

Precious scenery of the Seto Inland Sea
with its beautiful archipelago
Wishing you would realize that
it is not an ordinary place



Ms. FUNO, Hiroko

Setouchi Hot Planning



Mr. HAYASHI, Takayasu

Secretary General of the Setouchi City Tourism Association

— Mr. HAYASHI, Takayasu of the Setouchi City Tourism Association and Ms. FUNO, Hiroko of Setouchi Hot Planning are working hard to promote tourism and revitalize the local community in Setouchi City. In this interview, we asked them about the charm of Ushimado located within the Setonaikai National Park, their efforts there, and their roles and thoughts in the local community.

The Ushimado area facing the Seto Inland Sea is full of fascinating things to know!

HAYASHI: Before the COVID-19 pandemic, I worked for a travel agency and was involved in tourism in Setouchi City as a person in charge of regional revitalization and regional exchange projects by the local government. So I knew that Ushimado was within the Setonaikai National Park, and I was in a position to add value to it as one of the tourism products. The motivation for my job change to the Setouchi City Tourism Association is that inbound tourism in Setouchi City was gaining momentum and that the islands in Seto Inland Sea were ranked 7th in the “52 Places to Go in 2019,” a travel destination recommended by *the New York Times* to its readers, the only one in Japan. I was born and raised in a place without sea, so the Seto Inland Sea is very special to me.

FUNO: It was about 11 years ago that I became more familiar with Ushimado. It all started when I was involved in organizing a

concert at a music hall renovated from a rice warehouse owned by the Higashihattori family, a wealthy local merchant. From there, I formed connections with the people of Ushimado and have been working to revitalize the community. Although I had been working there, I did not know until recently that everything within sight of Ushimado Port is the Setonaikai National Park. I had a strong image that national parks should be surrounded by nature and well-maintained. Ushimado is a place where people live day to day, with houses, fields, and businesses, and it is closely connected to their daily lives. So it was an “unexpected” place for me.

HAYASHI: Although Ushimado is also called “Japan’s Aegean Sea,” I think the scenery of the Seto Inland Sea and the archipelago are more beautiful. It may be a tourism industry viewpoint, but it would be better to market the area purely as

“Ushimado” without such a catchphrase. I have lived in Okayama for nearly 20 years now, and I find that the people of Okayama are very modest and do not publicize the valuable things they have. That would be a regrettable loss. So I try to be more proactive in sending out information. In the summer of 2022, as part of the Okayama Destination Campaign, a large-scale tourism project, a masking tape “mt” event was held in Ushimado, which attracted an endless stream of visitors. In addition, a multi-purpose leisure facility, “Ushimado TARI” was built, where guests enjoy glamping and other activities. In the spring of 2023, a resort hotel is scheduled to open near the Ushimado Olive Garden, and a guesthouse is scheduled to open on Maejima Island. Local people say, “Ushimado is in a ‘bubble’ for the first time in 30 or 40 years.” I think that’s a good thing. There are many things I want to do and should do, so I am looking forward to the future.

FUNO: Ushimado has developed as a production area for vegetables since long ago because of its sloping terrain, which allows for plenty of sunshine, and because the irrigation of the fields is well maintained up to the top of the mountains. Heavy vegetables such as Chinese cabbage, cabbage, pumpkin, and tougan (wax gourd) are widely grown, and all of them have a characteristic of deep sweetness. However, since they are mainly shipped to the Kansai region, some locals are unaware of their deliciousness, which I think is also regrettable. Lemons are also grown in Setouchi City, and immature green lemons are also good to eat. We want to convey this to the local children, so we organize farming experiences with the cooperation of farmers, such as treading wheat sprouts in the fields and harvesting vegetables, and these experiences are available right here. Setouchi City is also developing a “Shoku-no-Shiawase (Food Happiness) Project,” the active promotion to provide local

profile **FUNO, Hiroko** Born in Okayama City, Okayama Prefecture in 1961, and a resident of Setouchi City since 1996. After devoting herself to raising her children, she worked as a cram school teacher and a part-time elementary school teacher before being elected to the Setouchi City Council for the first time in 2013. Served two terms (eight years), working to educate children about food, promote local products, ensure the safety and security of the elderly, and reinforce the city’s preparedness for disaster. In 2021, became a board member of Setouchi Hot Planning, a general incorporated association that plays a central role in the Setouchi Ushimado Tamatsu Countryside Stays Promotion Council and has been involved in the management of Countryside Stays programs and activities to promote the attractiveness of Setouchi’s food.

profile **HAYASHI, Takayasu** Born in Saitama Prefecture in 1967. While in university, he was dispatched to work as an overseas travel attendant and took a leave of absence to obtain a park guide license in Niagara Falls, Canada. After working for Kinki Nippon Tourist Co., Ltd. he joined JTB Chugoku Shikoku Corp.(at the time) in 2006. In 2021 became the Secretary General of the Setouchi City Tourism Association (General Incorporated Association). He has been involved in creating tourism sites and a variety of events, as well as improving the promenade on Kuroshima Island as secretary general of the Kuroshima Revitalization Council.

products for school lunches. Through these efforts, children can learn how delicious and wonderful this area is, how much delicious and seasonal food they are provided, and how grateful they are to have this kind of experience.

Opportunities to become more familiar with the community and appreciate its good qualities

HAYASHI: Since my ability to send out information on my own is limited, I think it is important to involve as many people as possible and to increase the number of related parties. Looking at the staff of the Tourism Association, there used to be many people related to Ushimado, where it is located, but since it is a tourism association for the entire Setouchi City, we have actively recruited people who live and work in Oku and Osafune on a daily basis. The local network has expanded as they have become our members. The Tourism Association is developing a tourism project for young people called “Dating in Ushimado” to promote Ushimado as a

“sacred place for lovers” (certified by the NPO Regional Revitalization Support Center) and has been producing short movies since 2021. There are four short movies, spring, summer, fall, and winter, featuring heart-warming stories set in Ushimado, and all the actors are residents including children as well as their fathers and mothers. The movies are for tourism promotion, but when people they know are in the films, local people are interested in watching them, which seems to help them feel closer to the local community. The “Koi-Post (Love Mailbox)” project, which appears in the movie, has also been launched to encourage people to take the time to write their loved ones, including family members and lovers, letters in their handwriting, with a marine blue mailbox at the Setouchi City Tourist Center Setouchi Kirari-kan, a pink mailbox at the Ushimado Olive Garden, and a retro red mailbox at the Yumeji Art Museum Yumeji Birthplace Memorial Museum in Oku. When they entered the “Sacred Place for Lovers Regional Revitalization Award” in 2022, they were selected as one of the 12 winning organizations as it would lead to sustainable regional revitalization and countermeasures against the declining birthrate.

FUNO: In this region, we take it for granted that there are vegetables, a history that continues to be handed down from generation to generation, and many interesting and fascinating adults who pass it on to the next generation. I especially hope that children learn about the good qualities of their hometown. So we need to have a strong local community, and we need to increase the number of people who are willing to help. I believe that is our role and the point of our efforts. In Ushimado and the neighboring districts of Oku and Tamatsu, local volunteers formed the “Setouchi Ushimado Tamatsu Countryside Stays Promotion Council” in FY2021 to revitalize the region and started “Setouchi Countryside Stays Navigation,” a stay-type tour that visitors can



sword-forging areas” in Setouchi City, and a hands-on event for children to familiarize themselves with sword culture held in the fall of 2022 has had a greater-than-expected response. A national treasure owned by the city, the “Long Sword (Tachi), Unsigned Ichimonji (a.k.a. Sanchomo),” has also become an essential tourist resource. Since this area has such a rich history, culture, and treasures, I thought it was important to create opportunities for local children to experience them daily. When these children become adults, they may stay in their hometowns, work in jobs that will help to promote the area, or become key persons in disseminating information about the unique charms of the area. I have high hopes for such possibilities, and I think this is one of the ways to develop networks.

Aiming to increase the population involved and create a bright future for the city

FUNO: Setouchi City was created in 2004. The name was derived from the image of a scenic, warm, and peaceful area benefiting from the Seto Inland Sea. At the time, I was a member of the merger council that selected the name, and at first, some people said, “It’s a name that doesn’t tell us where it is.” But now it seems that many people are considering moving to the area because of the name, and I realize that image is also important. I used to take this environment and scenery for granted, but once I learned that the scenery is precious because of the beauty of the many islands and that this is the Setonaikai National Park, it became a more important place for me. It is not something that is taken for granted from other people’s points of view. I want to cherish the “wind outside” that makes me aware of this fact.

HAYASHI: We sometimes receive phone calls with inquiries mistaking the Setouchi City Tourism Association for the Setouchi

Tourist Association. While we need to provide more information on what exactly Setouchi City is like, we can see that the name alone represents the Setouchi area. This is an area in Okayama Prefecture with a high retention rate of Regional Development Cooperation Volunteers, who remain in the area after their term of office ends and start their own businesses, and are actually active in a tangible way. The people in the area are hospitable and friendly, and I am sure that the existence of deep roots here keeps people who come from outside from leaving. We need to create opportunities for people to visit Setouchi City and stay for a certain period of time, even if it is a workation. Inbound tourism is gradually returning, but it is very important to communicate the region’s pride and increase the number of people interested in this region, Setouchi City. I believe that Setouchi City will have a bright future if we keep trying to increase the number of people interested in the area. As a fan of the region myself, I will continue to make such efforts.



From left: Townscape of Shiomachi Karakoto Street, Pink mailbox at Ushimado Olive Garden, View of Ushimado, and View of Mushiage Bay from Setonoakebono (Mt. Ohirayama), selected as one of the “Japan’s 100 Best Sunrise Views”

fully enjoy agriculture, fishing, and nature experiences unique to the area. Our goal is to enchant visitors through the experience in this region. For example, sugarcane is usually associated with Okinawa but is also grown in Setouchi City. One of the main attractions of our visitors’ tours is the experience of sugarcane harvesting, squeezing juice, and boiling it down to make Kuromitsu (sugarcane syrup). Students from Oku High School also organized a sightseeing tour in December 2022 for elementary and junior high school students in Setouchi City to show them the local attractions. I helped them create plans, and they were very impressed when they experienced digging for potatoes before making plans. This area has a unique quality that you can only discover through your own activities. The tour also included making tornado potatoes and fishing in Ushimado based

on their actual experience. However, the circle will not expand unless we value the people who play a central role in making the community thrive, so we need to come up with policies and budgets that make it easier for them to engage in these activities. **HAYASHI:** Ushimado has long flourished as a port town where boats waiting for the wind and tides were crowded. In the Edo period (1603-1867), Ushimado became a port of call for the diplomatic mission “Chosen Tsushinshi (the Korean Emissary)” sent by the Korean Dynasty. Ushimado then had such economic strength and human resources that it hosted a group of about 500 people, mainly at Honrenji Temple. Shiomachi Karakoto Street is also a very valuable street where the international exchange took place during the period of national seclusion. Osafune, as well as Ushimado, is becoming well known as one of “the major Japanese



Setouchi Countryside Stays Navigation In the Ushimado and Tamatsu areas of Setouchi City, visitors can enjoy dynamic nature, agriculture, fishing, and food experiences while staying in the area. Trekking, sea kayaking, strolling along Kuroshima Venus Road, harvesting fresh vegetables, watching oysters being landed, and other experiences unique to this area are offered to visitors to show them the charm of the area. With local people as experts, instructors, and supporters, visitors can encounter “authentic experiences” in the farming and fishing village life rooted in lifestyle, culture, history, and traditions, as well as industry.

Finless porpoises are a barometer
of the richness of the sea
Preserving an Ecologically Balanced Ocean
for Future Generations

Mr. ONOZUKA, Masahiro

Representative, Ushimado Water Trail

— Fascinated by the Seto Inland Sea, Mr. Onozuka, Masahiro of Ushimado Water Trail serves as a sea kayaking tour guide based in the Ushimado Islands. His encounter with the finless porpoise led him to establish a group to watch over them, and he is also committed to preserving the natural environment of the Seto Inland Sea.

The splendor of the Seto Inland Sea, we can experience it through sea kayaking

The Seto Inland Sea, always calm, is a perfect nature for sea kayaking. It's beautiful, gentle, and easy for humans to touch. Whenever I go around the tip of the island and suddenly see the sunset, I always think, "This is so cool." Kayaking at night, the moonlight and the mysterious blue-white glow of the sea fireflies are as beautiful as the light-up lights at a theme park. When I was an elementary school student, I was thrown into a mountain village in my birthplace of Gifu during summer

vacation and played around in the mountains and rivers every day. Perhaps because of my early experiences, I still love nature and have been kayaking in the same place for more than 20 years. And even though I know all the scenery I can see, I never get tired of it because it always looks different. The Seto Inland Sea is wonderful in that way, too. I used to have a kayak store in Osaka, selling kayaks imported from Canada in my store and wholesaling them to kayak stores all

profile Born in Gifu Prefecture in 1962 and raised in Osaka. After graduating high school, he worked for a movie theater management company and other companies. Encountering the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, he was inspired to make a career out of what he loved doing. He moved to Canada in 1997, and acquired distributor rights in Japan through negotiations with a local kayak manufacturer and learned the basics of kayak guiding. Established Ushimado Water Trail in 1999. In 2008, he became the chairman of the Association to Watch Over the Finless Porpoises of Ushimado. In 2020, he became the chairman of the Maejima Green Island Experience Exchange Council.

over Japan. We also hold hands-on test-ride events in various places to let people know the appeal of kayaks. We used to drive around pulling a special trailer with about 15 kayaks loaded, so it stood out a lot. Maybe that's why, after coming to Ushimado a few times, local people working to revitalize the community approached me. This led me to open a store at events and for limited periods of time. Originally I liked the place so much that I came to visit for pleasure, so in 1999, I moved to Ushimado, pulled out of my store and house in Osaka, and started the "Ushimado Water Trail." I arrange various kayaking tours based on Maejima Island, about 5 minutes by ferry from the mainland. While touring around the Ushimado Islands, we offer information on recommended

scenery and islands in the Setonaikai National Park area. I have a special feeling about the name "national park." When I first visited the United States at the age of 19, I camped in Yosemite National Park. The park ranger explained a lot about the nature of the park to me. I was so impressed with the park ranger's explanation of the park's natural environment that I began to yearn for a career in protecting nature and communicating the importance of nature. Although I didn't become a park ranger, looking back on my life as an elementary school student, I feel that being a kayak guide, which is what I am today, is something I was meant to do. It is truly a calling.



A guide with extensive knowledge of the sea of Ushimado, ONOZUKA Masahiro produces various sea kayaking tours, including the standard One-Day Trail and Half-Day Trail, which have continued to mature since their opening in 1999. The classic one-day and half-day trails are so packed with the charm of sea kayaking and the Seto Inland Sea that even first-timers can enjoy the experience fully. Various programs are available, including courses to open a beach café or beach restaurant on a paddled deserted island, courses to enjoy beach camping, and courses for elementary school-children and older can participate, and even include a finless porpoise workshop.





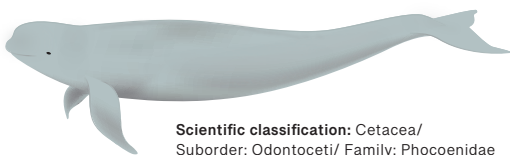
photo by Jin Inomata

Seto Inland Sea, a habitat of the finless porpoise, to prevent its decline

The Seto Inland Sea is home to a cute little creature called a “finless porpoise.” I first became aware of their existence after moving to Ushimado. When I was kayaking, I often came across strange creatures, and when I looked them up, I found out that they were finless porpoises. I wanted to work on conveying the importance of the natural environment, so I attended an environmental protection event where a sea turtle expert and now a professor at the Okayama University of Science, Dr. KAMEZAKI, Naoki was present. I told him about the finless porpoise. Apparently, there was a common understanding among scholars that they were no longer around here, so Dr. Kamezaki and his student, a finless porpoise researcher, came to Ushimado right away. I took them out on a kayak, and they were both surprised to see a finless porpoise that happened to appear right in front of them. So they decided to investigate this matter properly, and we launched the “Association to Watch over the Finless Porpoises in

About Finless Porpoise

The finless porpoise is a member of the whale and dolphin family and has inhabited the Seto Inland Sea for centuries. Known in the Seto Inland Sea as “nameso” or “degondou,” they are familiar to people who live near the sea. They are very active in the sea, but when they appear on the surface, they glide silently there. If you hear a blowing sound (breathing sound), it is a sign that they are nearby. Past surveys have reported a decrease in the number of finless porpoises in the Seto Inland Sea.



Scientific classification: Cetacea/
Suborder: Odontoceti/ Family: Phocoenidae
Length: 140-180 cm/adult, 70-80 cm/natal
Body weight: 40-70 kg

Ushimado” in 2008. We conducted a fact-finding survey of the sea area around Ushimado and held observation sessions by ferry, workshops, camps, and other events. In 2012, we visited about 130 locations in 11 prefectures along the Seto Inland Sea coast from Oita to Wakayama, including fishery cooperatives, yacht harbors, and other places, to interview people about the names they use for the finless porpoise. It turned out that there were as many as 35. Since they have no value to humans, they have lived without attracting much attention. The fact that so many local names have survived proves that they were once abundant throughout the Seto Inland Sea and were always close to humans. I collected as much information as I could on sightings in each area to find that although it is lucky to see them now, 50 or 60



photo by Jin Inomata

The Association to Watch Over the Finless Porpoises of Ushimado has been conducting professional and steady activities such as surveys of the names of finless porpoises along the coast of the Seto Inland Sea and continuous fixed-point observation of finless porpoises. In addition, the group has been actively engaged in finless-porpoises-watching events, educational activities to arouse interest in finless porpoises and the nature of the Seto Inland Sea, and beach combing to pick up marine debris.

years ago, they were so numerous that they were called “stray cats, stray dogs, and stray finless porpoises.” Many people said that as the number of fish to feed on decreased, they hardly saw finless porpoises. At the top of the pyramid of organisms in the Seto Inland Sea, the finless porpoise is a symbol of the richness of the sea and is considered a barometer of the health of the natural environment and ecosystem. If we want to protect the finless porpoise, we must look at the entire ecosystem, not just the finless porpoise, but we must protect the small plankton, seaweed, and small fish that support the bottom of the pyramid, or the ecosystem will not be healthy. During Rapid Economic Growth, the Seto Inland Sea became eutrophic due to wastewater from factories and households, causing plankton to bloom abnormally and causing frequent red tides, making it impossible

for fish to live there. Although the Act on Special Measures concerning Conservation of the Environment of the Seto Inland Sea (the Seto Inland Sea Law) and other laws enacted by the government in the 1970s greatly improved water quality, strict discharge controls have now resulted in oligotrophication. Now, the government is trying to restore the sea under the revised Seto Inland Sea Law, which came into effect in April 2022. The Seto Inland Sea is a sea that can become clean or polluted depending on human wisdom, technology, and discretion. The United Nations has set SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) and society as a whole is becoming more and more environmentally conscious. I would like to continue to watch over the finless porpoises and pass on to future generations an abundant ocean where finless porpoises can live.

PICK UP SPOT

Kuroshima Island

An island with a circumference of 1.6 km off the coast of Ushimado, Setouchi City, designated as a youth island by Okayama Prefecture. “Kuroshima Venus Road,” a sand path connecting the three islands that appears only when the tide is low, is a popular romantic spot. The road, which connects Kuroshima Island to Nakano-Koshima Island and Hanano-Koshima Island in an arch shape, is about 800 meters long and can be crossed on foot, but it only appears for about two hours at a time. On Nakano-Koshima Island, there is a heart-shaped natural stone called “Heart of the Goddess,” which is the inspiration for the name “Venus Road.” It is said that if you walk across the mysterious sand path created by nature and touch the stone, your romantic feelings will be conveyed to the person you are thinking of, just like the way the islands are connected, and your romance will be fulfilled.



Kuroshima Island, where eelgrass beds spread, provides an opportunity to learn about the Seto Inland Sea environment

Eelgrass beds play an extremely important role in shaping the ecosystem of the Seto Inland Sea. Eelgrass is a seagrass that grows in shallow waters where sunlight can reach it, and it cleans the water quality and releases oxygen through photosynthesis. Eelgrass beds are called the “cradle of the sea” because they provide a habitat and spawning ground for young and small fish. In the Seto Inland Sea, the shallows along the coast have been reclaimed and the eelgrass beds are disappearing rapidly, but there are still rich colonies of eelgrass around Kuroshima Island. Since Kuroshima Island named the sand path that appears at low tide “Venus Road,” the number of visitors has increased and the island has become a popular tourist spot. But everyone leaves satisfied after taking SNS-worthy photos. Kuroshima Island, with its seagrass beds and sandbars, is the perfect island for environmental education in the Seto Inland Sea. Even without naming it Venus Road, it has a lot of charm by nature. I would like to introduce it more. I would like visitors to realize the true value of the island as an island rich in nature within the Setonaikai National Park.



“The unique qualities of this place” that we want the locals to notice

Personally, the Seto Inland Sea is a treasure. The Seto Inland Sea provides me with a source of livelihood, and I consider myself to be a part of the Seto Inland Sea. If you are looking for a clean sea, you may go to other places such as Okinawa or Hawaii, but the Seto Inland Sea has its advantages as a sato-umi. For example, on Maejima Island, there is “Yuhi-Koen (Sunset Park),” where you can enjoy a beautiful view of Kuroshima Island and the setting sun, as well as a group of stones left over from the construction of Osaka Castle in the early Edo period. On the way to the observatory from the group of remaining stones, there is a recommended spot with a superb view of the Seto Inland Sea and the town of Ushimado. It is one thing to bring in new facilities to attract more tourists, but I think it would be fine if we could demonstrate the full potential of the area. If we try to do more than we are capable of, we may not be able to continue, or we may lose the original goodness of the area. I hope that we can promote the nature, history, culture, scenery, and other aspects of the area little by little, so that they become a local specialty and attraction, and the Setonaikai National Park as a whole will thrive. When I first came to Ushimado and organized the Sunset Trail, I remember being shocked to hear a local say, “I heard they charge money to show the sunset there.” I had no intention of doing that at all. I was just communicating what I thought was “cool” about living in this area in a usual way. The sun and moon are everywhere, but I just wanted to convey how wonderful the sunsets and

moonlight are that can only be seen here. The Seto Inland Sea is a sea that is familiar to people’s lives, and for the locals, it is usual to have this view every day. I think that is probably where the divergence was. Even people born and raised here and who have lived here for decades have no idea that this whole area is a national park. Even the finless porpoises. Most of the people who attend our observation meetings are from the Kansai area and other distant places, and at first, the locals were not very interested in the meetings. As the number of visitors increases and attention is drawn to the area, people’s eyes change, their interest gradually grows, and they finally realize the unique qualities of the area. I am happy to see this happen.



PICK UP SPOT

Maejima Island

The island has a circumference of about 10 km and is located off the coast of Ushimado, Setouchi City. Also known as “Midorijima (Green Island),” the island is rich in nature with beautiful pine forests, and the entire island is designated as Setonaikai National Park. There is a walking trail, a cycling course, one of the best fishing spots in Okayama Prefecture, and Remnant stones of Osaka Castle. In summer, visitors can enjoy swimming and marine sports, and the island is an easy way to experience a sense of something out of the ordinary. The view of the Seto Inland Sea from the Maejima Observatory (currently under maintenance) is indescribably spectacular, with the famous beautiful Ushimado sunset, which has been selected as one of “Japan’s 100 Best Sunset Views.”



Ajirozaki beach on the eastern end of Maejima Island is a scenic spot where you can have the very calm Seto Inland Sea all to yourself. At sunset, when the sky changes from orange to deep blue, the kayak tour “Sunset Trail” is recommended. The view of the sea glistening in the slanting sunlight is an irreplaceable experience.



A walking trail leading from the foot of the observatory. Walking on foot.



Remnant Stones of Osaka Castle

In the middle of the walking trail are the ruins of the stone quarry where the stones for the walls of Osaka Castle, which was rebuilt in the Edo period, were cut. This is a valuable site where each stage of the quarrying process can be reconstructed, showing the hard work of the past.



Maejima Observatory

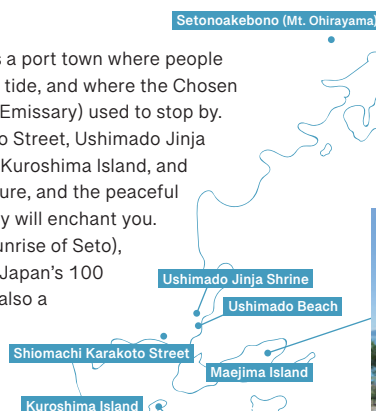
The Observatory (elevation of about 130 meters) is located in the middle of a 1.5-km one-way walking trail along the ridge of Mt. Maejima Higashiyama. From here, you can see not only Maejima Island but also the distinctive beauty of the Seto Inland Sea archipelago.

After passing through the remnant stones and climbing a slightly steep path, you will reach a recommended spot with a spectacular view. You can see Maejima Island, Ushimado, and the islands of the Seto Inland Sea below. At dusk, the townscape turns orange for an absolutely beautiful view.

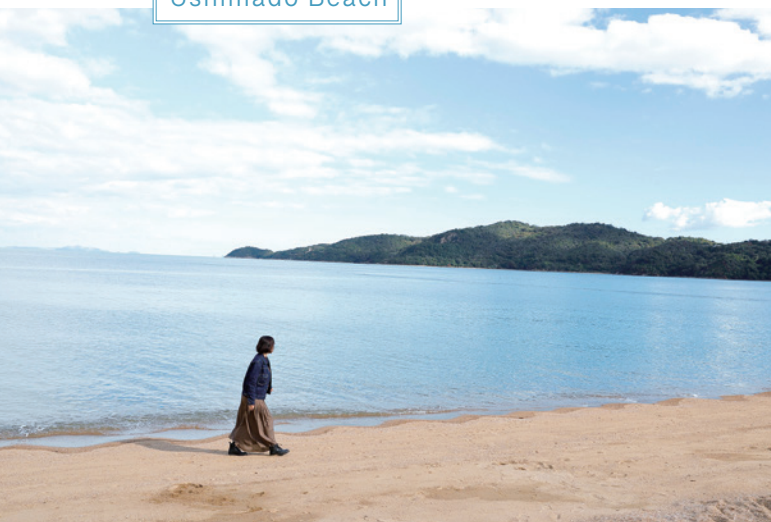


Setonaikai National Park
THE
SETOUCHI
STORY
Ushimado
Mushiage Bay

Ushimado prospered as a port town where people waited for the wind and tide, and where the Chosen Tsushinshi (the Korean Emissary) used to stop by. The Shiomachi Karakoto Street, Ushimado Jinja Shrine, Maejima Island, Kuroshima Island, and other islands rich in nature, and the peaceful and magnificent scenery will enchant you. The Setonoakebono (Sunrise of Seto), selected as one of the "Japan's 100 Best Sunrise Views," is also a must-see.



Ushimado Beach



It is a long, spacious, and calm beach with a view of the islands of the Seto Inland Sea far off and Maejima Island in front of you. The clear seawater, gently lapping waves, and long sandy beach lead to the far. You can feel refreshed just by strolling along the beach.

Ushimado Jinja Shrine

Observatory



From the Japanese gazebo observatory at the top of the steps, you can see Maejima Island and the Seto Inland Sea as far as the eye can see. Kameyama Park, where the observatory is located, is filled with the blooming of Rhododendron farrerae azaleas in spring.

Just next to Ushimado Beach!



Otorii gate



The sun shines through the leaves and the 364 stone steps seem to lead up to the sky. The sound of the waves can be heard as you ascend the steps, one by one, making your way up.



The clear, dignified air will soothe you.



Zuijinmon Gate

Passing through the second torii gate, you will see the Zuijinmon Gate. After climbing the stone steps ahead, you will soon see the hall of worship, Haiden.

Honden (main sanctuary)



The Honden (main sanctuary), an important cultural property of Setouchi City, sits behind the Haiden (worship hall).

Haiden (worship hall)



Ushimado Shrine is the guardian of Tobi, dedicated to the spirit of the land of Ushimado and the ancestors of consecutive generations. Many ema (votive tablets) and picture frames are dedicated to the Haiden and it is said that TAKEHISA, Yumeji, a poet and painter from Oku, saw these votive tablets and decided to pursue his painting career.

Senior Priest, Ushimado Jinja Shrine

Mr. OKAZAKI, Nobuhide



A shrine closely associated with the legend behind the name of the place

All of the shrine's 30,000 tsubos (9,760 square meters) of land is designated as a special zone of the Setonaikai National Park, and we put a lot of effort into the maintenance of the shrine so that visitors can worship in a pleasant environment. The main deity of the shrine is Empress Jingu. According to "Bizen-no-kuni-fudoki itsubun," when Empress Jingu was crossing the sea of Bizen by boat, a big bull demon appeared. Sumiyoshi Myojin, who was disguised as an old man, grabbed the horns of the bull demon, threw it down, and defeated it, giving rise to the name "Ushimarobi," which later became the current name "Ushimado." The shrine has deep ties to the region in terms of its history. The main approach to the shrine is surrounded by trees, creating a tunnel of green like a forest where Totoro lives. From the observatory (Kameyama Park) on the approach to the shrine, visitors can enjoy a magnificent view of the Seto Inland Sea, azaleas in full bloom in spring, the beautiful blue sky in summer, and the autumn leaves in fall, each with its seasonal expression. This shrine is where you can find a god who pushes you forward, a healing forest where you can recharge your energy, and a place where you can wash your mind and heart. We would be happy if you could drop by and remember its existence.





Townscape that remains as it was in the past

The street retains many vestiges of the Edo period through the Showa period when it flourished as a port town where people waited for the wind and tide. Nostalgic buildings such as Honrenji Temple and the ruins of a Guesthouse associated with the Chosen-Tsushinshi (Korean Emissary), a former bank that is a registered tangible cultural property of Japan, and the ruins of a lantern hall all stand side by side, reminding us of Ushimado's history.

Ushimado Kaiyu Cultural Museum



Built as a police station in 1887, this white Western-style building stands out against the blue sky. It is a Registered Tangible Cultural Property of Japan and currently exhibits materials related to the Chosen-Tsushinshi (Korean Emissary).

Honrenji Temple



Honrenji Temple, built in the Muromachi period (1333-1573), was used as an inn for Chosen-Tsushinshi (Korean Emissary). The main hall, the inner gate, and the Banjindo are designated as National Important Cultural Properties of Japan, and the precincts on the hill where the three-story pagoda is located offer a panoramic view of the sea at Ushimado.

Ushimado Musée Cultural Centre



Built in 1915 as the Ushimado Bank, its red bricks are impressive. It was later used as the former Ushimado Branch of the Chugoku Bank and is now a popular facility for introducing the culture of the street.

Togo-ato (Ruins of Lantern Hall)



It was built to protect the safety of ships traveling to and from the "Karakoto-no-Seto." It was demolished during the Meiji period (1868-1912), leaving the stone walls, but was restored in 1988 (Showa 63).

Wakaba-ya (Higashimattori Family Residence)



A grand mansion with a teahouse, back room, and storehouse.

Shiomachi Karakoto Street

Majestic view from Mt.Ohirayama



Setonoakebono (the Sunrise of Seto)



The sunrise seen from Mushiage, a port town where oyster cultivation is flourishing, is called "Setonoakebono." As the sun rises, the sky, sea, and islands turn a beautiful golden color. The view is majestic and has been selected as one of "Japan's 100 Best Sunrise Views." There are three viewing points: Mt. Ohirayama, Tachibana, and Mushiage Bay. Climbing Mt. Ohirayama offers a magnificent view of the Seto Inland Sea with its oyster rafts and the beauty of the many islands. We invite you to witness the sunrise at this famous spot, written in a waka poem in the Heian period (794-1185).

The Setouchi Story

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Editor's Note

I had the opportunity to interview people who think about the present and future of the region from various aspects such as tourism, education, and environmental concerns by the Seto Inland Sea, where the landscape as far as the eye can see is a national park. What struck me as I listened to their stories was the brightness in their eyes. The overwhelming natural beauty of the national park, the relaxed atmosphere of the Seto Inland Sea, the calm sea of Ushimado with its old prosperous port townscape, and the view from "Mt. Yudachi Ukeyama," featured in the cover photo of this booklet... I found once again that the fascinating scenery we enjoy today is the result of the efforts of residents. We hope that "The Setouchi Story" will help as many people as possible to learn about the region's activities. And may the thoughts of those involved in various fields in this area be conveyed to the world through this booklet. Finally, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to all those who helped us produce this booklet.

※The data in this booklet is as of March 2023.

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Setonaikai National Park Website
<http://www.env.go.jp/park/setonaikai/>