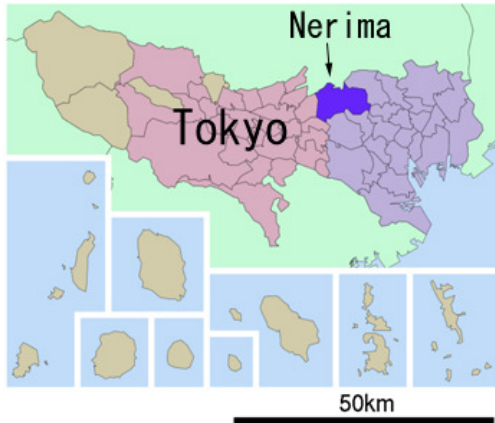




Japan Local Government Centre

Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR), London



Local Japan: Case Studies in Place Promotion

Using pop culture to assert distinctiveness of place

Nerima City profile

One of the 23 special wards of Tokyo

Area: 48.16km²

Pop: 703,005

Density: 14,443/km²



The 'birthplace of Japanese animation' Nerima Ward, Tokyo, went online with an official anime homepage in 2010 in an effort to revitalise the area through its biggest industry. Home to over ninety anime production companies and where animation masters Isao Takahata and Hayao Miyazaki of Studio Ghibli cut their teeth during the fifties, Nerima Ward has a strong connection to one of Japan's biggest cultural exports. A newspaper report on the site's launch last year quoted a Nerima official as saying, "We'd like to offer content that will enthrall people all over the world."

In 1958 the first colour full-length Japanese animated film was produced in Nerima: '*Hakujaden*' (The Tale of the White Serpent), and this was followed by Japan's first televised serial animation '*Astro Boy*' in 1964, also produced in Nerima. But

despite its history, a ward survey of 1,500 residents in 2009 found that only 50.7% knew that Nerima was the birthplace of anime.

The Animation Nerima homepage (www.animation-nerima.jp/eng/) features a history of the ward's anime industry, news on related events, interviews with local creators, as well as publicity material for their 'Anime Creators Scenario Contest' award. The site is comprehensive but also unusual in that it carries an English language version.

This international effort was deepened in 2009 when Nerima signed an Anime Industry Exchange Agreement with the city of Annecy in France. The



exchange between the birthplace of anime in Japan and the site of the world's biggest anime film festival is the first of its kind using anime to link the two place partners.



The ward has also placed panels in fifteen of the stations within its boundaries, each illustrated with a famous anime created in the area, including *Cyborg 009*, *Atom Boy* and *Super Dimension Fortress Macross* (more commonly known in the West in the form of its 1980's American adaptation '*Robotech*'). Visitors are encouraged to ride the railway and visit each stop on the line to see the whole set.

The ward is planning to continue its activities into 2011 and has already held an exhibition of anime poster artwork in February.



Iwate prefecture profile

Capital: Morioka

Area: 15,278.40km²

Pop: 1,330,530

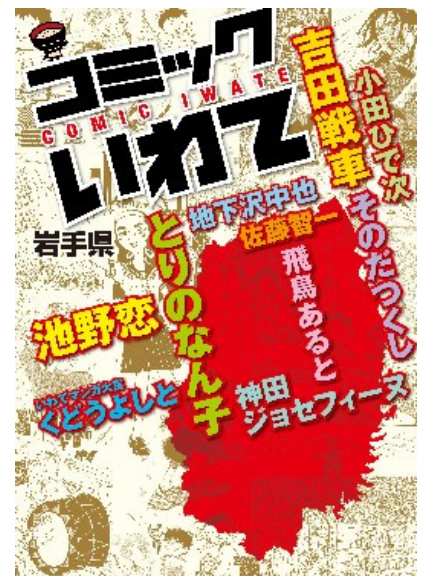
Density: 90/km²

The Iwate Manga Project launched by the Iwate Prefectural Government published its first volume in January 2011, the aptly titled '*Comic Iwate*'. An anthology of ten mangas, the nationwide publication is being hailed as Japan's first 'local manga': local authors, local subject matter and published by local government.

Born out of the 2009 Ishigami-no-oka Museum of Art and

Yorozu Tetsugoro Museum collaborative exhibition '*Manga in Full Bloom: The expressions of 50 Iwate manga artists*', the project is intended to introduce Iwate's most attractive features (natural setting, culture and famous hospitality) to the rest of Japan. The success of the original exhibition led to the prefectural government considering manga as a serious means of regional promotion, securing the assistance of a number of the 53 artists who took part in the exhibition, which ran from July to September.

Published by the Iwate Prefectural Government in cooperation with the region's newspaper group Iwate Nippou, '*Comic Iwate*' contains 10 stories, nine of which have been written by established authors such as Koi Ikeno, who contributed '*Kaze no Okurimono*' (Gift of the Wind). An example of the regional focus the volume takes, the story of '*Kaze no Okurimono*' was inspired by Iwate-born poet and author Kenji Miyazawa's novel '*Kaze no Matasaburo*' (Matasaburo the Wind Imp). Other authors include Kanda Josephine and Sonoda Tsukushi, also both published manga artists.



The final manga is the 2010 winner of the Iwate Prefecture Manga Grand Prix competition, a competition open to unpublished aspiring manga authors from all over Japan. However, works submitted must have Iwate Prefecture as their subject matter and make the reader considering living in or at least visiting the prefecture. The first prize in the 2010 Grand Prix went to a manga by Kudou Yoshito, who received a prize of over £750.

Priced at ¥735 and at 168 pages, while the initial pressing was planned at 10,000 for the prefecture to use for PR purposes outside of the region, book store pre-orders increased this to over 13,000. Reflecting the jump in pre-orders, reactions to Iwate's first foray into the realm of regional 'soft power' diplomacy have been positive, with one online review commenting that the book was "very enjoyable", giving the book five stars.

While total sales of the book are not yet known, the *Asahi* newspaper reported that 'Comic Iwate' will be the first in a series of manga books published by the Iwate Prefectural Government and featuring home-grown authors.



Niigata City profile
Capital of Niigata prefecture
Area: 726.09km²
Pop: 812,705
Density: 1,119.22/km²

Home to a curiously high number of manga artists, the 'Gataket' comic market and the JAM Japanese Anime and Manga Technical College, the city of Niigata is hoping that 2011 will consolidate its title as the true 'manga kingdom' of Japan. The newly-established Discussion and Planning Committee for Local Revitalisation through Anime and Manga met twice in late 2010 to discuss ways to attract visitors from across the country and the globe through its local manga heritage.

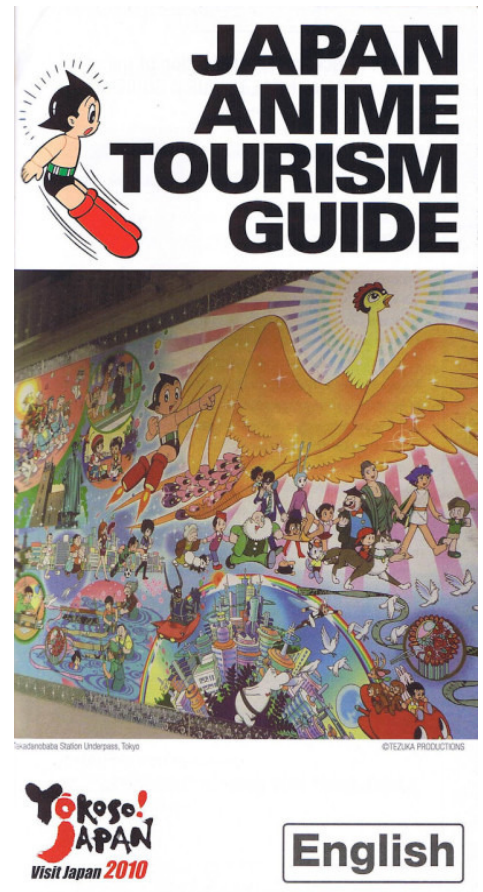


The push coincides with the opening of the 2011 Niigata Manga Competition, the Niigata 'Gataket' Comic Market and the Niigata International Anime Manga Festival at the end of February. While not the largest events of their kind on the anime calendar, the 'Gataket' is famous for its lax cosplay rules which allow fans to carry counterfeit weapons for the sake of their costumes, earning it the nickname 'holy land of cosplay'. It is also the largest comic market on the Sea of Japan coast.

In the past year many places across Japan like Niigata have begun to use anime and manga to attract visitors, but even before establishing the Discussion and Planning Committee for Local Revitalisation through Anime and Manga last year, Niigata had already capitalised on its local connections by creating 'Manga Street', which features statues from the famous Niigata-based manga series 'Dokaben', and giving its tour buses a manga make-over. Both of these are included in the Association of Japan Animation and Japan National Tourism Organisation *Japan Anime Tourism Guide* for foreign tourists visiting Japan.

Ideas that the committee itself has deployed to attract visitors and create new jobs include using the famous tunes of anime TV series based on Niigata-produced mangas to announce the arrival and departure of trains into the city, and displaying original manga illustrations in vacant shop fronts.

Although it is still early days in the project, a newspaper article by the *Asahi Shimbun* quoted the chair of the panel, Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting Company's Center for Arts Policy and Management's head Yoshiyuki Oshita as saying: "If Niigata City Government goes ahead and hammers out a set of comprehensive measures for education, industry growth and sightseeing, such as fostering manga artists, the city can attract visitors from all over the world."



Credits

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