

Yufuin Hot Spring's Rustic Hospitality

By Mizoguchi Kumpei

YUFUIN is a small valley town surrounded by mountains, and you could definitely say that it is a countryside resort. Though it is a tourist town, it does not have any big hotels to accommodate large groups of people, or any dazzling entertainment districts.

Foreign visitors first came to see this town in 1910. They grew to love Yufuin after enjoying its plentiful hot springs in a beautiful natural setting, and sampling the delicious food made from fresh local ingredients.

When the town renewal program began 30 years ago, we wanted to prevent Yufuin from going the route of many other resorts in Japan, and so we took a trip to Europe to study the resort towns there. I eventually realized the key characteris-

tics for an attractive town are “space, tranquility and nature.” Of course, the town renewal was not something I could carry out alone, but required the help of a large number of friends and colleagues. Space, tranquility and nature... the country town of Yufuin has an abundance of these qualities. Therefore, bringing the efforts of many people together, we have done our best to save and preserve the wonder of the town.

Today, the number of foreign visitors is on the rise. However, having overseas guests is not so extraordinary for Yufuin. We welcome foreign visitors in the same way as Japanese visitors. After all, the overseas travelers have also come to escape the city, and delight in Yufuin's natural beauty and warm hospitality. In addition to enjoying the town,



they want to savor cuisine made from local seasonal produce, take walks in the surrounding valley to appreciate the season, tour little art galleries and participate in small-scale events.

I think the visitors of the future will no longer have to deal with international boundaries, as we are now in the information age. Travelers can go almost anywhere to find wonderful and alluring resorts, which is why people want something different from the same old tourist spots. I believe the sightseeing of the future will be “way-of-life tourism,” where people seek to experience locals with a distinct personality. What visitors really want is the hospitality found in a comfortable way of life and abundant natural environment. If the people living in a local do not have a special way of life, then the people who visit

will not be able to sense this either. While it is already a hot spring spa, one of the goals of Yufuin is to become a “way-of-life resort.”

Yufuin is a small resort, but it offers visitors a chance to fully experience the delights of the Japanese countryside. Please visit our town during your trip in Japan. With our rustic charms that have remained unchanged for centuries, we are waiting to welcome you. **JS**

Mizoguchi Kumpei is the president of the Tamanoyu Hotel. He has been selected as one of the Charisma Ambassadors of Tourism by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport.

Yufuin: A hot spring health resort with a scent of culture

Yufuin is a spa resort with a long history that encompasses three hot spring districts in Oita Prefecture on Japan's southern island of Kyushu. While ranked as the country's second largest hot spring source by the volume of water produced, Yufuin

also captivates its visitors with natural beauty, paddy fields and its tranquil hot spring town.

Yufuin is particularly famous for its morning mists through fall and winter. The Yufuin valley that extends out from Mt. Yufu (sometimes called the “Mt. Fuji of the Bungo region”) can often be seen completely blanketed in mist. Wherever you dig in this valley, a hot spring will

bubble up, and poets and writers have favored it for centuries as a simple but very charming hot spring district.

Based on the idea that the unique charm of Yufuin lies in its natural beauty, abundant hot springs, refined culture and comfortable way of life, the local residents and government have joined together to enhance the beauty of the town. A wealth of cultural events and happenings such as

music and film festivals are also held throughout the year. In addition to numerous art galleries, there are even studios where you can experience pottery making. ■

Access:

JR Yufuin Station is the closest train station (Express buses from Fukuoka Airport or Oita Airport are available)