

# MATSUYAMA OUTLOUD, May 2024

—Voices of the WGO? Staff and Members of the Volunteer Guide Seminar—

## May Agenda

I called for a taxi reservation the other day, and 5 taxi companies one after another refused to arrange a ride for me. They gave a lack of drivers as the reason.

The Daily Yomiuri reports that there will be a severe shortage of shuttle bus drivers during the upcoming Expo 2025 Osaka. What can be done to solve this problem?

While traveling in San Francisco last August, I saw some driverless taxis passing by downtown. I couldn't believe my eyes at first. I felt as if the cab had driven straight out of a science fiction movie.

The robo-taxi company, Alphabet Inc. Waymo, got a green light to turn San Francisco into a real-life lab to test their autonomous vehicle (AV) launching the world's first AV service last year.

My son started working for a company that contributes to self-driving technology. Their solid knowledge of survey and high-precision location information makes them innovators in the field.

Since the Japanese government has set a goal to provide self-driving transportation services at more than 50 locations nationwide by 2025, his company, along with several local governments, are committed to implementing self-driving buses throughout Japan.

Currently, Shiojiri City in Nagano Prefecture is conducting a demonstration of AVs, which are equipped with high-precision three-dimensional maps that the company developed independently. Last week, he and his colleagues participated in a test drive of an autonomous bus, "Green Slow Mobility", on public roads in downtown Shiojiri. The demonstration was successful, so the general public started riding the test bus the following day.

Matsuyama City is one of the 62 areas where the government subsidizes the improvement of AV services. I can't wait to see (and ride) it in the near future. This ultra-futuristic vehicle isn't bizarre or eerie, but has to be evaluated as an intelligent alternative, I think.

If the use of this groundbreaking invention becomes widespread, our public transportation system will be safer and more convenient. Traffic accidents will definitely decrease, and the problem of labor shortage will disappear. (Miwa N.)

Here comes 'Golden Week', a series of national holidays in Japan!

With her two children, my Canadian friend is coming back to Matsuyama for the first time in five years.

This third-generation Japanese-Canadian woman, a self-employed travel adviser, was once my client. Since COVID-19 was downgraded to the same level as influenza last May, traveling to Japan has been much more plausible, especially for her.

But also for her, 2021 was the worst year. In January, she, her husband, son contracted coronavirus. The rest of her family quickly recovered, but she nearly died, and spent months bedridden in the hospital.

She was forced to relearn how to chew, drink, swallow, bathe, and even breathe. Her lungs were badly damaged by the virus and she needed an oxygen tank to breathe. I can hardly imagine how tough the road was she'd been taking.

Still, as she's on oxygen, she cannot go swimming or skiing any longer. The doctor told her to

expect recovery would take almost three years, and even then, she might not fully recover.

As an example to her children, she has tried her best and not given up, even when things looked bleak.

But she has been working hard on one of a personal goal and that is to finally return with her kids to Japan, her parents' homeland.

That's why I was excited when I read her email that she'd already booked their flights to Japan.

Of course, we will visit the temple graveyard in Dogo again, where the ashes of her grandparents, aunt and uncle are all buried.

My mission is to make all her favorite Japanese foods such as yamaimo grated yam on rice/soba noodles, renkon lotus roots, and many other Matsuyama, Uchiko and Ozu specialties.

That will be heaven!

(Kay)

There are two types of shiitake mushroom cultivation methods: log cultivation and mycorrhizal bed cultivation.

Currently, mycorrhizal bed cultivation is the most common method, as it allows for stable cultivation regardless of the season.

In log cultivation, the mushrooms are grown over a long period of time.

Last month I became the owner of two shiitake mushroom logs. The log is a branch of an oak tree about 90 cm long and about 10 cm in diameter. Straight logs free of flaws are selected. Then, they are injected with shiitake mushroom fungus.

For six months, the logs grow horizontally in a sunny forest. Afterwards, the logs are placed vertically in a well-ventilated spot out of direct sunlight.

The first harvest is made about a year and a half later. After that, the shiitake mushrooms are harvested as they mature. On average, they can be harvested for six years. The shiitake mushrooms grown on logs are said to be very tasty, aromatic, plump and crunchy.

Currently, my shiitake mushroom logs are growing in the forests of Tobe Town, labeled with my name.

I am very much looking forward to the harvest in the fall of the next year.

(Hiroko)