

International Aquarium Congress Held in Iwaki

Green Slow Mobility Trial around Onahama

The year 2018 saw two big international conferences held in Iwaki. As mentioned in previous editions of Iwaki Vision, Iwaki was once again the host venue for the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM) back in May 2018, welcoming leaders from over 16 Pacific nations. Just a few months after the summit, over 500 guests from 35 countries visited Iwaki to attend the 10th International Aquarium Congress, which was held 5-10 November. Iwaki was only the second city in Japan to host this congress.

The congress featured various symposiums with keynote speakers covering a range of themes including plastic pollution in the world's oceans and other environmental issues. With so many visitors from across the globe, this was also a chance to showcase Japanese culture such as tea ceremony and traditional performances including bosasara (a dance involving wooden staffs). Whilst the main venue for the congress was Onahama Fish Market, there were several events held in the Aquamarine Park area to coincide with the congress, including a dragon palace festival and stalls promoting local food products.

With the successful conclusion of both the PALM8 Summit and the International Aquarium Congress, Iwaki is now ready to welcome even more international guests to the city when the Rugby World Cup is held in Japan later this year and when Tokyo hosts the Olympics next year.

Alongside the International Aquarium Congress, Iwaki also conducted a trial run of a new form of low-speed, eco-friendly transport known as Green Slow Mobility from 30 October to 12 November, 2018. Departing from Iwaki La La Mew with stops at Iwaki Marine Tower, AEON Mall Iwaki-Onahama and Aquamarine Fukushima, the small electric-powered vehicle used in the trial shuttle service travels at a maximum speed of 20km/h and can fit up to nine passengers.

During the trial, two assistant language teachers who work in Iwaki shared their thoughts about riding the green-powered transport. They said it was quite an interesting ride and a relaxing break from the busy International Aquarium Congress event. They also praised its small size and low speed as this allows it to safely travel through busy pedestrian areas. However, they believe that it would be ideal for use in tours around historical and cultural sites or festivals and should include stops at some other attractions around the city if future trials were considered.

Although this was only a trial run, it appears that the Green Slow Mobility could have the potential of not just offering a convenient and environmentally-friendly means of travel around Iwaki's famous sightseeing spots, but could also serve as a symbol of innovation for Iwaki as the city moves beyond disaster recovery and aims for a more prosperous future.

