

PLAZA NEWSLETTER(January 2026)

2025 is ending. What kind of year has it been for you? Looking back, there were many events, but the Osaka Expo was particularly exciting. Also, Japan's first female prime minister taking office became a major topic. Attention is likely to focus even more on Japan's political developments going forward.

Regarding next year, we have an important announcement about the Plaza. From Tuesday, January 27, 2026, to Friday, March 6, 2026, the Kumamoto City International Center will be closed for electrical equipment renovation work. During this period, access to the International Center will not be possible, so in-person consultations will generally be suspended. Telephone, email, and online consultations will continue as usual. However, if you contact us in advance, we may be able to arrange consultations at an alternative location. Please inquire for details.

Thank you for reading the Plaza Newsletter throughout the year. We hope you enjoy a relaxing holiday season. We look forward to your continued support in the coming year.

Now allow us to partially introduce the consultation details found in our plaza. We received 88 consultations in November and have shared below examples of questions and answers. Some content has been edited for privacy concerns.

Q : Please tell me about the required documents and timing for the pension withdrawal lump-sum payment.

A : To receive a pension, you must have a 10-year qualifying period. Receiving a lump-sum withdrawal benefit will reset your qualifying period to zero. Please be aware of this if you may return to Japan in the future. The following three documents are required:

① A document showing your pension number, such as your Basic Pension Number Notification (a copy is acceptable)

② A copy of your passport

③ A copy of your bank passbook and cash card

To request a lump-sum withdrawal payment, download the form from the Japan Pension Service website or obtain it at a pension office. You must submit your request within two years of returning to your home country. Please complete the procedure after submitting your change-of-address notification at the city office. Withdrawal lump-sum payments are subject to income tax (20.42%). To receive an income tax refund, submit a "Tax Agent Notification Form" to the tax office before returning to your home country. After requesting the withdrawal lump-sum payment, they will send the "Notification of Decision to Pay Withdrawal Lump-Sum Payment" (this can be sent to outside Japan) approximately 4 to 5 months later. If you wish to have this notification, required to receive your income tax refund, sent to your tax representative, please attach a separate "Power of Attorney" to your withdrawal lump-sum payment request form.

Q : I want to dispose of my bicycle. Please tell me how.

A : Bicycles are considered recyclable materials and should be treated the same as empty cans and bottles. Place them at the garbage station by 8:30 AM for collection by the city's garbage truck. Please attach a label marked "Unwanted Items" in a clearly visible location. In Kumamoto City, collection is free and does not require an appointment.

Q : My wife and I came to Kumamoto for a short trip of about two weeks. During our trip, my wife had to be hospitalized urgently, so we ended up staying in Kumamoto for a while longer. This means we now need to renew our visas. What should we do?

A : According to the Kumamoto Regional Immigration Bureau, they need to prepare the application for extension of short-term stay and the necessary documents. Since they do not speak Japanese, they advised that they should come to the Immigration Bureau accompanied by someone who understands Japanese.



Form for "Application for extension of period of stay"

If you have any problems, please contact the Kumamoto Consultation and Support Plaza for Foreign Residents.

We are pleased to introduce Ms. Daphne Pastovic, the German Coordinator for International Relations who joined us in August.

Where are you from?:

I was born in the town of Landshut in Bavaria, Germany. I grew up in the town of Passau, and before coming to Kumamoto, I lived in Munich. Given this background, the place I feel most connected to as my hometown is Passau in Bavaria.

What is Bavaria like?:

It is a place rich in nature and beauty. With forests, mountains, and numerous ponds, it is a very livable area. Furthermore, countries like Italy and Austria are nearby, making it a region where you can easily travel abroad.

What sparked your interest in Japan?:

When I was a teenager, there were many documentaries about Japan on TV, and I really loved watching them. I thought, "I want to go to Japan someday," and I first came to Japan in 2018. At that time, I really liked the people, the language, the nature, and so on. Because of that, I decided to study Japanese studies and completed my master's degree in 2024.

What's your favorite Japanese word?:

Japanese has many convenient words and expressions that are difficult to translate. For example, "YOROSHIKU ONEGAI SHIMASU" and "OTSUKARESAMA DESU" I find that very interesting and I like it.

What surprised you about Kumamoto?: The summer heat!

Places you'd like to visit in Kumamoto:

Since I really love the ocean, I'd like to go to Amakusa.

Things you'd like to try in Kumamoto:

Kumamoto is famous for its horses, so I'd like to try horseback riding in Aso.

What you like about Kumamoto:

I've only just arrived in Kumamoto, so I'm looking forward to visiting various places. For that reason, I feel Kumamoto, located in the center of Kyushu, is a very convenient place for traveling.

A Message to Foreign Residents in Kumamoto:

If you have any troubles or questions, feel free to come to the International Center for help.

Everyone there is very kind, so they'll help you with any problem!

【German consultation:

Wednesdays 13:00-17:00】





What's "FUKUBUKURO"?

Have you heard of "FUKUBUKURO"? It's a Japanese cultural tradition where mystery bags containing unknown items are sold at bargain prices during events like the New Year's first sales.

The thrill of not knowing what's inside until you open the bag after purchase, combined with the cost savings compared to buying items individually, makes it a great bargain. It also serves as a way to test your luck for a prosperous new year.

The contents vary widely, including clothing, sundries, food, cosmetics, and more. They are sold not only at department stores and brand shops, but also at electronics retailers and drugstores.

It is said that merchants began distributing good fortune to customers in hopes of prosperous business. The name "FUKUBUKURO" (lucky bag) is said to have originated from the belief that the bag held by DAIKOKUTEN, the god of fortune, contained many treasures.

Lucky bags, a traditional custom dating back to the Edo period (1603–1868), remain beloved by many today. Recently, however, they have diversified, with some sold with their contents revealed. Why not try your luck with one sometime?



DAIKOKUTEN



Opening and closing times of the end of year and the new year holidays

Kumamoto City International Center is closed between Mon, Dec 29, 2025 and Sat, Jan 3, 2026. The phone line is closed during the above period.

Emails can be received but the replies from the Plaza will only be sent on or after Jan 4, 2026.

Sun, Dec 28, 2025: Open as usual (10am – 6pm)

Mon, Dec 29, 2025 – Sat, Jan 3, 2026: Closed

Sun, Jan 4, 2026: Open as usual (10am – 6pm)



Information on Kumamoto Consultation and Support Plaza for Foreign Residents

The Plaza offers professional consultations including legal affairs, residence status issues, housing and life affairs support in multiple languages. Consultants who speak English, Chinese, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Spanish, Nepali and Taiwanese are available at the Plaza as the schedule below.

January Schedule

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				01 closed	02 closed	03 closed
04 • Vietnamese Consultation • Life Consultation in Chinese	05	06 • Chinese Consultation	07 • Immigrational Consultation • Vietnamese Consultation • Life Consultation in Chinese • German Consultation	08 • Korean Consultation	09 • Life Consultation in Chinese • English Consultation • Spanish Consultation	10
11 • Immigrational Consultation • Life Consultation in Chinese • Educational Consultation	12 Coming of age day	13 closed	14 • Mental Health Counseling • Tagalog Consultation • Life Consultation in Chinese • German Consultation • Job Consultation	15 • Korean Consultation	16 • Life Consultation in Chinese • English Consultation	17 • Life Consultation in Chinese • Free Legal Consultation
18 • Immigrational Consultation • Vietnamese Consultation • Nepal Consultation	19	20 • Chinese Consultation	21 • Housing Consultation • Vietnamese Consultation • Life Consultation in Chinese • German Consultation • Life Consultation in Taiwanese	22 • Korean Consultation	23 • Life Consultation in Chinese • English Consultation	24
25 • Life Consultation in Chinese • Educational Consultation • Life Consultation in Taiwanese	26 closed	27 • Chinese Consultation	28 • Life Consultation in Chinese • German Consultation • One-stop Consultation Service for International Students	29 • Korean Consultation	30 • Life Consultation in Chinese • English Consultation	31
Note: Consultations 1:00pm~5:00pm (apart from the ones below) • Life Consultation in Chinese 1:00pm ~ 6:00pm • Immigrational Consultation 1:00pm~4:00pm • Free Legal Consultation 2:00pm~4:00pm (Reservation required) • Educational Consultation 10:00am~3:00pm • One-stop Consultation Service for International Students 1:00pm~4:00pm • Job Consultation 10:00am~6:00pm • Mental Health Counseling						

※ Consultation service could be cancelled due to consultant's personal reasons. Please e-mail or call us beforehand to check if the consultant is available.

Kumamoto Consultation and Support Plaza for Foreign Residents' Facebook

We regularly update information useful to you.

Follow us and be one of the first one to be informed!



Plaza's FB

We are offering variety of information useful to your life. Please check us!



Our website



Our Life affairs guidance

Kumamoto Consultation and Support Plaza for Foreign Residents

Location: 2nd floor of Kumamoto City International Center

Address: 4-18 Hanabata-Cho, Chuo-Ku, Kumamoto City, 860-0806

Tel: 096-359-4995

E-mail: soudan@kumamoto-if.or.jp

Opening hours: Between 10 am and 6 pm

Closed on second and fourth Mondays and between December 29 and January 3

★ If second or fourth Monday is a national holiday, the plaza will be closed the following day instead.

