



Kumamon and Governor Kabashima's Visit to Boston

October 17, 2013

1. Kumamon, which is the yuru-kyara of Kumamoto Prefecture, will visit Boston from November 11 to 13th, 2013.
“Yuru-kyara” or “loose character” is a mascot. In Japan, there is a mascot for everything, including the police and the national tax agency, and it helps promote the organization's image or products. As a part of his oversea embarkation activities, Kumamon will accompany Mr. Ikuo Kabashima, Governor of Kumamoto Prefecture, when he travels to Boston.
2. Governor Kabashima, who has a graduate degree from Harvard, was invited to give a lecture there, and Kumamon will travel with him. The theme of the Governor's lecture is “Kumomon's Political Science and Economics: the Front of Local Governments in Japan”. It is expected that an audience of more than one hundred students and journalists will attend the lecture. In addition, Governor Kabashima and Kumamon will appear in various places in Boston to promote Kumamoto Prefecture and its products.
3. Kumamoto Prefecture has been very successful utilizing Kumamon in promoting its image and products (*).

(*) Kumamon's success in Japan:

- Kumamon now has his image plastered across everything from cookies and bags of rice to bed covers in a five-star hotel and an airplane for Solaseed Air. The Hotel New Otani Kumamoto offers a lavishly Kumomonized room starting from ¥14,000 per night. Online shops offer Kumamon Q-tips, nail clippers, beer, lingerie, boxers, chopping boards, and fake nails.
- Sales of Kumamon items have reached ¥29.3 billion in 2012, up from ¥2.5 billion in 2011.
- Kumamon won the grand-prix award for “Licensing of the Year 2013”.
- Kumamoto Prefecture does not charge companies for the usage of Kumamon’s image. If a company wants to use Kumamon, it simply fills out an application and gets permission to use it. Recently, applications have averaged 700 a month.
- A life-size Kumamon appears at approximately 2,000 events a year. According to an Internet poll, 87.4% of the Japanese people recognize his image.



4. So far Kumamon has promoted Kumamoto products in such countries as Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore in Asia and France and the United Kingdom in Europe. He appeared at the “Japan Expo” in France and visited Baccarat factories in France and MINI factories in the UK to promote Kumamon products. Furthermore, Kumamon is collaborating with Baccarat, the BMW’s MINI and the Teddy-bear produced by Steiff Co. (*).

This time Kumamon will promote Kumamoto on the East Coast of the United States, and explore the possibility of collaborations in the American Market.

(*) Collaboration between Kumamon and Steiff Co.: When the German teddy bear maker Steiff collaborated with Kumomoto Prefecture and made 1,500 stuffed Kumamon bears, each for ¥29,400, the teddy bears on the online shop sold out within five seconds, the company says.

5. After various activities in Boston, Governor Kabashima and Kumamon will leave for New York.

