

Multilingual Electronic Newsletter

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Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) Column

●Birthplace of the Satsuma Mandarin: Nagashima●

— By Joseph Snowden (CIR from the UK)

As someone who grew up in the UK, I fondly remember eating ‘Satsumas’, deliciously sweet mandarin oranges. But it wasn’t until I came to Kagoshima that I realized the name derives from *that* Satsuma – the Satsuma Domain, historical predecessor of today’s Kagoshima Prefecture. You can imagine my excitement when I heard that I would be visiting the Japanese birthplace of the Satsuma mandarin (known here as *unshuu mikan*), Nagashima.

An island in the north west of Kagoshima Prefecture, Nagashima is connected by road to the mainland and is under two hours’ drive away from Kagoshima City. Arriving there, the first thing I noticed was the crispness of the air. The island is, like much of Kagoshima Prefecture, blessed with abundant nature, and just standing still for a moment to take in my surroundings was pleasantly refreshing.

I was also struck by the quaint and friendly atmosphere. We were warmly welcomed by a staff member at a roadside station – a true must-see in Nagashima for the sheer variety of citrus fruits of all shapes and sizes on offer, all unbelievably fresh and extremely affordable.

Heading north, we continued our journey to our first destination. The Japan Mandarin Centre was opened in 1993 as a facility for visitors to learn about the history and culture behind mandarin orange cultivation. It sits off the beaten tourist track, but the building is unmistakable, crowned with a huge, orange, mandarin-shaped dome.



The orange dome of the Japan Mandarin Centre

We were greeted by Mr Yamagami, the Designated Manager of the facility since April 2022, who was happy to show us around. He explained that in recent years, visitor numbers have fallen, and that a key aim of his was to bring people back to the centre, to show them what it has to offer.

One popular new scheme is mandarin picking, taking place between October and the beginning of December, whereby visitors can harvest their own mandarins from the orange groves surrounding the building. You can’t get fresher than that!



The retro light-up world map

Moving inside, we entered an exhibition space that truly felt like another world. Not much has changed since its opening in 1993, including the CRT televisions and vintage light-up world map, creating a genuinely charming and authentic ‘back-in-time’ atmosphere that is hard to find elsewhere. There is detailed content on the history of mandarin cultivation, different mandarin varieties, mandarin harvesting and processing, and much more.

The facility’s retro charm is embodied by “Mandarin-chan”, a smiling mandarin-shaped robot that greets you upon entry. With the flick of a switch, Mandarin-chan’s head rises to reveal a whole family of animatronic fruits and vegetables, singing and dancing in that rather clumsy, robotic (and I would add, nostalgic) style. Still a hit with children, finding an animatronic like this ‘in the wild’ is rare and definitely a highlight for those who enjoy 80s and 90s culture.



Mandarin-chan

Personally, my favourite part was the second floor, which houses the remains of an authentic second-generation Satsuma mandarin tree, thought to have begun its life around 100 years ago. Next to that is a treasure trove of information, including a collection of mandarin tree cultivation logbooks written by hand many decades ago. Even as someone without any specialist knowledge, I would love to spend an afternoon poring over the contents of those books.



Second generation Satsuma mandarin tree

Contrasting with the retro feel of the rest of the facility, the top floors are being transformed into a modern and stylish co-working space, along with a study space for local students. Overlooking the orange groves, you couldn’t ask for a more idyllic location for a ‘workcation’. Mr Yamagami is keen for the centre to serve as a hub for exchange with the international community of citrus growers and



The view from the future co-working space

researchers, as well as people working in all kinds of different industries. This, I found particularly interesting. Building on its history as a site of international importance in the propagation of citrus fruits around the globe, Nagashima is still today facing outwards to the rest of the world.

Passing by the orange fields, we left the Japan Mandarin Centre behind us and hurried over to the Nagashima Continental Market Cafeteria (*Nagashima Tairiku Ichiba Shokudo*) to sample some local delicacies. Positioned about 15 metres away from the sea, the sounds of lapping waves and squawking gulls hint at just how fresh the food is.

Given that Nagashima is the top production centre for yellowtail in all of Japan, I went for the Yellowtail King Set Meal (*Buri-ou Teishoku*), the most popular dish. With the fish served in several different forms, and topped off with a mandarin-flavoured dessert, I certainly wasn't disappointed.



The Kentoushi-sen Memorial Stone

Stomachs satisfied, we left the cafeteria behind us and headed towards our final stop in Nagashima, another reminder of the island's historical international links. The *Kentoushi-sen* Memorial Stone marks the landing site of one of the boats sent from Japan to Tang China in the 8th Century, as part of Japanese efforts at the time to learn from Chinese civilization. In the year 777, four boats were dispatched from Japan for the 12th mission to China, but all were shipwrecked on their return in 778, with the first boat washing ashore here in Nagashima.

The monument is itself impressive, with an air of solemnity around it, but just behind the memorial stone is a humble, pebble-covered beach. Standing by the waves, facing outwards towards China, I took a moment to imagine what it would have been like to be here on that fateful day in 778.



The beach behind the memorial stone

Crossing over the *Kuronoseto Ohashi* Bridge back towards the Kagoshima mainland, I reflected on my short time in Nagashima. The true charm of Nagashima is in its contrasts. Many places with historical importance in Japan are grand and distinguished, but Nagashima offers something different. It's humble and quaint. It feels raw, unchanged.

I take a fresh Satsuma mandarin out of my bag. Somehow, I think this one will taste even sweeter than I remember.



The Kuronoseto Ohashi Bridge

The Governor's Activities

●11th May: Visit by the Ambassador of Japan to the Dominican Republic●

Ambassador Takagi, from the Embassy of Japan in the Dominican Republic, paid a courtesy visit to the Prefectural Office.

I asked about the status of the local prefectural association (kenjinkai), and Ambassador Takagi told me about and showed me photos of their recent events, explaining that the Kagoshima Prefectural Association (Kagoshima Kenjinkai) is the largest community of people of Japanese descent in the Dominican Republic. I also heard from the Ambassador that the movement of people and economic exchange with foreign countries, among other activities, have been recovering from the impact of COVID-19.

Through projects such as Kagoshima Prefecture's acceptance of Overseas Technical Trainees from the Dominican Republic, I look forward to seeing even closer exchange between us.



International Exchange in Kagoshima

●Prefectural Scholarship Exchange Students have arrived in Kagoshima!●

The Prefectural Scholarship Exchange Student Programme offers the descendants of people who emigrated from Kagoshima a chance to study at universities within the prefecture. As well as giving them the opportunity to experience life in Kagoshima, the programme aims to train promising students who can then contribute to furthering relations between Kagoshima and their home countries. In April, three students (two from Brazil, one from Peru) arrived in Kagoshima for the 2023 programme.

The three exchange students will stay in Kagoshima for 11 months, until February 2024, and will study their respective fields of expertise at Kagoshima University (the Faculty of Law, Economics and Humanities, and the Faculty of Medicine).

Here, we asked each of the students about their motivations to study abroad in Kagoshima.

Caroline Ayumi Sato (Brazil, fourth-generation Japanese, Faculty of Law, Economics and Humanities)

My motivation for becoming a Prefectural Scholarship Exchange Student in Kagoshima was, first of all, because I want to interact with Japanese people and people from other countries while improving my communication skills. On top of that, I'd like to focus on my research, with the aim of pursuing post-graduate study in the future. While I'm here, I'd like to make more friends with Japanese people and people from other countries, and I'd like to try and gain lots of new experiences. For example, I want to visit places I've never been to before, and try foods I've never eaten before.



Manami Murakami (Brazil, third-generation Japanese, Faculty of Medicine)

This photo was taken at Marutake Sangyo in Satsumasendai City. I visited the armor factory and the traditional Japanese garden there, and learnt a little about Japanese history and craftsmanship. Many of the traditional armor and props that are used in Japanese TV dramas and films are made here.

While I'm studying in Kagoshima Prefecture, I'd like to learn about the Japanese healthcare system and public health initiatives. I also want to find out more about Japanese culture and the culture of Kagoshima. When I return to Brazil, I'd like to be able to apply the lessons I'll learn here, along with the good memories I'll make and the experiences I'll have, to my daily life.



Andrea Sayuri Wakabayashi Mayo (Peru, third-generation Japanese, Faculty of Law, Economics and Humanities)

My name is Andrea Sayuri Wakabayashi Mayo. I'm from Peru. I'm really happy that I could come to Japan.

I'm learning about Japanese culture. I've gotten to know friends from many different countries, and I'm studying a lot at university. I want to learn a lot of things in Japan, then when I return to my home country, I want to tell others about the knowledge I've gained and about what Japanese culture is.



What's Happening in Kagoshima

●The Sheraton Kagoshima is open for business!●

On 16th May, the foreign-owned hotel “Sheraton Kagoshima” opened its doors in Korai-cho, Kagoshima City.

Located in the center of Kagoshima City, it has great access to JR Kagoshima Chuo Station for express buses and the bullet train, Kagoshima Port for connections to Sakurajima, the Tenmonkan downtown area, and more.

As well as 228 guest rooms, the 19-storey building contains a range of facilities including a cafe and restaurant, a bar, a spa and a fitness center for guests.

The interior design of the hotel and its rooms reflects Kagoshima's natural beauty, with guest rooms carefully decorated using motifs of Kagoshima's landscape. What's more, from rooms named after Sakurajima, guests can enjoy panoramic views of the volcano, impossible to find outside of Kagoshima.

A member of the globally expanding Marriott Group of hotels, there are high expectations that many tourists from both within Japan and beyond will stay at the Sheraton Kagoshima.

Address: 43-15 Korai-cho, Kagoshima City, 890-0051

Telephone: +81-99-821-1111

Website: [Sheraton Kagoshima Hotel](#) | [Marriott Bonvoy](#)



(3) 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](#)

(4) Others

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