



# J.CLAIR Singapore

## Newsletter

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**The Japan Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (J.CLAIR), Singapore**

6 Battery Road #26-01/02 Singapore 049909  
Tel: +65-6224-7927 Fax: +65-6224-8376  
Email: [info@clair.org.sg](mailto:info@clair.org.sg)  
HP: <http://www.clair.org.sg/>

### ◆Recent Activities

## *JETAA* *Acting as a Bridge between* *Japan and Their Home* *Countries*



#### About JETAA

JETAA (JET Programme Alumni Association) is a voluntary organization of former JET participants who will continue acting as a bridge between Japan and their home countries after finishing their term in the JET Programme, which is one of the main programmes that CLAIR helps to implement. Currently, JETAA has 53 chapters in 16 countries and over 24,000 members.

The JET Programme (The Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme) is one of the largest international exchange programmes in the world and promotes international interaction in the local regions of Japan through the employment of foreign youth in local governments, and enhancement of English education at elementary, junior high and senior high schools.

JET participants are assigned to small and medium-sized cities and rural fishing villages throughout Japan, and live a life rooted in that place.

There are mainly 2 types of positions offered in the JET Programme, Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) and Coordinator for International Relations (CIR). ALTs provide assistance to Japanese teachers during foreign language classes in elementary, junior and senior high schools. CIRs work in local governments in Japan and assists in the planning and implementation of exchange events in addition to translation and interpretation work.

JET participants who have finished their terms are valuable Japan experts and talented pro-Japanese personnel. After returning to their respective countries, they conduct various activities for maintaining and strengthening their network through JETAA. CLAIR greatly supports their activities in cooperation with the local embassies of Japan.

JETAA participates and cooperates in tourism events etc. held in various countries, and promotes attractions throughout Japan from a local resident's point of view.

In addition, they organize various networking events, hold meetings among members, host festivals and introduce Japanese culture through many cultural events.

### **JETAA Singapore's Activities**

The first JET participants from Singapore were recruited in 1999. Since then, 345 people have participated in the JET Programme as of 2017 and many of them joined JETAA Singapore after their appointments in Japan.

Since its establishment in 2009, JETAA Singapore has expanded the scope of its activities year by year, and is organizing various activities in collaboration with J.CLAIR Singapore and the Embassy of Japan in Singapore.

Specifically, JETAA Singapore organizes opportunities for exchange such as New Year's party, cherry-blossom viewing, mid-autumn festival gathering and exchange meetings between members and related persons of Japanese companies. In addition, they hold an orientation and send-off party every year for new JET recruits who will soon be leaving for their new assignments in Japan.

Furthermore, in order to raise awareness of the JET Programme, JETAA Singapore conducts publicity activities at several universities in Singapore and at the Japanese Association's Summer Festival which is

visited by many local residents.



*JET Programme Publicity Event  
at Japan Creative Center*

In order to promote exchange between Singapore and Japan, JETAA Singapore holds Yukata workshops and Japanese cooking classes etc. to introduce Japanese culture. The association also provided booth support for Japanese municipalities at the travel fairs which are held every year in Singapore.

Among the various efforts of the Singapore chapter, the mentor system is particularly unique.

One JETAA member is assigned to support each new JET recruit, to give advice on things such as living in Japan, advance preparation for their assignments etc.

Even after the new recruits have left for Japan, the mentors keep in touch with them so as to offer prompt support as and when necessary during their stay in Japan.

It can be said that this strong support system plays a big part in maintaining the emotional well-being of JET participants and thus helps them to do their work better.

### **Establishment of JETAA in the Philippines and Indonesia**

The Philippines has been recognized as an English-speaking country of the JET Programme since 2016, and many ALTs from the country are expected to participate in the future.

Indonesia has been experiencing remarkable economic growth in recent years. With its living standards rising rapidly especially in urban areas, the country is garnering much attention as a potential market for promoting economic activities. Local governments in Japan are focusing on attracting Indonesian tourists to Japan and thus, the need for



Indonesian CIRs is also expected to increase.

While there is a strong inclination to raise the number of JET participants in both countries, there are currently only a few former JET participants. However, based on the idea of “Think Big, Start Small,” CLAIR will still support the establishment of JETAA chapters in these countries so as to enable returning participants to act as linkages to promote ties between Japanese local regions and their respective countries.

**►Establishment of JETAA in the Philippines**

In October 2017, a welcome-back party was held for former ALTs who formed the first batch of returning JET participants from the Philippines since the country was recognized as an English-speaking area of the JET Programme.

This party also served as a ceremony for the future establishment of JETAA in the Philippines in collaboration with the returning JET participants, the Embassy of Japan in the Philippines and CLAIR.

**►Establishment of JETAA in Indonesia**

Since 2018 will be the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Indonesia, it was decided, after consultation with the Embassy of Japan in Indonesia and former JET participants, that JETAA shall be established in

Indonesia in the same year as a symbol of the bonds between the two countries.

3 former CIRs from Surabaya who were employed in Kochi City have long been actively involved in various programmes in the Surabaya Yosakoi Festival which is held every year in Surabaya. Thus, the foundation for JETAA’s activities in Indonesia is already set and the official establishment of the chapter is expected to further enhance members’ activities.



*Former JET CIRs from Surabaya*



*JET Super Fair ~A WelcomeBack Party in Singapore~*

Voices from JETs

~3 Years in a Nutshell...or as Much of a Nutshell as it Gets~

400 words to talk about 3 years of my life. I'd say, it's impossible to put every experience of my amazing life in Toyama and Japan into this tiny blurb.

From dancing Nihon Buyo (one of Japanese traditional dances) in a summer festival at a portside town to playing the Koto (a music instrument) at a local Starbucks while wearing a sari. From becoming a co-teacher in charge of my school's tea ceremony club to giving an hour long lecture in Japanese about the importance of accepting and appreciating diversity. Appearing on a local TV show, wearing the sari (again) and teaching people how to make Pandan flavored agar agar jelly and then talking about Tamil. Teaching drama skills to my special needs students and making the most amazing movies with them and being able to keep in touch with some of them to this day. Attending a translation course by a beautiful lake with a high fever and no voice. Volunteering at an English conversation club for older ladies. Getting about 20 plus Kimonos from various obaa-chans (old ladies) who had too many Kimonos to keep in the house. Gaining a set of Japanese parents who'd visit Singapore almost every year from almost 30 years ago and a sister figure in a Japanese teacher of English who lived down the road from me. Meeting a LOVELY wacky group of JETs, from all over the world, who would come to my rescue in a flash.

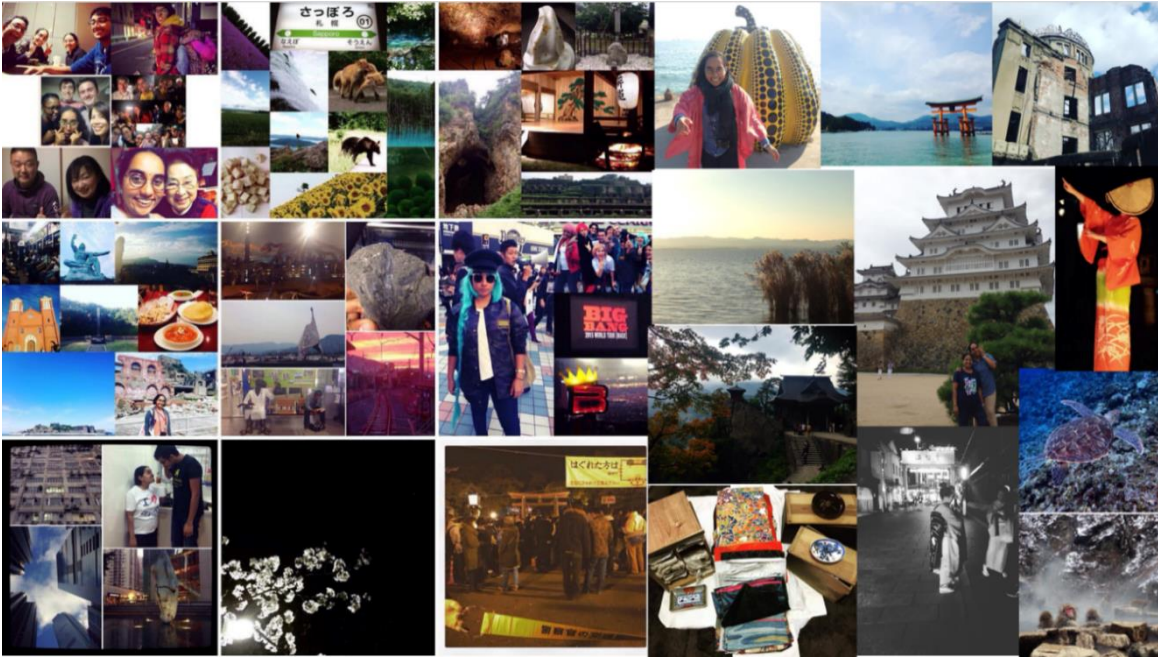
Experiencing births, marriages and deaths. Travelling to the oddest places where I've hitch-hiked, camped out in a tent without bathing for several days, slept in a car, scuba dived with turtles, experienced history and almost got chased by a bear...Climbing a mountain on my last day in Toyama and making it back to the bus with just 10 minutes to spare!

I have done SO much...and people always say that X amount of years ended in the blink of an eye. But for me, I feel like I crammed an eternity of experiences into those short 3 years. I made priceless friends, who I wouldn't trade for the world. Back in Singapore, I now work for the Singapore Repertory Theatre. They say all the world's a stage and indeed I feel like I could put the world on a stage now. So, thank you Japan for opening my eyes, heart and mind. Thank you, Toyama, for being a home and giving me all the love in the world.

\*\*\*Profile\*\*\*\*\*

- Name: A Yagnya
Country: Singapore
Time in Japan: 2014-2017
Placement: Toyama City, Toyama Prefecture
Position: ALT

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## *Holding of the Local Administration Seminar in Hanoi, Vietnam*

With the aim to further enhance international cooperation between Japan and ASEAN countries in the field of local administration, Japan's Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) has been conducting the "Local Administration Seminar" in various countries across Asia since its inception in 1999. Targeted at management-level local government officials, these seminars are often held in collaboration with the respective Ministry of Home Affairs in these countries, and this year, the seminar was held over a period of 2 days on 14 and 15 September in the Vietnamese capital, Hanoi. This was the 4<sup>th</sup> time for the local administration seminar to be hosted in Hanoi, where it was also previously held in 1999, 2006 and 2012.

The event was graced by several distinguished guests from both Japan and Vietnam, including Dr. Tran Anh Tuan, Vice-Minister of Vietnam's Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), Mr. Katsuro Nagai, Minister of the Embassy of Japan in Vietnam and Ms. Nozomi Iwama, Senior Representative of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Vietnam Office. The seminar provided a platform for all guests and participants to conduct a lively exchange of opinions on the current situation and challenges faced by Japan and Vietnam in terms of local administration, and everyone was able to gain a deeper understanding of the administrative systems and actual circumstances in both countries, which also helped to facilitate the network building among participants.

After the opening ceremony, the seminar kicked-off with a keynote speech from Mr. Takeshi Miyaji, Director-General for Policy Coordination in the Minister's Secretariat of MIC. Titled "Measures Taken to Strengthen the Framework of Local Communities in Japan", Mr. Miyaji gave an overview on the structure and duties of local governments in Japan, as well as a brief history of Japan's municipal mergers and its post-merger conditions.

This was followed by a keynote speech from Mr. Phan Van Hung, Director-General of the Local Government Department of MOHA, who spoke on the subject of Vietnam's overall local government system

and new regulations stated in the Law on the Organization of Local Governments. In his address, Mr. Hung first explained about the respective powers, functions and organizational structure of Vietnam's local government, including the People's Council and People's Committee, before moving on to touch on Vietnam's new law addition of setting up, breaking down, merging and dividing administrative boundaries etc.



*The Vietnamese Keynote Speech*

In addition to the keynote speeches, speakers from both Japanese and Vietnamese local governments and related organizations were also invited to share their thoughts and experiences on local administration at the seminar. Representing Japan were Mr. Tomoyuki Ago, Director of Municipal Affairs Division of Shimane Prefectural Government, as well as Mr. Yukimitsu Isekawa, Executive Director of the International Affairs Department of Fukuoka City Government, who each gave presentations on "Municipal Merger in Shimane Prefecture" and "Fukuoka City – To Become the Leading City in Asia" respectively. There were many detailed questions raised by the floor during the question-and-answer session of the Japanese presentations, which provided hints to some of the issues faced by local governments in Vietnam today and indicates their strong interest to wish to learn from Japan's experience in this area. With regards to the case study by Shimane Prefecture, the Vietnamese participants were interested to know if the decision and authority of the merger lies with the central or local governments; while in terms of urban

management of bigger cities such as Fukuoka City, many were keen to learn more about its budget and human resources management, putting forward questions such as, “Is the city allowed to raise the salaries of its staff in an event of a budget surplus?”, or “Do local governments in Japan have the authority to reduce their staff strength by themselves?”



*Case Study Presentation by Fukuoka City*

On top of the Japanese speakers, about 10 representatives from various local governments and

related organizations in Vietnam were also invited to speak at the seminar, where they each shared more about some of the latest initiatives that Vietnamese local governments are undertaking, as well as raised some of the challenges faced in Vietnam’s local administration such as the lack of a clear division of roles between the central and local governments. Facilitated by MOHA, including Mr. Tran Luu Trung, Acting Director-General of the International Cooperation Department of MOHA, many of the local participants listened earnestly to these presentations as it also provided them an opportunity to assess how their own local governments were measuring up to the rest.

Vietnam’s local administration system is presently going through a transition or “catch-up” phase, and the pace of its administrative reform can be expected to progress at a firm and swift manner. Going forward, J.CLAIR Singapore would continue to pay close attention to the shifting trends in Vietnam’s local administration scene and conduct more studies on the topic, while supporting further exchanges between Japan and Vietnam.



*Group Photo*



## *Specialist Dispatch Project on Market Management in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*

From 2 to 5 October 2017, J.CLAIR Singapore implemented the Specialist Dispatch Project in collaboration with Kuala Lumpur City Hall. Under the Specialist Dispatch Project, Japanese local government employees with professional knowledge or technical skills are dispatched to local governments in the ASEAN region and India so as to leverage the quality of administration as well as capacity building in those areas, in addition to strengthening the cooperative ties between Japanese and overseas local governments.



*A Scene from the Lecture*

Kuala Lumpur City Hall is currently redesigning and redeveloping the local markets, and in the process, the city hall is facing issues including those related to sanitation and product quality management. Based on Kuala Lumpur City Hall's request, a specialist from Japan's Kyoto Prefectural Government was dispatched so as to provide the relevant trainings. In this respect, trainings on infrastructural aspects such as the master planning and zoning of markets, as well as trainings on the quality management and benchmarking of products were conducted during the dispatch period.

The main highlights of the program are a series of lectures conducted by the specialist from Japan. Before delivering the lectures, the specialist had the opportunity to visit several local markets in Kuala Lumpur and gained the necessary local information to provide a local perspective to the participants. The lectures showcased contents such as the incorporation of a cold chain for leveraging the management of

temperatures, sanitation and quality of products. In addition, topics including the streamlining of shipment logistics, maintaining low temperatures at storage facilities as well as the standard operating procedures using Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) were also explained. A case study on the "Kyoto Vegetable Festival", which is conducted to revitalize the local markets in Kyoto was also featured as a reference for the local participants.



*Site Visit at Pasar Borong Kuala Lumpur*

Through the site visits as well as questions received from the locals, it was felt that there is a need to change the mindsets of all parties involved with market management. The specialist commented that "It is important for all relevant parties to follow the rules, and share a common goal to solve problems together so as to provide products that are safe and fresh to the consumers, and from there gain a competitive edge over other local markets".

In addition, the specialist also stressed the importance of establishing quality infrastructures for better services. To become a "market chosen by the consumers", it is important to have in place an integrated approach in the cooperation system among all parties related to the operation and management of markets.

It is hoped that the Specialist Dispatch Project can continue to contribute to local governments in the ASEAN region as well as India through the transfer of knowledge and experience from Japan.

## *Japanese Traditional Art, Yokagura Performance in Singapore!*

Do you know the Japanese traditional performing art called “Kagura”?

Kagura is designated as an important intangible folk cultural property in Japan, and performers do a dance to music in order to express their gratitude for this year's harvest and wish for a bountiful harvest in the next year. Each performance is in the motif of ancient myths which are related to Japanese nation-building, and many mythical Gods appear in these stories.

Takachiho Yokagura in Miyazaki Prefecture is held every year between November and February, and is performed through the night at each village. Because the performances take place in the night, it is usually called "Yokagura" which means “Night Kagura”.The performers and players of flutes and drums are all residents from the local area. Every year, they perform at a different venue chosen by rotation, in places like residents' homes and local community halls. Since the steps and music of the dance have been handed down from person to person, one of the features of Takachiho Yokagura is the presence of slight regional differences.

This year, J.CLAIR Singapore invited Takachiho Yokagura from Miyazaki Prefecture, Japan, in order to introduce this traditional Japanese culture to Singaporeans. They gave 3 performances - at the Japanese Cultural Festival organized by the Japanese Cultural Society, Singapore; at Isetan Scotts, a Japanese department store, on 16 September; as well as at Our Tampines Hub, a local community center on 17 September.

In conjunction with the performances, we distributed sightseeing brochures at each venue. We also carried out activities promoting Miyazaki's local produce at Isetan Scotts, as the ‘Autumn Kyushu Fair’ was held at the same time, and the collaboration between these 2 events produced increased hype.

Even though Kagura is based on Japanese myths which Singaporeans are not familiar with and so may have difficulties understanding the stories of the performances, surprisingly, a larger than expected crowd gathered to see the performances at each venue. Members of the audience expressed their thoughts on the performances to us, such as “I want to go to Miyazaki and see authentic Yokagura”.

Takachiho Yokagura is a traditional art which has been handed down from generation to generation among ordinary residents in the local areas. In this artform, the love that they have for their hometown can also be felt. Through this event, J.CLAIR Singapore hopes that many people in Singapore managed to gain an understanding of Japanese traditional cultures.

On a final note, this event was carried out in cooperation with many organizations such as Miyazaki Prefecture, Takachiho Town, the Japan Foundation, the Japanese Cultural Society, Singapore, and the People's Association. J.CLAIR Singapore will actively cooperate with each related organization to further spread and promote Japanese traditional arts in the future.



*A Crowd of Spectators in Front of Isetan Scotts*



*The Performance that Fascinated the Audience*



## Local Government Exchange and Cooperation Seminar

~CLAIR invites overseas local government officials from ASEAN and India to Japan to discuss and exchange information on the current situation and various issues of local administration facing local governments in both Japan and their home countries~

~Message from a 2017 participant, Atty. Mildred Joy Que,

*Mayor of Municipal Government of Dulag, Leyte, Republic of the Philippines~*



*The writer (standing, 5th from left in green) pictured with the group of participants and members of staff*

In early October, I flew to Japan to attend the 2017 CLAIR Local Government Exchange and Cooperation Seminar, themed: “Efforts Towards a Low-Carbon Society” Policies of Kitakyushu City. In Tokyo, the program included lectures on Japan’s framework of government, and site visits to places like the National Diet Building. In between the scheduled program, the group of participants bonded over sharing stories about our experiences working in local governments, compared implementation policies and talked about our personal lives.

The next day, we flew to Kitakyushu City, the host local authority for this year’s seminar. The visit to the Kitakyushu Environment Museum was an eye-opener. Thoughts raced through my mind on the choice between economy and environment. At what prize is industrialization being implemented? Is the environment worth sacrificing for modernization? Is prosperity the end-goal? Kitakyushu’s hard-earned lessons to tackle environmental problems and overcome severe pollution brought the answers to these queries. One cannot simply ignore the

environment. Try counting your money while breathing black smoke, would you survive? For emerging economies where we all came from, it was an important lesson to remember that our earth was not inherited from our forefathers; rather, it is borrowed from our children. Therefore, it is equally important to consider the environment as a valuable asset that we will bequeath to our children.

On the next day, the group was given a presentation on Industry Development and Pollution Control, which also touched on Kitakyushu’s international environmental cooperation and business. From the presentation, one can appreciate the need for international cooperation to this global concern. For the air that we breathe, the water that we drink and the soil that we plant on - these are all interconnected in the realm of things. We may be diverse but we should be unified in purpose to protect our only home – EARTH.

The visit to Kitakyushu’s Ecotown, Next Generation Energy Park and Toto Museum was a living testament that sustainable development is possible. The innovative efforts of capitalizing on waste and harnessing renewable energy were indications that we can meet our current needs without comprising the future’s ability to meet their own needs. These programs should indeed be replicated around the world.

The Opinion Exchange Session further bolstered the need for international cooperation on environmental concerns. To our minds, the City of Kitakyushu showed the way to balance economic activities without sacrificing the environment. They also proved that waste management is an overlooked industry that promises potential earnings. It also made us realize that mother earth can satisfy man’s needs but not

man's greed. The group, in their own little way, commits to implement measures that will address these environmental concerns in their own localities.

As we bid our farewells to each other in Tokyo on a rainy afternoon, we felt that in just 5 days, our group became a family – a family deeply committed to protecting our only home - planet EARTH. After all, as a family of global citizens, unified in diversity, we all agreed that there is no planet B. Japan, particularly

Kitakyushu, gave the framework from which we draw our inspiration. Coupled with political will and the awareness that there is no rewind and no replay, we must therefore begin the herculean task to save our only home – right here, right now!

(The article published here is an extract of the original piece by the writer)

## ◆Travel Fairs in ASEAN countries

*~To promote travel to Japan and gather information about Japan tourism,  
J.CLAIR Singapore actively participates in Travel Fairs held in ASEAN countries~*

### 1. Outline of the Travel Fair

Organized by the National Association of Travel Agents Singapore (NATAS), “NATAS Travel Fair 2017”, one of the largest travel fairs in Singapore, was held at Suntec Singapore over 3 days from 11 to 13 August.

J. CLAIR Singapore staff and JETAA Singapore members helped promote travel to Japan at the Japan Pavilion set up by JNTO at the fair.



### 2. Which are the most popular destinations in Japan for Singaporeans?

At the Japan Pavilion, visitors were asked to put stickers on a Japan map to indicate places where they hope to visit next time. Below are some of the most popular destinations.

Ranking	Destination	Travel Interests
1st	Kansai	The advantage of the area is that people can enjoy the cultural aspects of Osaka, rich history of Kyoto, and vibrancy of a port city (Kobe) all at one time because they are located closely to each other.
2nd	Hokkaido	Many look forward to enjoying winter sports as well as seeing snow during their winter trips.
3rd	Tokyo	Tokyo remains very popular for first-time visitors.
4th	Kyushu	People are drawn to attractions offered here that are impossible to experience in Singapore, such as Onsen (hot springs) or local foods.
5th	Okinawa	Okinawa is promoted as the “part of Japan which is located nearest to Singapore.”

### 3. What does the future hold for tourism to Japan in the Singaporean market?

The number of Singaporeans who visit Japan is steadily increasing each year. Marked by characteristics of a large number of individual and repeated travelers, more Singaporeans are seeking for an exclusive travel experience in Japan through experience-based tourism and so on. With market needs expecting to become more segmentalized and intensified going forward, J.CLAIR Singapore would like to further promote various local attractions of Japan more than before.



## ◆Do you know Japanese Local Foods ?

~In Japan, each local area has its own local food that cannot be found in other areas. We will introduce a few of them here~

### *“Oyama Udon” of Oyama City, Tochigi Prefecture*

Oyama City of Tochigi Prefecture is located 60 km north of Tokyo, and the city is blessed with an abundance of natural sceneries. From the famous Watarase Reservoir located here in Oyama City, you can enjoy the spectacular sceneries of a vast beautiful landscape that changes with the four seasons.

The Omoigawa River that flows through the city center creates fertile land and local people grow rice, vegetables as well as strawberries that have become signature local specialties. In fact, Oyama City is one of the leading producers of wheat in Japan, growing mainly malted wheat and pearled wheat. Malted wheat is used as an ingredient to produce beer and pearled wheat is used in blended tea and cosmetics.

Oyama City is also famous for its signature “Oyama Udon” (Udon is a type of Japanese traditional noodle) , which is made of locally produced wheat named

"Iwainodaichi" (land of blessing). The Oyama Udon Festival is held every October and local restaurants offer delicious Oyama Udon to many people. Well-known for its chewy and smooth texture, Oyama Udon is normally served with hot soup as well as vegetable tempura.

As it is just a 42-minutes ride by bullet train from Tokyo to Oyama City, please do visit the city and enjoy the amazingly delicious Oyama Udon.



### *The exquisite “Miyazaki Jidori” of Miyazaki City, Miyazaki Prefecture*

Miyazaki is located in the Kyushu region, which is the southern part of Japan. The locality is blessed with enchanting blue seas and skies, captivating flowers, lush greeneries, rich nature and temperate climate throughout the year. You can also enjoy marine sports, trekking and golf here in Miyazaki.



One of the major attractions of Miyazaki is the fresh and high quality vegetables, meat, fish and other uniquely delicious foods available here. In fact, specialty food products from Miyazaki, such as Miyazaki Beef and Miyazaki Mango are quite popular overseas.

Among the local foods in Miyazaki, the most recommended one is Miyazaki's local chicken, called

"Miyazaki Jidori" in Japanese, of which Miyazaki is the top producer in Japan. Miyazaki Jidori is tender as well as juicy, and it tastes even more delicious when grilled. Miyazaki Jidori could be consumed as sashimi, as it has no smell. The charcoal-grilled version and the *nanban*-style with sour sauce version are the 2 most popular ways of enjoying the Miyazaki Jidori locally. It is a pity that these delicacies are not exported overseas yet.

Please savour the authentic Miyazaki Jidori if you visit Miyazaki in the future. You will surely be charmed.

