up early and headed towards Kuninao to see the renowned Fukugi Namiki.

The first thing I noticed upon my arrival was the spectacular beach. I thoroughly enjoyed even just my short walk along the coast, but it seems that the residents of Kuninao regularly use the beach as a kind of public forum, talking, drinking, and sometimes playing games there. It's also famous as a spawning ground for sea turtles, so I recommend a visit to anyone interested in marine life.



Kuninao Beach



The area is also full of Instagrammable spots and remnants of Ryukyu culture!

The Fukugi Namiki, rows of *fukugi* trees that create tunnel-like streets, directly face the beach. Since *fukugi* trees are able to grow perfectly well in close proximity to each other, it's possible to create living walls by planting them together in rows! They were originally planted to shield against the wind and prevent the spread of fire, but now the area is a popular photo spot, including among newlyweds searching for the



The Fukugi Namiki

perfect wedding photos! An event known as “Fukugi Night” is held around Christmas time, during which the *fukugi* trees are decorated with Christmas lights.

After wandering around the Fukugi Namiki for a while, I took a footpath heading north and made my way to Cape Miyakozaki. The strong wind that lashes the cape all year round prevents trees from growing, so the area is instead covered by a carpet of *ryukyusasa* (Ryukyu bamboo) that grows no taller than an adult’s waist. This means visitors have an unobstructed view all the way to the horizon! To me, Cape Miyakozaki felt like a really mysterious and unique location.



Cape Miyakozaki, covered in *ryukyusasa*!

## **(6) Amami-Oshima World Heritage Conservation Center**



World Heritage Certificate

My next destination was the Amami-Oshima World Heritage Conservation Center, which opened its doors in July 2022. Built to serve as a general hub for teaching people about the value of Amami Oshima’s natural world heritage, it contains an exhibition and a museum shop to pique the interest of visitors.

Entering the facility, I was greeted by an impactful mural created by Amami Oshima resident and picture book illustrator, Miroco Machiko. A wonderful depiction of the island’s ecosystem, it’s a treat for children and adults alike.

Inside the exhibition space is a recreation of Amami Oshima’s forests. With mood lighting and videos projected on the walls that change every 15 minutes, visitors are able to experience both daytime and nighttime forest environments. Learning about the unique



The Amami-Oshima World Heritage Conservation Center



Mural by Miroco Machiko

features of the island's nature, I found myself amazed again and again by the process of evolution.



Inside the exhibition space

Information is written on the walls in both English and Japanese, and multilingual information sheets are available, so the exhibition can be enjoyed by people from all over the world!

### **(7) Kuroshio-no-Mori Mangrove Park (Canoe Experience)**

Right next to the Amami-Oshima World Heritage Conservation Center is the second largest primeval mangrove forest in Japan. You can enjoy the mangroves through a wide variety of activities at the mangrove park, including ground golf and Segway experiences, but I decided to go for a classic Amami tourist activity – a canoe experience!

Having walked down to the canoe boarding area, I was handed a lifejacket and paddle before our guide explained the basics of canoeing. The explanations assume no prior knowledge, so even beginners like me can feel confident. After that, I climbed into my canoe and set off for the mangrove tunnels!



Canoe Experience

With the tidal current, there was almost no need to paddle, so I took some time to enjoy the scenery with my camera in hand. After arriving at the mangrove tree tunnel, our guide told us all about the different types of mangrove and the range of wildlife that you can see in the forest.



Listening to our guide's explanation

The mangrove tunnel was a really mysterious place – I haven't experienced anywhere else like it – so yet again, I felt that I'd come to an extremely unique location, like nowhere else in the world. I could have stayed there all day, enveloped in the atmosphere of the mangrove tunnel! Our return journey required us to paddle against the current, so after working hard to keep paddling back to shore, I certainly felt refreshed!

#### **(8) The Santaro Pass (Amami rabbit spotting)**

On my second evening, I headed to the centre of the island, traversing the Santaro Pass in order to catch sight of the Amami rabbit (*amami-no-kuro-usagi*), an endangered species. Since the rabbits sometimes come out into the middle of the road, there is a limit on the number of cars that can use the pass to prevent accidents, so booking in advance is essential. As an experience you really can't have anywhere else in the world, I wholeheartedly recommend it!



Catching sight of an Amami rabbit on the Santaro Pass

Thanks to our guide, I was able to see around 6 Amami rabbits. I was thrilled! On top of that, we also heard the calls of a number of wild animals. The exceptionally unique ecosystem on Amami Oshima is one of the reasons that it was recognised as a UNESCO Natural World Heritage site, so I felt that getting to observe Amami's biodiversity directly like this was an extremely valuable experience.

### (9) Tomita Shochu Distillery

Still elated from spotting several Amami rabbits the night before, I awoke on my third morning and made my way to Tomita Shochu Distillery, producer of the classic Amami spirit, *kokuto shochu* (brown sugar shochu). Tomita Shochu Distillery not only produces “Ryugu”, “Maaran-sen”, and other popular *kokuto shochu* brands, it also offers distillery tours! As a relatively small distillery compared to the other *kokuto shochu* distilleries on the island, I felt a sense of intimacy and familiarity right from the start of my tour. What’s more, Tomita-san explained that the area had historical links to the UK, so as a Brit I felt an even closer affinity to the distillery.



The entrance to  
Tomita Shochu Distillery



Kokuto shochu produced by  
Tomita Shochu Distillery



Links to the UK

I found Tomita-san’s tour deeply interesting, even more so because I could compare what I was seeing with the *imo-jochu* (sweet potato shochu) distilleries that I had previously visited on Kagoshima’s mainland. There were a number of differences – for example, in the production of shochu there is a fermentation process known as *shikomi*, which results in the creation of *moromi*, the ferment. During the process, raw materials are mixed in tanks buried in the floor, but since the climate on Amami Oshima is warmer than on the mainland, only the bottom parts of them are buried here!



Tanks containing *moromi* (ferment)

My personal highlight of the tour was the brown sugar tasting. I was able to try both Okinawan and Amami brown sugar, and was surprised to find quite a difference in the flavour. Tomita-san explained the reason for the difference.

It's all about the "Wind Taste". In other words, sugar cane (which is used to make brown sugar) is buffeted by the sea breeze as it grows, and this affects the flavour. Since sugar cane plants cultivated in different locations have different degrees of exposure to the sea breeze, the flavour of the sugar (its "Wind Taste") also differs. At Tomita Shochu Distillery, "Ryugu" is made from Okinawan brown sugar, but "Maaran-sen" uses Amami brown sugar, so I recommend trying both!



Okinawan brown sugar used at Tomita Shochu Distillery

Finally, I asked Tomita-san whether he had any recommendations for how best to enjoy *kokuto shochu*. I was surprised by his answer:

*"Nope! I just want people to enjoy kokuto shochu, so please drink it any way you like."*

In the UK, I often drank wine, for which there are a number of drinking rules as well as important guidelines for wine pairings. In contrast, Tomita-san recommended drinking *kokuto shochu* freely, simply finding a style that you like – neat, with still water, with soda water, or some other style. For me, that way of looking at things felt as refreshing as the *kokuto shochu* itself.

I said thank you to Tomita-san, bought a bottle of "Maaran-sen", then set off towards my final destination.



Bottle of "Maaran-sen" in hand, I said goodbye to Tomita Shochu Distillery

## (10) Oshima Tsumugi Village

Amami is home to a specialty product that has been passed down for generations. Known as one of the world's great fabrics, Oshima *tsumugi* (or Oshima pongee) is a silk fabric with a spectacular glossy finish, and is something you absolutely cannot miss if you have the chance to visit Amami Oshima!

You can feel the presence of Oshima *tsumugi* all over the island, including through the many signs decorated with *Tatsugo-gara*, a pattern commonly used for *tsumugi*, but for those that want to find out more, I recommend the Oshima Tsumugi Village.

After arriving there myself, I was first greeted by the wonderful flowers in the subtropical botanical garden. Hearing the call of the Lidth's jay, one of the symbolic birds of Amami, and catching sight of the Ceylon blue glassy tiger butterfly (said to be a harbinger of winter here), I waited for my mud-dyeing experience and facility tour to begin.



The subtropical botanical garden at Oshima Tsumugi Village

Full of excitement, I first headed towards the mud-dyeing area. After listening intently to the teacher's instructions, I picked up my handkerchief and began to fold it, so that it would be dyed according to my chosen pattern: a white flower on a field of deep brown. Then, using a solution made from the *Sharinbai* plant, I dyed it three times. I was surprised to see that after just a short time submerged in the dye, the handkerchief took on the colour of a full-bodied red wine.

Then, I made my way to the mud fields, where I submerged the handkerchief in the soft mud. The iron in the mud reacts with the tannins contained in the *Sharinbai* dye, giving the fabric a unique, glossy chocolate colour. I was personally very satisfied with the finished product, and because I had created it using a traditional Amami method, the entire experience felt extremely valuable.





The mud-dyeing area



Concentrating on folding my handkerchief



Sharinbai dyeing



Mud dyeing



The finished product

While the handkerchief was drying, I went inside the *tsumugi* factory and was finally able to comprehend just how much intricate work and skill is required to create the delicate *tsumugi* motifs. I was also able to feel a kimono made from *tsumugi*, and was particularly surprised by how light the fabric was.



Touring the Oshima Tsumugi Village

### **Conclusion**

Even though I only stayed for a few days, I thoroughly enjoyed my time on Amami Oshima. With flora and fauna like the Lidth's Jay, the Amami rabbit and the brush pot tree, as well as traditions including *shima uta* (island songs), *kokuto shochu* and Oshima *tsumugi*, there is a whole treasure trove of nature and culture unique to Amami. So please – go and experience it for yourself! I'm absolutely certain that you'll become one of Amami's biggest fans, just like me!

## The Governor's Activities

### ●Visit by Local Government Officials from the UK (17<sup>th</sup> Jan)●

On 17<sup>th</sup> January, Governor Shiota was visited by a delegation of 12 individuals, including local government officials, from the UK. All were participants in the “Overseas Local Government Executive Exchange and Cooperation Seminar 2022”, organized by the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR) and held in Kagoshima Prefecture.

The theme of the seminar was Kagoshima Prefecture's initiatives towards net zero, so the governor talked about Kagoshima's goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to effectively zero, achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

Visitors heard from the governor that Kagoshima has had relations with the UK since the time of the Satsuma Domain, and is currently linked with the London Borough of Camden and the City of Manchester through friendship agreements. The governor also expressed his hope that the visitors would enjoy Kagoshima's delicious food, nature, and hot springs during their stay, and ultimately come to like Kagoshima.



### ●Exchange with Taiwan●

#### • Visit by Hsieh Ming-ta, CEO of high-end Taiwanese supermarket “Yumaowu” (16<sup>th</sup> Jan)

On 16<sup>th</sup> January, Mr Hsieh, CEO of the Taiwanese high-end supermarket “Yumaowu”, visited Governor Shiota to report on the increase in exports from Kagoshima to Taiwan, and to discuss the reopening of direct flights between the two locations.

Mr Hsieh described the popularity of products from Kagoshima in Taiwan, and expressed his desire to work hard towards re-establishing a direct air route between Taiwan and Kagoshima Airport.

The governor conveyed his gratitude for Mr Hsieh's cooperation with Kagoshima Prefecture to date, including with the running of the Kagoshima Fair, and asked for Mr Hsieh's assistance if he were ever to visit Taiwan.



The courtesy visit

- **The governor's sales pitch in Taiwan (30<sup>th</sup> Jan)**

On 30<sup>th</sup> January, Governor Shiota visited the head office of China Airlines in Taiwan as part of efforts to reopen the Kagoshima-Taipei air route, currently suspended due to COVID-19, as soon as possible. As well as promoting Amami Oshima and Tokunoshima islands, which were recently registered as a Natural World Heritage site, and Kagoshima's Kuroushi beef, which was recognized as Japan's best for the second time running at the 12<sup>th</sup> National Wagyu Olympics, the governor called for the reopening of the air route at the earliest opportunity.

On the same day, the governor also visited the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association's Taipei Office to ask for support with the resumption of direct flights, and for their cooperation with the promotion of further exchange between Kagoshima and Taiwan.

Kagoshima Prefecture is continuing its efforts towards the reopening of regular international air routes as soon as possible.



The governor's visit to Taiwan



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## Latest News

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### ●Kagoshima Prefecture has a new slogan!●

With its three UNESCO World Heritage sites and world-class local produce, including Kagoshima Kuroushi, Japan's top Wagyu beef, the appeals of Kagoshima Prefecture are innumerable and span across history, culture, and more. In other words, the prefecture is full of “treasures”.

Based on the “Powered by PR” concept detailed in the Kagoshima Basic PR Strategy, set out in December last year, Kagoshima's new slogan was chosen to embody our desire for many people to visit our treasure-filled prefecture, for them to experience it hands-on, and for the residents of Kagoshima to find and be aware of the many treasures spread across every region of the prefecture.

The logo features the Japanese characters '南の宝箱' (Nan no Takara Bako) in a bold, black, serif font. The character '宝' (Takara, meaning treasure) is highlighted with a golden, four-pointed starburst. Below this, the characters '鹿児島' (Kagoshima) are written in a similar bold, black, serif font.

### TREASURE OF THE SOUTH, KAGOSHIMA

The logotype combines both classic and modern styles, expressing the concept of *onkochishin*, or new discovery by revisiting the past.

What's more, the character “宝” (*takara*, treasure) is decorated with a sparkling point of shining light, evoking thoughts of treasure in people's minds and conveying our desire for them to find each of Kagoshima's treasures.

It is a logo that truly embodies the excitement one feels at the allure of Kagoshima.

## Kagoshima Seasonal Tourist Information

### ●Tadamoto Park (Isa City)●



Photos provided by  
Kagoshima Prefectural Visitors Bureau

Located on top of a small hill that overlooks the city, Tadamoto Park is known as a great spot to see cherry blossoms. The park's rows of cherry blossom trees extend for around 2 km, and at the peak of the cherry blossom season they are illuminated by a thousand lanterns, so you can enjoy the changing appearance of the cherry blossom between day and night.

The park was selected as one of “Japan’s Top 100 Places for Cherry Blossom” in 1990.

**Address:** 2484-193 Okuchiharada,  
Isa City, 895-2506  
**Telephone:** 0995-29-4113  
(Isa PR Division, Isa City Office)

**Opening dates:** Open all year  
(Peak cherry blossom season is usually between late March and early April)

**Access:** ~25 min from the Kyushu Expressway’s Kurio IC  
~40 min from Shin-Minamata JR Station

Car parking facilities are available.





(3) Food

- [Kagoshima stores promoting local production for local consumption](#)
- ['Kagoshima no Shoku' website](#)

(4) Agricultural, Livestock and Seafood Products

- [The Kagoshima Brand](#)
- ['Furusato' certified food products](#)
- [Natural and processed meat products](#)
- [Kagoshima Prefecture Chamber of Tea Industry website](#)
- [Specialty forest products](#)
- [Marine products](#)

(5) Others

- [Kagoshima Internet TV Channel 'Move! Kagoshima'](#)
- [Official Kagoshima Prefecture Facebook](#)
- [Official Kagoshima Prefecture Twitter](#)
- [Kagoshima Prefecture Official Website](#)