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## Minamiboso city, Chiba Prefecture, “Shirahama Ama Festival” monitor tour for foreigners.

Date: July 20 and 21, 2014 a two-day one night trip

“Shirahama Ama Festival” is a valuable festival that introduces Japanese Ama (female divers) culture. As it marks its 50th anniversary this year, Minamiboso city asked IAC to help them organize a monitor tour to promote tourism and plan a strategy on how to send information of the city to the people living abroad. Since we at IAC think that “experiencing old Japanese culture that remains in our rural area enhances mutual understanding between Japan and other countries,” we decided to collaborate with Minamiboso city and advertised the tour to foreign people mainly through the embassies.

The number of people who participated in the tour was 27 (including 4 children). They were well represented from various parts of the world. Georgia, Spain, Romania of Europe, Zimbabwe, Madagascar of Africa, USA, Ecuador, Peru of the Americas, Israel of Middle East, and India, Korea, China of Asia.

The highlight of the Ama Festival is “Ama no Yaei” (Ama’s night time swimming), in which Ama wearing white garments and bearing bamboo torches swim in the sea at night. Before the event, Ama were having their final rehearsal during the day on July 20th. Tour participants, who wanted to experience Ama swimming, joined them in the rehearsal. They were very impressed by the techniques of Ama. They said, “Holding onto a floating pail and swimming with a torch in the other hand seemed easy, but once we tried it, we realized it was very difficult.”

It was somewhat of a pleasant surprise when the participants really enjoyed the “Yukata (casual summer kimono) experience” we had organized for women. They seemed to have understood the Japanese women’s idea of dressing up, choosing a Yukata by its color and pattern, then picking up the matching Obi and matching thong of Geta (wooden clog). They went to the festival wearing Yukatas and enjoyed watching the Mikoshi (portable shrines), a Japanese drum show, the dance of Ryu-jin (dragon god), “Ama no Yaei” (the climax of the festival), and as a finale, the fireworks. Despite all the activities, Yukatas never got

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## Welcome to Sakai!

I very much hope that this article will make both those who are hearing of Sakai for the first time and those who have visited us before, more interested in Sakai.

Among Japanese cities, Sakai is particularly rich in history and tradition. In the 5th century Nintoku-tenno-ryo Kofun, one of the world’s largest tombs, was constructed in the area. The city is working towards having the Mozu Kofungun Ancient Tumulus Cluster, of which Nintoku-tenno-ryo is a part, inscribed on the UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites together with the Furuichi Kofungun Ancient Tumulus Cluster in Habikino City and Fujiidera City.

During the middle ages, known as Sakai’s “Golden Era”, Sakai developed as one of Japan’s most important hubs for “Namban trade”, i.e. trade with the Portuguese and Spanish. The city prospered from overseas trade and in the midst of the chaos of the Period of the Warring States, Sakai’s peaceful rule by a council of its own merchants led to it being known as the Venice of the East, and its wealth spurred the development of tea ceremony and other refined culture.

On top of its wealth of history and tradition, Sakai is at heart a manufacturing city. The city is famed for its traditional industries, not least its handmade knives, said to be used by some ninety percent of professional chefs in Japan. Furthermore, in recent years Sakai’s waterfront area has played host to a growing collection of companies boasting world-class

loose thanks to the professional kimono dresser who helped them wear the Yukatas.

The participants appreciated the kind hospitality of Minamiboso city, and we also got several suggestions from them. Some of the feedbacks were: “I wanted to experience activities in the sea” ; “I wanted to ride sea kayaks or boats” ; “I wanted to experience something related to the local life” ; and “This is the first time I heard about Minamiboso city or Ama festival-we want more information like this for the foreigners.”

In the future, when we collaborate not only with Minamiboso city but also with other local governments, we would like to discuss in details what type of attractions we should prioritize, given the limited amount of time available to the visitors.

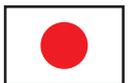
I would like to thank Community Development Producer, Mr. Nagaki Nihei, and Mr. Harunobu Otani of T-Gate, Inc. (KINKI NPPON TOURIST Group) for their guidance. This tour was not possible without their help.

I received the following words from Mr. Shoichi Iida, the executive committee chairman of Shirahama Ama Festival.

On the occasion of “the 50th Shirahama Ama Festival” , we organized this “monitor tour for foreigners” so that we can show the charm of Minamiboso city to the foreign people living in Japan. When the participants of the monitor tour in their Yukatas saw the magical Yaei (Ama swimming with torches) and fireworks in the ocean, they cheered with joy. When I saw that scene, I was very glad that I organized the tour.

This tour has been a good opportunity for us to establish better ways in receiving the tourists and promoting the city, so that many foreign tourists will visit Minamiboso city in the future. I would like to thank Mr. Harunobu Otani of T-Gate, Inc. (KINKI NPPON TOURIST Group) and IAC for their great support in organizing this tour.

(Terumi Kanaya, IAC)  
(translated by Keiko Hori, IAC)



technologies in the environmental and advanced manufacturing fields leading to the establishment of liquid crystal panel and thin-film photovoltaic panel factories, and the construction of the mega-scale Sakai Solar Power Station.

Also in Sakai is one of Japan’s largest national soccer training centres, J-GREEN Sakai, which is used by over 600,000 people every year and is increasingly popular for international personal and sports culture exchanges.

The Sakai Festival, the city’s largest event, is held every October and its vibrant parade lets city residents and visitors alike experience for themselves some of Sakai’s long and rich history. In March next year, the Sakai Plaza of Rikyu and Akiko will open its doors to the world to introduce Sen no Rikyu who perfected tea ceremony culture, and Sakai’s passionate poet, Yosano Akiko. Sakai will continue to work hard to make its historical and cultural resources better known and more accessible.

Sakai is within 30 minutes of both Kansai International Airport, gateway to Kansai, and Osaka City, home to Universal Studios Japan with its new Harry Potter attraction, making for exceptionally easy access. We are looking forward to greeting visitors from Japan and around the world to our dear city.

(Minoru Kasatani  
Director General of the Sakai City Culture and Tourism Bureau)

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## Hello, dear embassy #18 "Serbia"



## Heavy floods hit Serbia. Most serious damage in its history. It was like Tsunami of the river. Grateful for the support from Japan 100 years since World War I. Interpretation of the history varies and is complex Nikola Tesla, great scientist and genius of electricity, is the pride of Serbia Hoping for Japanese companies to launch business in Serbia Waiting for a member of the Japanese imperial family or governmental leaders to visit Serbia

The Embassy of the Republic of Serbia is located in an upscale residential area called Gotenyama, about 10 minutes walk from Shinagawa station. The building used to be the Embassy of Yugoslavia. It became the Embassy of Serbia when Yugoslavia broke up.

Ambassador Nenad Glišić came to Japan in 2013 and became the Ambassador in May 2014. He knows Tokyo very well because he used to live here when his father worked as a diplomat. After graduating from the University of Belgrade, he worked for companies in countries like Australia and Nigeria, and then became a diplomat. As a diplomat, his posts include the director of information. He also worked in Italy and China. Ambassador says, "I like economics and I follow closely the economic trends."

Earlier this year, Serbia was hit by heavy floods. I would like to offer my deepest condolences and sympathies to all those affected by the floods.

Ambassador: "Because of the severe floods which we have never experienced before, there were 27 people dead, many people missing, and numerous evacuees. There were also enormous economic damages. It was the largest natural disaster in the history of Serbia." "In a way, it resembled the Great East Japan Earthquake. The flooded Sava River was as if it was struck by Tsunami."

"The international community is supporting Serbia by holding international conference among other things. We are grateful for the support from Japan, too."

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the World War I. In Japan, as well as in Europe where it broke out, people have strong interest in the war and historians are organizing study groups and symposiums featuring World War I.

It is said that the War broke out because Serbian young man assassinated Archduke Ferdinand of Austria, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, in Sarajevo. I heard that Serbian people still regard him as a hero and built a statue of him this year, to

praise him.

Ambassador, "The young man fought for freedom. People's opinion about the young man has not changed from the Yugoslavia era. The young man unleashed his anger towards Austro-Hungarian rule. He didn't have any intension to start a war. The underlying cause of the war was the deep-rooted conflict between Germany/Austro-Hungary and England/France."

"One third of the Serbian men died in World War I. Serbia was devastated at war."

Everywhere in the world, the interpretation of history of wars always varies, and is always complicated.

Recently, the great Serbian electrical engineer, Nikola Tesla has been attracting attention. One of the reasons is the success of the American electric car manufacturer, Tesla Motors.

Ambassador: "Tesla was a genius. Thomas Edison was smart enough to use Tesla's knowledge to start many businesses and succeeded. Nowadays, we can freely use alternating current, mostly because of Tesla's work and discoveries.

Tesla is the pride of Serbia."

The Japanese people usually pay attention to Edison who made light bulbs out of bamboo from Kyoto, but apparently we should know more about Tesla, too.

To enhance exchange between the two countries, Serbia aims to attract direct investments from Japan.

Ambassador: "We concluded free trade agreements with surrounding countries and our market is expanding. We are expecting the Japanese companies to come to Serbia to launch business."

"We also hope that a member from the Japanese imperial family or governmental leaders would come to Serbia. Visits by the leaders will bring the two countries much closer."

(Yasunori Yamashita, IAC)  
(translated by Keiko Hori, IAC)



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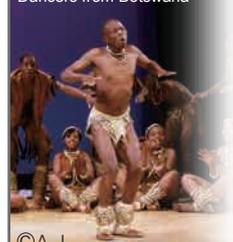
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Dancers from Botswana



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