



HONORING ANIMATION. A man walks by an eatery with its facade painted with letters that read "Welcome to Washinomiya" and the characters of a TV animation series, "Lucky Star," or "Raki Suta," near Washinomiya Jinja shrine in Kuki, Saitama prefecture, north of Tokyo. Eighty-eight places in Japan are going to be designated "animation spots" to encourage tourism — using train stations, school campuses, rural shrines, and other fairly everyday places where popular manga characters are depicted. One shoo-in for the list, according to organizers, is Washinomiya Jinja, a picturesque shrine that is a familiar scene in comics by Kagami Yoshimizu, which later became a TV animation series. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

Japan naming 88 manga, animation landmarks to boost tourism

By Yuri Kageyama
AP Business Writer

TOKYO — Eighty-eight places in Japan are going to be designated "animation spots" to encourage visitors to seek out the train stations, school campuses, rural shrines, and other fairly everyday places where popular manga characters are depicted.

Such landmarks number in the tens of thousands, given the popularity and volume of manga comics in Japan, but the project aims to compile the official list for any fan's animation "pilgrimage," to the places known as *seichi*, or "sacred spots."

Anyone can vote on the landmarks through a website set up in several languages, including English and Chinese.

"Japanese pop culture has grown to rival American Hollywood," Tsugihiko Kadokawa, chairman of Kadokawa Corp. publishing and film studio, one of the officials behind the effort, said at a Tokyo news conference. "Animation can change the times."

The project highlights Japan's push to make tourism a valuable boon for a stagnant economy, as dynamic as the export of Toyota vehicles and Sony electronics.

Foreign tourism has grown, under a "Cool Japan" initiative, reaching 20 million people last year — five years ahead of a goal set by the government, prompting officials to raise its 2020 target to 40 million tourists.

Kadokawa and other officials behind the newly formed Japan Anime Tourism Association said they would compile a travel route of 88 animation spots by December, including where manga and animation works took place, as well as the homes of manga artists and museums dedicated to their works.

Votes from fans will be considered in compiling the list. "Vote for the special spot you want to share with everyone," the site says.

One shoo-in for the list, according to organizers, is Washinomiya Jinja, a picturesque shrine in Saitama prefecture on the outskirts of Tokyo, a familiar scene in comics by Kagami Yoshimizu, which later became a TV animation series, "Lucky Star," or "Raki Suta."

The shrine is not as grand or famous as others in the country, such as Meiji Shrine in central Tokyo, but it's still the one to visit for those who love the manga series, which depicts friendship among schoolgirls, all illustrated with the huge eyes and colorful hair characteristic of manga.

The shrine appears in the opening

sequence of the TV show, whose typical episode features a heated discussion in cute, cooing voices on the correct way to eat a pastry.

Hopes are high at Washinomiya Jinja that it will be picked.

"I'm all for it," said Teruko Masaki, whose restaurant near the shrine sells noodles and other products with the manga characters splashed on the packaging.

The pieces of wood on which visitors write their wishes, such as getting accepted at a college or having a healthy baby, are, at Washinomiya, covered with drawings of the "Lucky Star" girls.

Other possible animation spots include the "Gundam" giant robot statue on Odaiba, an artificial island in Tokyo Bay, and the Ghibli Studio of Hayao Miyazaki, the Oscar-winning animator who made *Spirited Away*.

Louis Lee, an editor from Hong Kong, who was at the Tokyo launch of the Japan Anime Tourism Association, said he was an avid manga fan, especially of "Slam Dunk," a story about a high school basketball team.

"It teaches you not to give up until the end," he said.

Fans like Lee say manga has proven useful for studying Japanese language and culture. They say animation spots should have manga character costumes that visitors can wear in photos, as well as

Continued on page 16

Uber starts food delivery in Japan after ride-share stumbles

Continued from page 2

because of a strong taxi lobby. Uber offers just a high-end taxi service in Japan, and has begun limited ride-sharing in a rural area, where populations are declining, Uber Japan Co. president Masami Takahashi said.

But hopes are high that food delivery will be popular for Japanese working late in the office and at parties. It may also be handy for tourists, more familiar with the service and whose ranks are growing in recent years.

Uber takes a percentage of the revenue from the restaurants, but dishes come at the same price as at the restaurants.

Daisuke Nomura, owner and chef of Sougo, a Michelin two-star restaurant, hopes UberEats will help not only Japanese but also visitors from abroad rediscover the delights of his traditional shoujin-style cooking.

"I have used the car service, and so I trust the brand and the quality of its service," he told reporters in Tokyo.

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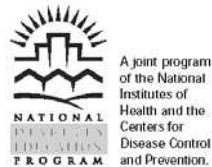
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The Metro Council is scheduled to hold a public hearing 5 p.m. **Thursday, Oct. 27** and is scheduled to hold a public hearing and take legislative action 2 p.m. **Thursday, Jan. 26, 2017** at Metro Regional Center, 600 NE Grand Ave., Portland.

Submit comments Oct. 7 through Nov. 7, 2016: online at oregonmetro.gov/rffa | by mail to Metro Planning, 600 NE Grand Ave., Portland, OR 97232 | by email to trans@oregonmetro.gov | by phone at 503-797-1750 or TDD 503-797-1804.

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