

<People> Interview	・・・P1
Mountain-Hiking	・・・P2, 3
Event Information: Spring 2016	・・・P4
Recycling of Small Waste Electric Equipment	・・・P5
Information	・・・P6

Himeji Cultural and International Exchange Foundation
newsletter editing volunteers
URL <http://www.himeji-iec.or.jp/>

<People> Mr. Andrey Verkhovtsev

Andrey Verkhovtsev is an artist and photographer. He is from Russia. He married a Japanese woman in 2008 and has lived in Koderacho in Himeji since 2011. Since he has been in Japan, he has produced many liberal and original works such as oil paintings and collages of people and natural settings, like Mt. Fuji, and has used his inspiration of pictographs that he has seen on trains to create some of his art.

Q: Tell us about your hometown in Russia.

A: I was born in Michurinsk about 450 kilometers away from Moscow. It is very cold in the winter, with temperatures around negative twenty degrees. Inside houses there is central heating, so it is comfortable. Some staple foods include potatoes and bread, which are often eaten with a hot vegetable soup. When I was 12 years old I started my dormitory life at a national art school in Sankt-Peterburg. The city is very beautiful with many museums, cathedrals, monasteries and palaces. The city had a European atmosphere. It was a beautiful city, which I now consider to be my second hometown.

Q: What surprised you most when you came to Japan?

A: In Russia, the cost-of-living is unstable, and it is not as safe, so people back in my country feel stressed more often than not. Here in Japan, I do not get that impression. I think that Japanese are kind and calm and they seem to lead stable lives in a safe and peaceful country. They are also well-mannered, and hardly even litter. Even when people go out, they usually bring their trash back home. Also, I think Japan is a very beautiful country with lots of nature.

Q: How do you spend your holidays?

A: Since my daughter is also interested in painting pictures, my family often visits museums and art galleries. We enjoy fishing in the pond, cycling and spending time in nature. It happens that I get inspiration for my paintings from nature.

Q: What is your dream in the future?

A: If possible, I'd like to have one more child. I want to have a house with a spacious studio. I want to be surrounded by nature and form relationships with kind hearted people that inspire my paintings.



Mountain-Hiking

We will introduce some mountain-hiking paths for beginners that you can freely enjoy in Himeji. Mt. Hirominesan and Mt. Masuiyama, which are north of Himeji Castle and 260 meters above sea level, are located in Nishiharima Nature Park.

On the top of Mt. Hirominesan is Hiromine jinja Shrine (ひろみねじんじや 廣峯神社), established in 733, and is said to be a hongu (main shrine) to Yasaka jinja Shrine in Kyoto. On Mt. Masuiyama, there is Zuiganji Temple (ずいがんじ 随願寺) which is famous for “Onioi” held on February 11 every year. Both are carefully preserved as Important National Properties.

Why not try out mountain paths where you can enjoy a natural environment, as well as historic tourist spots and nice views from the summit.

◆Mountain-hiking course for beginners * 【Required Time】 represents one way on foot

- ① Take Shinki Bus **81**, **82**, **84**, **86** for “Shirakuni” bus stop **A**
You can also walk to the site from Nozato Station on the JR Bantan Line.
- ② Go from “Shirakuni” bus stop **A** to the entrance path **B** 【10 minutes】
You will pass through residential streets.
- ③ Take entrance path **B** to Zuiganji Temple **C** 【25 minutes】
The scenery is not so good but the path is well developed for walking and easy to hike for kids and seniors.
- ④ From Zuiganji Temple **C** to Hiromine jinja Shrine **D** 【50 minutes】
It is a narrow mountain path but easy to walk. Be careful not to slip and fall because there is no handrail available and a valley on both sides of the path in some areas.
- ⑤ Hiromine jinja Shrine **D** to descending point **E** 【10 minutes】
Follow the signs in ‘Hiromine Observation Platform’ near descending point **E**, en route, you will find a resting place which offers a panoramic view of the city of Himeji.
- ⑥ Descending point **E** to entrance path **F** (Omotesaka sando Street) 【30 minutes】
Go down the steps on the south of the Setre Highland Villa parking lot.
- ⑦ Entrance path **F** to Shinki Bus “Shirakuni Minamiguchi” bus stop **G** 【20 minutes】
There are multiple bus stops, with frequent service, so be careful not to take a wrong bus route. You can also use “Hiromine” bus stop near the entrance to the path, although buses are not as frequent.

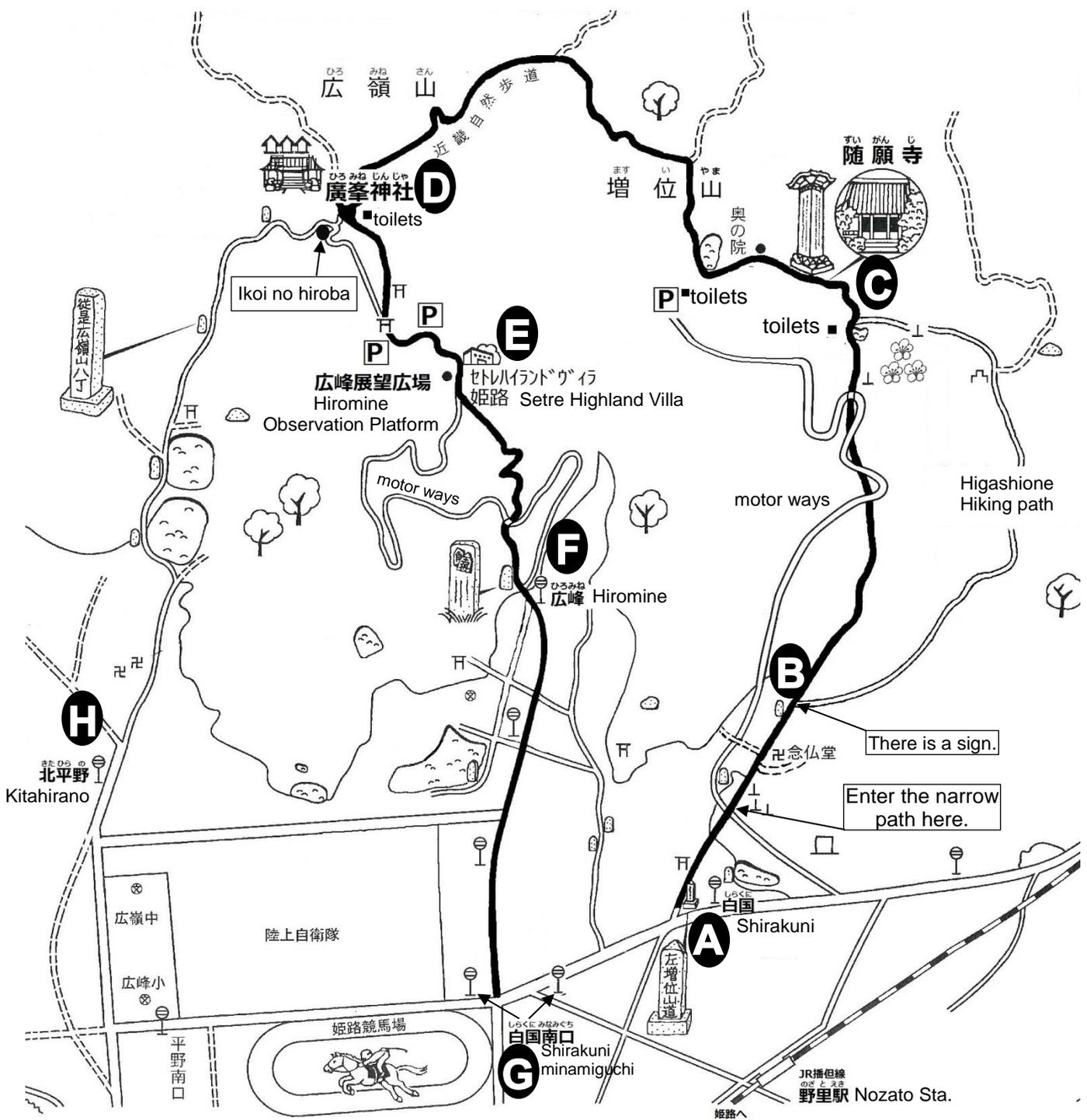
◆Other paths

Higashione hiking path **B~C** 【one hour】

As you approach the summit, the path en route commands an extensive view of the urban area and some islands in the sea. Note that there are some places on the path where you might lose your way. Watch your step, as there are also slippery and dangerous places.

Hiromine jinja Shrine **D** ~ “Kitahirano” bus stop **H** (Urasaka sando Street) 【55 minutes】

The path is fit for walking. From Hiromine jinja Shrine, start descending at ‘Ikoi no hiroba Square’.



【Important notice for hiking】

- Arrange minimum equipment for hiking such as hiking shoes, rainwear and some drinking water.
- Do not use fire. Help prevent forest fires.
- Do not litter on the mountain.
- Do not go alone.
- Tell someone where you will go in advance.



Event Information: Spring 2016

The season of beautiful cherry blossoms has come.
Let's go out with family and friends!



●Cherry Blossom Viewing Party at Himeji Castle

Japanese harps and Japanese drums will be played on stage, and local sake, dango (sweet dumplings made from rice flour) and box lunch will be sold.

【Date & Time】 Saturday, April 2, 10:00 AM~4:00PM * Sunday, April 3 in the event of rain

【Place】 Sannomaru Square in Himeji Castle

●Night Viewing of Cherry Blossom at Himeji Castle

Cherry blossoms will be lit up in the garden of the castle.

You can see the fantastic cherry blossoms at night.

【Date & Time】 from Friday, April 1 to Thursday, April 7, 6:00PM~9:00PM

(Entrance until 8:30 PM)

【Place】 Nishinomaru garden on the castle grounds
(The western side from the entrance gate)

【Admission Fee】 Free



●The 67th Himeji Castle Festival

There will be the Japanese traditional performing art, *Takigi-Noh*, a *Noh* theater performed at night, the announcement of the Queens of the Himeji Castle, a citizen's parade, all people dancing with Bansyu Songs and other performances held at this event.

“Himeji Yosakoi Festival” will be held at the same time as the Himeji Castle Festival this year. Dancers in brightly colored costumes will perform a splendid dance.

【Date】 from Friday May 20 to Sunday May 22

【Place】 Otemaedori Street, Otemae Park, Sannomaru Square in Himeji Castle and surrounding areas

<Notification>

JR “Higashi Himeji Station” will be opened on Saturday, March 26!

Himeji Higashi Station JR Sanyo Honsen has been newly constructed between Himeji station and Gochaku Station. The Himeji Police station, Sukoyaka Center, Monodzukuri Institute and other facilities are near this station.



Recycling of Small Waste Electric Equipment

Himeji city has set up a recycling bin like the illustration on the right in 30 locations in the city (city hall, local offices, city branch offices, service centers, and environmental centers) in order to recycle precious resources. Let's use them in order to reduce waste and make effective use of resources as long as possible.



Recyclable Items: Recyclable items are listed as below, and should also be able to fit through the bin's slot (50cm × 15cm).

Mobile phones, PHS, computers (including tablet type devices)

Telephones, Fax machines, Radio sets, Digital cameras, Video recorders, Film cameras

Video equipment: various recorder/players, video players, tuners etc.

Audio equipment: various media players, headphones, earphones, IC recorders, hearing aids etc.

Auxiliary storage: hard disks, USB memory sticks, memory cards

Digital book devices, Digital dictionaries, Calculators

Electric blood pressure meters, Electric thermometers

Hairdressing tools: Hair dryers, Hair irons, Electric shavers, Electric toothbrushes etc.

Flashlights, Clocks, Gaming equipment

Car equipment: navigation systems, car tuners, car radios, ETC in-vehicle units etc.

Accessories: remote controllers, AC adapters, cables, plugs/ jacks, battery chargers etc.



Note:

1. Delete all personal information.
2. The items put in the recycling bin will not be returned.
3. Please remove dry batteries and rechargeable batteries from the items. Batteries should be taken out on the collecting day of bulky waste, and rechargeable batteries should be brought in a recycling bin located at a store.
4. If the item cannot get through the slot of the bin (50cm × 15cm), it cannot be collected. Please ask manufacturer for collecting the oversized items like computers.
5. Specified kind of home appliances cannot be collected. (TV, Refrigerator, Washing machine, Tumble dryer, Air conditioner)
6. Home electric appliances except personal computer and specified types of home appliances can still be disposed as bulky waste (oversized waste, non-flammable waste), but rare metal cannot be recycled.
7. Use of the recycle bins are limited to household garbage.

☆☆Information about the Himeji Cultural and International Exchange Foundation☆☆

■Sister Cities of Himeji

Himeji City has six sister cities in the world, including: Charleroi in Belgium, Phoenix in the United States, Adelaide in Australia, Curitiba in Brazil, Taiyuan in China and Changwon in Korea. In addition, Château de Chantilly in France and Himeji Castle have a sister castle connection. The Foundation conducts youth cultural exchange programs with these cities. They will hold a seminar with more information on how to apply for the program this April. If you are interested in this program, please contact the Foundation at using the information below.

■Cultural Events Hosted by the Foundation

The Foundation promotes dramas, music performances and other events at Parnassus Hall and Caspa Hall and Himeji City Bunka Center. The Himeji Jazz Festival, where local amateur jazz bands will gather, will be held on Thursday May 5 (national holiday) at Big Hall located in the Himeji City Bunka Center. The entrance fee is 500 yen. For more information please contact: Himeji City Bunka Center 079-298-8015

◇◆◇Editor's Postscript◆◆◇

In spring, cherry blossoms, rose, wisteria and other flowers are at their best. In April, we start new school years, fiscal years and other new stages of our lives. We also have Golden week in May. We hope that fills your heart with happy expectations as you look forward. We also hope that “VIVA! ひめじ” provides you with useful information for your daily life. Please enjoy reading “VIVA! ひめじ” in 2016 too.

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These names are used with the contributors' permission.

Their assistance is much appreciated.

You can read back numbers of “VIVA! ひめじ” at the website of the Himeji Cultural and International Exchange Foundation (International Exchange Section)(<http://www.himeji-iec.or.jp/>).

The next issue will be available in June. Don't miss it! We invite your comments and suggestions.

We are always looking for translators and native speakers to assist us with translating and proofreading upcoming editions of “VIVA! ひめじ”. If you are interested, please contact us at the following address.

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