

Collections

Making a collection is an enjoyable way to spend time, be the things in your collection physical or intangible.

One a winter's day two years ago, I was trekking up the snowy mountainous paths of the Togakushi Shrine in Nagano Prefecture. Half way up the mountain I came across a young American man, and as we were closing in on the main shrine on the top of the mountain, my new friend produced a small notebook from his pocket and asked whether I knew what it was. Seeing my puzzled look, he opened one of its pages to reveal a beautiful red stamp accompanied by flowing calligraphy, and explained to me that this is a *goshuin*, a seal stamp that Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples give to visitors as proof for their patronage.

Shuin, often known as *goshuin* with the Japanese honorific prefix *go* attached to it, can be collected from all over Japan. Each shrine and temple has its unique design, some are neat and reserved, while others are more whimsical and flamboyant. If you're someone who loves going to shrines and temples to begin with, collecting *goshuincho* may just be icing on the cake for your future visits. For fellow beginner *goshuin* collectors like myself, I have prepared a simple manual:

1. Purchase a booklet called a *goshuincho* for your *goshuin* collection. They're for sale in shrines and temples that offer *goshuin*, with costs ranging from 1,000-2,000 yen. Certain department stores and bookstores also have them in their stationery section.
2. Go to the *goshuin* reception desk, open up to the page where you'd like to receive your stamp, hand over your booklet, and approach the staff by saying '*goshuin wo onegaishimasu*'.
3. Receive a number placard from the attendant, and wait to be called.
4. Retrieve your *goshuincho*, hand over your placard, and pay a fee of 300-500 yen. This small fee is considered donation money to the establishment.



Anatomy of a *goshuin*

1. The institution's name in calligraphy.
2. A stamp with the name of the institution.
3. The kanji for *houhai* ('worship') in calligraphy.
4. This stamp usually depicts something that signifies the institution, or its relationship with surrounding or related institutions. In this instance, it indicates Usa Jingu's position as the head-shrine of all Hachiman-shrines in Japan.
5. Date of the visit in year/month/day format.

Wind the clock two years forward, and my colleagues and I were bathing in the toasty autumn sunlight filtering through the blinds into the office of Mr. Kuroki Toshihiro, the senior priest of Usa Jingu. After exchanging formalities, I asked Mr. Kuroki whether he knew why *goshuin* has enjoyed a resurgence in popularity in recent years. Perhaps, said Mr. Kuroki pensively, it's because Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines are places where one can feel safe, and collecting the different designs of *goshuin* give people motivation to visit the nooks and crannies of the country. We then all pondered why it's especially popular with the female visitors, but couldn't come with a concrete answer. I for one personally enjoy having aesthetically-pleasing mementos neatly compiled into a little booklet, not to mention that I always learn something new and interesting in shrine visits – maybe there are others out there who feel the same as me.

We then asked Mr. Kuroki whether there's anything in particular that he'll like to share with future visitors, to which he replied earnestly that while he appreciates that people are excited about shrines, it's important to remember that the grounds are places of solitude and serenity, so it's best to contain one's volume. On a lighter note, Mr Kuroki shared an interesting *jinja*-related tidbit that we hadn't known of before – in the heart of Tokyo, among the concrete and steel beams, there thrives a forest of impressive scale on the grounds of the Meiji Shrine. The forest was created in memory of the late Emperor Meiji, who passed away in 1912. Through the power of around 110,000 volunteers, the saplings that were planted around 90 years ago have grown into an expansive canopy stretching over 700,000 square metres in area. The 100,000 trees of 365 species were donated from all around the country, a cause to which the Oita Prefecture had also made contributions.



Some shrines that I have visited in my goshuin collecting adventures, from left to right:

1. *The local Usa Jingu, head shrine of all Hachiman-shrines in Japan.*
2. *The Kameyama Hachiman Shrine in Shimonoseki, Yamaguchi Prefecture, home to the world's largest blowfish statue.*
3. *The Meiji Jingu in Tokyo, where volunteers planted over one hundred thousand trees to create a forest.*

Having now acquired this new knowledge, I was ready to start my own collection. On the last Labor Thanksgiving Day, I brought along my newly purchased *goshuincho* and set foot on the grounds of Meiji Jingu itself. The sound of bustling conversation filled the air, and I looked around at the towering trees as I joined the line for the *goshuin*. These trees had all once belonged elsewhere before they were transported to Tokyo. Just how much hope and love were instilled to them, and how many stories had they each to tell? Surely these shared tales and memories will continue to breathe and thrive like leaves drenched in morning dew, even long after we pass, I mused, and the idea filled me both with delight and melancholy.

EXHIBITIONS & SCREENINGS

Date	Description	Place	Cost	Contact #
Dec 8 th , 2018~ Jan 20 th , 2019	Treasure Box of Contemporary Art – Toshioka Collection	Oita Prefectural Art Museum (OPAM)	¥300 (250)	☎ 097-533-4500
Dec 4 th , 2018~ Feb 5 th , 2019 ^{*1}	Collective Exhibition IV – <i>Sorezore no monogatari</i> (Stories within Artworks)	Oita Prefectural Art Museum (OPAM)	¥300 (250)	☎ 097-533-4500
Mar 8 th ~ May 6 th , 2019	Ancient Civilization of the Andes	Oita Prefectural Art Museum (OPAM)	¥ 1,500 (1,300)	☎ 097-533-4500

Most Museums and Centers are closed on Monday, or Tuesday if Monday is a public holiday. Student admissions vary, highest cost shown.

*1. Exhibition will be temporarily closed on Jan 9th.



STAGE & MUSIC EVENTS

Date	Time	Artist/Event	Venue	Cost	Contact #
Jan 16 th	19:00	ichiko presents: Beethoven – The Complete String Quartets Vol. 3, performed by the Verus String Quartet	iichiko Oto-no-izumi	¥1,500-¥3,000	☎ 097-533-4004
Feb 9 th	16:00	Family musical: <i>Mahou wo suteta Majorin</i> (Majorin Who Threw Away Magic)	iichiiko Grand Theatre	¥1,000-¥4,000	☎ 097-533-4004
Mar 30 th	14:00	10th Regular Performance by the iichiko Grand Theatre Junior Orchestra	iichiko Grand Theatre	¥500-¥1,000	☎ 097-533-4004

**Ticket prices range from student to most expensive general admission. Prices shown otherwise indicate price for purchase on the day of event, they may be cheaper if purchased in advance. Times shown indicate start times, doors usually open 30 minutes beforehand.

VENUES

iichiko Oto-no-izumi = iichiko Culture Centre 1F, Oita City

iichiiko Grand Theatre=Oasis Tower 1F, Oita City

The weather is now cold, and I always feel famished. Perhaps I moan about this way too often, because lately my superior left a fairly sizable *konbini* snack on my desk with a smile on his face. While I was touched by the gesture, it was also a tad embarrassing. Come to think of it, my Japanese co-workers are always showering me with various snacks. If there's one thing that I remember about Japan in the future, it would be that I was always well-fed.

Xin Lan Xie, CIR from Australia

Correction Notice:

Please note that the author for the *Inshoku keizu* (*Genealogy of Food and Drinks*), which was briefly mentioned in last issue's 'On Dango-jiru', should be Motoyama Tekishu instead of Higashiyama Ogih. The editor would like to apologise for the error.

Festivals and Events

Date	Event Description	Location	Contact #
Mar 27 th , 2018 ~ Feb 14 th	Oita Joshi Park Kaso Tenshu Illumination The illumination event, which was initially scheduled to be on display for a limited time only last year, has been extended. The virtually reconstructed castle watch tower lights up daily from sunset to 22:00, and can be enjoyed till 14 th Feb this year.	Oita Joshi Park (Oita Castle Ruins), Oita City	☎ 097-574-6628
Dec 11 th , 2018 ~ Mar 10 th	Hello Kitty to kurasu machi (Hello Kitty and the Town We Live in) Come over to Hiji, where you can collect AR stamps that reveal new, original pictures of Hello Kitty. Head to the Ninomaru Yakata for your chance to get an original goods in exchange for the images.	Various locations in the Town of Hiji	☎ 0977-72-4255
Nov 16 th , 2018 ~ Feb 14 th	Fantasy of Light Oita ~Marriage of the Starry Skies~ Come along and enjoy the special illuminations for festive occasions. Both the Chuo-dori Street and the Funai-chuo Gate Square will be bathed in the gentle sparkles of decorative lights until Valentine's Day.	Chuo-dori Street, Funai-chuo Gate Square, Oita City	☎ 097-573-7377
Dec 15 th , 2018 ~ Mar 10 th , 2018	Hiji Curry Rally Did you know that the town of Hiji, which is famous for its joka karei (flounder), also produces delicious <i>kare</i> (curry)? Have a taste of the curries that do the local restaurants proud, and collect special stamps from the stores which can be exchanged for a chance to win an exciting prize.	Participating restaurants in Hiji	☎ 0977-72-4255
23:00, Dec 31 st , 2018 ~ 02:00, Jan 1 st , 2019	Ryujin Toshikoshi (New Year's Eve of the Dragon God) Bamboo lanterns will be set up to welcome guests participating in the <i>hatsumode</i> , the first Shinto shrine visit for the Japanese New Year. Distribution of amazake is in place.	Shiraishi Shrine, Musashimachi Uchida, Kunisaki	☎ 090-8835-2533
Oct 15 th , 2018 ~ 15 th Jan	Tsukumi Mo-ika Squid Festa The fishermen, fishery industry and chefs participating in the annual Tskumi <i>Mo-ika</i> Squid Festa are proud to present delicious, mouth-watering fresh mo-ika straight from the seaweed-bed farms straight to your palate. The <i>Yo-tsuna</i> tuna, which has received favourable reviews last year, will appear again on this year's special collab menu.	Participating stores in Tsukimi. More info at: < http://tsukumiryoku.com/publics/index/94/ >	☎ 0972-82-9521
23 rd Nov, 2018 ~ Mar 3 rd	Core Yamakuni Ice Skating Rink Want to flex your athletic abilities on ice? Get a hint of winter at the outdoor ice skating rink at Core Yamakuni. Various training classes and special events will be held while the ice rink is in use.	Core Yamakuni, 130 Yamakunimachi Morizane	☎ 0979-62-2140
Sep 2018 ~ Jan 13 th	Oita Prefectural College of Arts and Culture Festa The staff and students of the Oita Prefectural College of Arts and Culture will be presenting their best works during the festival. Workshops, lectures, open courses and many other events will be open to the public during this event.	Oita Prefectural College of Arts and Culture, OPAM, iichiko Cultural Centre, Beppu Park	☎ 097-545-0542
Oct 5 th , 2018 ~ Feb 11 th	Kurushima Takehiko Memorial presents: 'Living Human Treasure – Inoue Manji' Don't miss your chance to view the beautiful Dehua porcelain crafted by Kurushima Takehiko, the famed porcelain artist who is officially designated as a living human treasure by the state. (Memorial closed on Mondays. If Monday is a public holiday, it is closed the next working day.)	Kurushima Takehiko Memorial Building, 855 Mori, Kusu	☎ 0973-73-9200

What's Going On?

From the Plaza

Free Legal Consultations for International Residents

The Oita International Plaza is holding free legal consultations for foreign residents on *the third Wednesday of every month*.

- When: **January 16th, February 3rd, February 20th, March 3rd, March 20th**
- Time: **13:00-16:00**
- Consultant: **Sei Ito** (Administrative Solicitor)
- Venue: **Oita International Plaza (iichiko Culture Center, B1F)**

Free Tagalog Consultations

The Oita International Plaza is holding free consultations in Tagalog.

- When: **January 12th, January 22th, February 2nd, February 19th**
- Time: **13:00-16:00**
- Consultant: **Rhodora Yoshitake** (President of the Oita Philippines Friendship Association)
- Venue: **Oita International Plaza (iichiko Culture Center, B1F)**

Free Chinese Consultations

The Oita International Plaza is holding free consultations in Mandarin.

- When: **Every Thursday 10:00-13:00 (except January 24th, March 21st)**
- Time: **10:00-13:00**
- Consultant: **Uenyu Kodama**
- Venue: **Oita International Plaza (iichiko Culture Center, B1F)**

(*Dates and times are subject to change. Please contact the Oita International Plaza before coming.) TEL: 097-533-4021

International Event Notifications

The Oita International Plaza will be announcing some international events that take place within Oita Prefecture on our social media pages in order to support organizations proactively fostering international relations.

Facebook - <http://www.facebook.com/oitaplaza>

Twitter - <http://twitter.com/oitaplaza>

If you are interested in relaying information about an event, please send e-mail at the Plaza.

Mail: kobayashi-ikuyo@emo.or.jp

Japanese Lessons

Himawari Japanese Volunteers

Support for people learning Japanese in order to help them enjoy their lives in Oita, now at three different locations.

Wasada Public Hall Wed. 10:00-11:30

Meiji Akeno Public Hall Wed. 14:00-15:30

Tsurusaki Public Hall Sat. 10:00-11:30

For more information contact Ms. Fukata TEL: 097-527-2614

E-MAIL: nihongo_himawari_oita@yahoo.co.jp

Nihongo Rakuraku-talk

Beppu City Hall offers free Japanese lessons every Monday from 14:00-15:30. For more information contact the Beppu International Affairs Division

TEL: 0977-21-6133 E-MAIL: int-ma@city.beppu.oita.jp

Sakura Japanese Class

Come study Japanese with friendly volunteers and teachers in a pleasant atmosphere. Sakura Japanese Class is held every Monday from 10:15-12:00 at the Oita University International House in Nishiki-Machi, Oita City. Classes are free of charge. For more information call Ms. Ohashi CELL: 090-7866-2486

AIUEO Japanese Lessons

Volunteers offer free Japanese lessons on Tuesday and Friday from 10:20-11:50 at I-NESS near Oasis Tower as well as Thursday nights at Compal Hall from 18:30-20:30. Lessons are also offered in Beppu at the Beppu Foreign Tourist Information Office on Tuesday mornings from 10:00-12:00. For more information contact:

Ms. Miyase CELL: 090-8353-2485 (day lessons)

Ms. Kato TEL: 097-532-5940 (night lessons)

Want to go around greeting people with the weather getting warmer and nicer? Try these expressions in the Oita dialect:

どげえかえ? [doge e kae] How are things? / How are you?	どこ行きな? [doko ikina?] Where are you off to? / Where are you going?
なんしよんの? [nan shiyonno] What are you up to?	ぬきいなえ [nuki i nae] It's warm.

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THANK YOU !!

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HOURS: Monday-Friday 9:30am-6:00pm

(closed weekends and the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month. We are open on the Saturdays before these Mondays)

Closed national holidays & Dec 29th - Jan 3rd

The International Plaza is located on the basement floor of OASIS Hiroba 21 (iichiko Culture Center).

