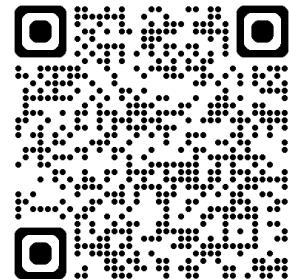


All aboard Japan's shut-down train lines



<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/videos/20251202015058780/>

Local rail services across Japan are being reduced as passenger numbers drop, but a few of those are bouncing back in an entirely new form and breathing life into their regions.

These once silent tracks in rural Kyushu's Takachiho town are thrumming again. This open top tourist train chugs through the mountains on a 30-minute round trip, usually 10 times a day. Up to 60 riders take in the view at a leisurely 15 kilometers per hour until the high point of the journey. At over 100 meters tall, the old railway bridge was one of Japan's highest. And in a nod to social media, the driver fires a bubble gun to create some magical photos. The shots have attracted attention from across Japan and around the world. Last year saw a record 130,000 visitors board the train, but getting to this point hasn't been easy. Since opening 50 years ago the train was vital for local residents. But after a powerful typhoon struck the region in 2005, it was clear the cost of repairs would be prohibitive, and the line was decommissioned. Former employees and ordinary people pulled together to preserve what they could. Their efforts ultimately helped bring the line back to life as a tourist attraction.

We're doing it to revive the railway as a place for people to meet.

Meanwhile, in Fukuoka prefecture, the sight of another former is also drawing crowds. Its tracks long gone, the old railway in the town of Soeda is now a walking path through the forest. It leads to an adventure facility hidden among the trees. Since opening two years ago, it has attracted young people and families from outside the prefecture as well. Damage caused by torrential rain in 2017 rendered a section of track here unusable. Local officials say the surrounding forest was then left to the wild. The town purchased the land and areas around it for redevelopment.

There are few opportunities to take pictures on the tracks.

We've combined an unused station and an abandoned forest for the benefit of Soeda. People have high hopes for the facility.

Journeys like these prove that the termination of a service doesn't always have to be the end of the line, instead, new hope and fresh purpose can bring people together again.

Source: (NHK World News)

Now discuss the questions with a partner.

1. What's your opinion of this idea? Would you like to visit any of the places featured in the video?
2. Can you think of any other good abandoned or unused locations for such a business?
3. Do you prefer to visit historical and nostalgic sightseeing spots or modern and new attractions?
4. Do you think social media features—like the bubble gun—are important for attracting tourists today?
5. Do you know of any other places that have been revived by the local community?