



## The March 2024 Issue

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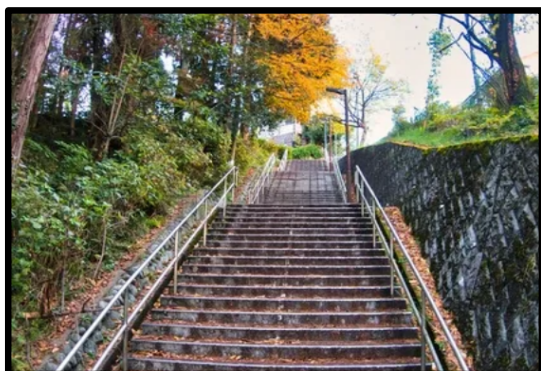
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## Whisper of the Heart & Seiseki Sakuragaoka

Have you seen the Ghibli movie *耳をすませば?* In English, the title is *Whisper of the Heart*. It is my favourite Ghibli movie! The movie is set in **Western Tokyo**, & is **based** on a real town named Seiseki Sakuragaoka. Sheila and I have gone there a few times with different friends, so we would like to tell you a little about it. If you want to visit, I recommend doing the stamp rally. You can get the paper and your first stamp in the station building.

Outside the station, you can see a **mini** version of Seiji's house. It is a special "**Youth** postbox" where you can write your dreams for the future. When you **achieve** them, you should write a new letter and visit again to report your **success**. The movie is set in summer, but the area is beautiful in any season! We will save summer for last, and show **autumn** first. The red and yellow trees look great!







If you visit Seiseki Sakuragaoka in **winter**, you can see beautiful illuminations near the station. It will be cold, but this can be a good thing. To see all the **locations** from the movie, you will have to go on a **somewhat** long walk up the hill, and **climb** lots of stairs. All this walking will make you feel warm, so it might be easier to do in cold weather. When we went we wore winter coats, but had to take them off for part of our walk.



When you arrive at the station, you will hear the famous song used in the movie: カントリーロード. A different part plays when trains arrive on either **platform** 1 or 2. The Japanese lyrics were made **specially** for this movie.

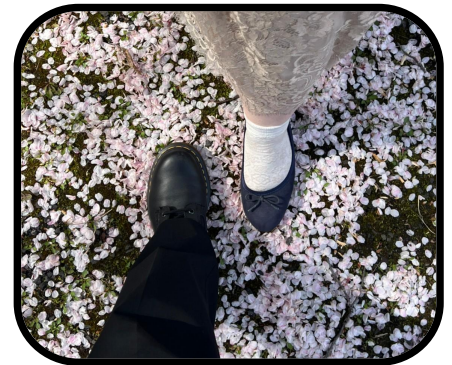
'Take Me Home, Country Roads' is the title of the original song. It was written by singer John Denver about Sheila's home state- **Maryland**. The **rhythm** of the song didn't sound right, so it was changed to say **West Virginia** instead. The area outside the station was shown a few times in the movie. Since the movie came out in 1995, the city has changed a little. There are more cars and buildings now for **example**. Back to the stamp rally! The first stop on your walk will be the convenience store Shizuku visits in the movie. Here you can get a snack, and the second stamp. We had some *taiyaki*!



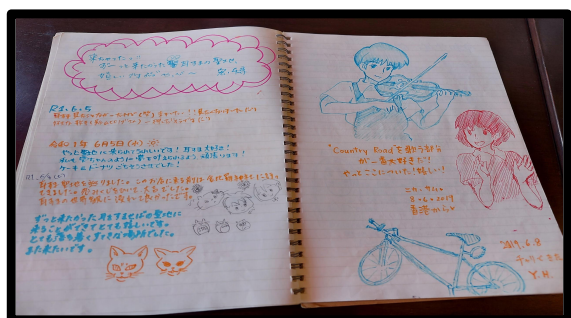




With a name like Sakuragaoka, of course this area will be beautiful in **spring**! **During** your walk up the hill you can see lots of cherry blossoms. You can take great pictures with the trees **framing** the town below. There are mostly white cherry blossoms here, but when you look up close, the inside **petals** are pink. When we came here in spring, my friend and I **recreated** the scene at the **shrine**. Of course, we didn't do the **love confession** part! We also got **fortunes**, and mine was very lucky!



In the movie, when you get to the top of the hill you can see Seiji's house- which is also an **antiques** shop. In real life, the house isn't there, but there are still Whisper of the Heart **themed** shops! You can find the third stamp here, and then relax at the bakery or the cafe. They both have themed food & lots of decorations. The owners are very kind, and can give **advice** to help you find other spots from the movie. At the cafe, you can look at messages from other **visitors**, and write your own too!







Finally, here is Seiseki Sakuragaoka in **summer**! A lot of the movie takes place during Shizuku's summer vacation, so if you want to be recreate the movie as closely as possible, you should visit in summer! Just make sure to wear **sunscreen** & a big hat, and bring some water to help **beat the heat**!



On this page you can **compare** four photos and four drawings. First is the amazing view from the end of the movie. Actually, this area is **private property** in real life, but you can see a similar view from Irohazaka Sakura Park. Next, you can see the bottom of the long hill path. It looks so **similar**!



Third, you can see **statues** of the Baron & Louise in the bakery at the top of the hill. It has lots of art, figures, and **memorabilia** from the movie. You can actually see a mini version of the **grandfather clock** in this photo as well!



Finally, you can see Shizuku **running** down the stairs. This is my favourite scene from the movie! I love how the animation helps you see how **excited** Shizuku is. If you want to recreate this scene, just make sure to look where you're going! We don't want anyone falling down the stairs and hurting themselves.

