

The Oita tourism desk in London enters its second year

Monday 30 August, 2021

Dubbed “the Onsen Prefecture”, the plucky little province of Oita in western Japan is well known for its picturesque mountainside towns and stunning views – but it’s most famous for one thing and one thing alone: its steaming hot natural baths.

In fact, Oita has the best hot spring baths (aka *onsen*) in the world. It’s in an area of incredible geothermal activity which pumps up hundreds of millions of litres of clean, pure and restorative water out of the ground every year through naturally occurring steam vents. It’s Japan’s favourite spa region, with an onsen on hand to recover pretty much any ailment, and we want to share this wonderful secret with the world.

Tourism Oita set up a dedicated tourist desk in London last year with this goal in mind, and we held a wildly successful online seminar in March this year, attended by a huge number of European travel agents and media from a wide variety of countries.

And now that the world is opening back up for international travel, we’re looking to build on this success and help many more people discover Oita for themselves.

Getting to know the Onsen Prefecture

Oita has the most hot springs of anywhere in Japan. Internationally, only Yellowstone National Park in the United States has more.

The main difference between Oita and Yellowstone is pretty simple: you’re allowed to get into most of Oita’s onsen and have a bath! About 8m people visited Oita in 2019, before travel restrictions came in.

There are enough wonderful onsen here, particularly in dedicated spa towns such as Beppu and Yufuin, that many local residents choose not to wash at home at all, preferring to visit the excellent public onsen. Communal baths like these have been around for hundreds of years, and they’re still a vital community hub – and a very welcoming place for visitors.

Investing in eco-tourism and renewable energy

There are plenty of incredible applications for all this hot spring heat beyond bathing. For instance, there’s an amazing local style of cooking known as ‘jigokumushi’ – or ‘hell steaming’, in which meals are prepared over natural steam vents, while most washing and cleaning uses natural spring waters alone.

Meanwhile Japan’s first green hydrogen plant has recently opened in the tiny town of Kokonoe, which uses geothermal power from the local hot springs to produce high-purity hydrogen in next-generation clean fuel. The prefectural authorities are hoping to use it to power their public and private transport networks in the near future.

All of this makes Oita is one of the greenest prefectures in Japan, alongside the highest production of renewable geothermal energy in the whole country. We’re proud of our eco-friendly efforts, and we’ve been investing heavily in eco-tourism over the years. Oita is a relatively rural province, so that means plenty of opportunities for hiking, touring the natural world and staying in simple countryside accommodation.

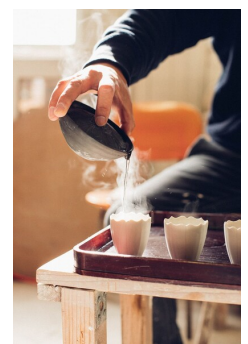
Discover more on our new YouTube channel

Now that international travel is resuming and we’re preparing for life after the pandemic, we’d love to keep in regular touch with our travel agent partners and the press via email newsletters and seasonal sample tours. Email oita.japan@hankyu-euro.com to sign up!

We’ve also have a YouTube channel which showcases the best of what’s on offer in Oita. You can see our wonderful hot springs up close, and check out all sorts of insider information on everything from what to see and where to go, on top of cool local tips and hidden attractions. Check out the channel [here](#).

Oita is one of Japan’s most charming prefectures, and it’s the perfect place for a relaxing holiday that’s just a little bit off the beaten path. Please don’t hesitate to get in touch with us with any questions you

Media:



may have – we'd love to tell you more about Oita.

Ends



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Oita Prefectural Government - UK & Europe Advisors

E. oita.japan@hankyu-euro.com

W. <https://exploreoita.com/>

Additional Contact(s):

PRESS CONTACT:

Hiromichi Ishida

HANKYU TRAVEL INTERNATIONAL EUROPE UK LTD

+44(0)20 7268 3071

oita.japan@hankyu-euro.com

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