

Sekai wa Hitotsu

Gifu International Center (GIC)

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Celebrating 35 years of the Friendship Partnership between Gifu Prefecture and Jiangxi Province, China

Gifu Prefecture and China's Jiangxi Province entered into a friendship partnership in 1988. Since then, the two regions have promoted exchange in a wide range of fields, including culture, youth, and agriculture and forestry.

As 2023 marked the special occasion of the 35th anniversary, in October a delegation from Jiangxi, including Director Wu Hao of the Jiangxi Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China, visited Gifu. The delegates met with Governor Furuta of Gifu at the Prefectural Office and confirmed that they would like to continue to promote cooperation and exchange in various fields in the future.

In addition, to celebrate the 35th anniversary, concerts and other events were performed by the Jiangxi Art Troupe, who visited Japan from China.



Commemorative concert

The concert celebrated the friendship between Gifu and Jiangxi in a spectacular way, with a traditional Chinese bamboo flute and lute (pipa) performance by the Jiangxi Art Troupe, a local theatre presentation from Jiangxi Province, a musical performance by the Asahi University Wind Orchestra, and a joint performance between the Nagara High School chorus and the Jiangxi Art Troupe of the Chinese folk song "Mo Li Hua", which means "jasmine flower".

● Gifu Prefectural Office

Date: Wednesday 24th October 2023

Venue: Minamo Hall, 1F, Gifu Prefectural Office

● Asahi University

Date: Thursday 26th October 2023

Venue: Lecture Room 513, 1F, Building 5, Asahi University



Photo exhibition introducing Jiangxi Province

35 photos were displayed to introduce the rich nature, culture, and industry of Jiangxi Province.

Exhibition period: Wednesday 25th October to
Tuesday 7th November 2023

Venue: Seiryu Lobby, 20F, Gifu Prefectural Office

Organized and sponsored by Gifu Prefecture and Jiangxi Province
Supported by the Gifu International Center



New Year's customs from around the world

In Japan, the new year is in January, and Japanese customs include: Hatsumode (the first shrine visit of the year), Nengajo (New Year's greetings cards), Otoshidama (New Year's gift, which is often money), and Kagami-mochi (a special mochi dessert with an orange on top). How did you spend the New Year's holiday?

Many East Asian countries, such as China, celebrate the Lunar New Year. Lunar New Year is based on the lunisolar calendar, rather than the Gregorian calendar, and each year the date of the Lunar New Year changes. This year, it's on February 10th. In East Asia the new year (whether it be on January 1st or the Lunar New Year) is usually celebrated as one of the main holidays of the year. However, there are fewer traditional New Year's customs in many western countries, because Christmas is largely celebrated as the main holiday of the year instead.

We are going to share how people celebrate the new year in different countries around the world! Many New Year's customs, including Japan's, include wishing for, or trying to bring about good luck for the coming year.

~ Countries that celebrate the New Year on January 1st ~

Cuba



In the Central American country Cuba, at midnight on January 1st it is customary to eat 12 grapes. Each grape represents one month of the year, and you make a wish for each grape. Also, if you want to travel in the new year, you walk around the block carrying an empty suitcase. This custom is also followed in other Latin American countries such as Colombia and Mexico. Another custom in Cuba is wearing yellow underwear for New Year's, which is thought to bring good fortune, luck and wealth.

Greece



In Greece, a cake called Vasilopita is eaten on New Year's Day. When making this cake, a coin is mixed in with the cake ingredients, and so one person will end up with a slice of cake with the coin in it. It is said that this person will be blessed with good luck for the new year. In addition, a pomegranate is used to decorate the house for New Year's. This is because since Ancient Greek times the pomegranate has been a symbol of prosperity and good fortune. When the new year begins, the pomegranate is smashed outside the house, and the more the seeds scatter, the more good luck the new year will bring.

Austria and Germany



Austria and Germany are neighboring countries, with the German language spoken in both and some similar traditions and customs. In both countries, melted lead is used to predict the future in the new year. Lead has recently been prohibited due to its toxicity, and so tin or wax can be used instead. After melting the material, it is poured into cold water. It will then turn into a solid and the shape formed is used to tell the fortune of the new year.

Additional customs

In multiple western countries, including the UK and the USA, New Year's Resolutions are made as goals for the new year. Often resolutions are related to health, for example, a goal to start going to the gym. All over the world, countdown events and parties are a popular way to ring in the new year. As with resolutions, the UK and the USA, among other countries, also have a shared custom of kissing someone when the clock strikes midnight on New Year's Eve.

~ Countries that celebrate the Lunar New Year ~

Vietnam



In Vietnamese, the Lunar New Year is called "Tết". To celebrate, Vietnamese people decorate their house with flowers. Before the holiday begins, flower markets are opened throughout the country. In southern Vietnam, subtly fragrant, yellow "hoa mai" (apricot flowers) are used, while in northern Vietnam "hoa dao" (peach flowers) with slightly thicker, deep pink petals are used.

If you want to know more about Tết, check out GIC's CIR blog using this QR code!



China



In Chinese, the Lunar New Year, also known as the Spring Festival, is "Chūn Jié". During the Spring Festival, Chinese people use Chunlian couplets to decorate the entrance to their home. Chunlian have wishes written on them, for example for prosperity in business ventures and for the health of family members. On the morning of the new year, firecrackers are set off because their sound is said to ward off evil and bring good omens. Speaking of which, in many western countries, firework displays are a common way to celebrate the new year. In China, red clothes are worn during the Spring Festival as it is said that wearing red clothes brings good fortune.

Information for foreign residents who own or plan to own a car in Japan

Owning a car is very useful as a means of transportation and for daily activities such as shopping. For this reason, many foreign residents are thinking about buying a car. Let's take a look at some things you need to be aware of as a car owner in Japan.



1 A driver's license is required

To drive a car in Japan, you must have a Japanese driver's license.

(1) If you have a driver's license from your home country, you can convert it into a Japanese license by carrying out the necessary procedures. For more details regarding application conditions and required documents, etc., please refer to the multilingual version of the Gifu Prefectural Police Headquarters website. (<https://www.pref.gifu.lg.jp/site/police/100122.html>)



(2) If you do not have a driver's license from your home country, you can use one of the two methods listed below to obtain a Japanese driver's license.

- ① Take and pass the written test and practical test at the Police Headquarters Driver's License Test Site (Driver's License Center).
- ② Attend driving school and obtain your driver's license.

In Gifu Prefecture, the written test can be taken in English, Portuguese and Chinese (as of December 2023). Never lend your car to someone who does not have a Japanese driver's license.

2 Vehicle Inspection (Shaken)

The motor vehicle inspection and registration system tests whether the vehicle in question is in a safe condition to drive. For new vehicles, the first inspection is carried out in the 3rd year after its purchase, and then subsequently every 2 years. Vehicle inspection is stipulated in the Road Transport Vehicle Law and must be carried out for the vehicle to be road legal. Inspections can be carried out at various locations such as car dealerships and gas stations.

3 Automobile Insurance

Automobile insurance covers any damage caused in the event of a traffic accident or other problems when driving. There are two types of insurance: mandatory vehicle liability insurance and voluntary additional insurance. By law, you are obligated to take out mandatory vehicle liability insurance, which only covers the victim of a traffic accident. It does not cover damage to your or the other party's vehicle, nor does it cover your own injuries. For more comprehensive coverage, you will need to take out voluntary insurance too, which you can purchase online, at a car dealership, etc. If you want to borrow someone else's car, e.g. a friend's, you can purchase a one-day insurance policy.

4 Automobile Tax

Automobile tax rates are determined based on the engine size, model year, etc. of the vehicle. Around May every year a tax notice will be sent to the address of the person registered as the vehicle's owner. Make sure to pay your automobile tax by the deadline, as if you fail to do so, you won't be able to get your vehicle inspection. If you cannot pay all the tax in one lump sum payment, you can apply to pay it in installments by consulting with your local prefectural tax office or with the relevant municipal department. If you fail to pay the automobile tax before the deadline or pay it in installments, you may be required to pay late payment charges.

Please also be aware that there have been many cases where people did not receive the tax notice because they forgot to change their address when they moved house.

5 Registering as the vehicle owner (transferring registration)

If you buy a secondhand vehicle, you need to register as its owner. If you purchase a secondhand vehicle from its owner privately, (e.g. no car dealership or intermediary involved) using it without changing the registered owner is illegal and you could be fined. Additionally, notices related to traffic violations or tax notices will continue to be sent to the address of the previous owner. It will also be difficult to buy voluntary insurance and if you want to sell the car in the future, you won't be able to do so. In short, you must register yourself as the new owner of the car.

6 The two main categories of vehicles in Japan: yellow plates and white plates

In Japan, family cars for household use are divided into two main types using the color of their license plate. Yellow plate cars, also called "Kei cars" are smaller and have smaller engines. White plate cars are standard-sized, ordinary vehicles and so are larger than yellow plate/ Kei cars. Generally, automobile tax and insurance premiums are cheaper for Kei cars than for ordinary cars. If you buy an ordinary vehicle (not a Kei car) you will need to make sure you have a storage place for it, and apply for a Parking Place Certificate (Shako Shomei). In some areas, (Gifu city, Kakamigahara, Ogaki, and Tajimi) you will also need to apply for a Parking Place Certificate when buying a Kei car.

7 What to do in the event of a traffic accident

If you are involved in a traffic collision or accident, immediately stop your vehicle in a safe place. Check whether you, or any other person involved in the accident is injured, and if necessary, call the emergency services at 119 for an ambulance. After this, contact the police using the phone number 110, and accurately inform an officer what happened.

Life with a car is more convenient, so when driving let's all be responsible, abide by traffic rules, and drive safely.

Did you know...

You can choose your license plate number, as long as it is 4 digits or less (Preferred Number Plate System). You can apply at the Gifu Automobile Business Association (Preferred Number Plate Registration Center) counter, (<http://www.aba-gifu.or.jp/>) or via the National Automobile License Plate Council's website. (https://www.n-p.or.jp/hope_number.html)

Close up!

Introducing groups
operating in Gifu

Gifu World Youth Association

Established in March 1982, this year marks the 42nd anniversary of Gifu World Youth (GWY). Their activities include: youth training conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, JICA, and JICE; Japanese language programs for university students from Hong Kong; and other human resource and local community development in partnership with national and international industry, government and academia. In 2022, at an event to commemorate GWY's 40th anniversary, Makio Miyagawa, the former Japanese Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Malaysia gave the keynote speech "International Projects and the Future of International Exchange" which covered topics ranging from the global political upheaval (the new era of conflicts) to the recent situation in Ukraine and its impact on international relations. Additionally, members reflected on their previous activities and pledged to further development in the future.

Since its establishment, GWY has engaged in international exchange with countries all over the world, not only in Europe and North America, but also in Asia, the Pacific region, Central and South America, and Africa. GWY has organized many exchange activities such as involvement in the Seino (region in Gifu) and Kent (county in the UK) Youth Exchange Program, an education seminar with the Malaysian Ministry of Education, a Japanese language training program with UOW College Hong Kong, and performances at junior high and high schools by specialists in the fields of music and the arts from around the world.

Additionally, a Multicultural Forum with foreign residents of Gifu Prefecture is held twice per year. In December, Gifu Prefectural Coordinators for International Relations and exchange students from various countries presented about festivals from around the world, followed by enthusiastic group discussions between the presenters and attendees.

In cooperation with other organizations involved in international exchange, GWY strives to carry out a wide range of projects, including company visits, interpreting, translating, homestays and introductions to Japanese culture. GWY also provides overseas information using their website and online exchanges.



40th anniversary special lecture event



Summer Japanese language training program for university students from Hong Kong



Presenters at the Multicultural Forum



Commemorative photo with homestay family

We want to hear your thoughts about "Sekai Wa Hitotsu" !

Thank you for reading "Sekai Wa Hitotsu".

Here at the Gifu International Center we publish our newsletter, "Sekai Wa Hitotsu" three times per year, (February, July and November) in Japanese, English, Portuguese, Tagalog, Chinese, and Vietnamese, with the aim of promoting international exchange and a multicultural society.

We have created a questionnaire for readers so that we can improve our newsletter.

Please use the QR code on the right to complete the questionnaire.

The questionnaire is available in Japanese, English, Portuguese, Tagalog, Chinese and Vietnamese.



Please complete the questionnaire by Sunday 31st March 2024

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