

<https://www.env.go.jp/park/setonaikai/>

The Setouchi Story

SETONAIKAI
NATIONAL PARK



Ministry of the Environment
2022.3

Tied to the Setonaikai National Park

Introduction

What do you think of when you hear the word “national park”?

You may have an image of an expanse of virgin forest, inhabited by wild animals.

National parks, which are designated by the Japanese government as one of Japan’s representative natural landscapes, are characterized by the diversity of their environments, including forests, farmlands, and villages.

While there are places where nature remains almost untouched, you can also experience the history and culture of the region, which are interwoven with nature, people, and life.

The Seto Inland Sea (Setonaikai) is a scenic area, with a blue sea for as far as the eye can see. This beautiful scenery of countless islands of various sizes has been praised by many geographers as “the most fascinating place in the world.” No wonder it was designated as the first “National Park” of Japan.

The islands and port towns of the Seto Inland Sea, which have prospered since ancient times as a domestic and international shipping route, are a place where nature and human life coexist. The scenery gives a sense of nostalgia. Even though the landscape has changed over time, it is still loved today.

In *the Setouchi Story* you will discover new charms of the Setonaikai National Park that you may not have noticed yet, by getting in touch with the thoughts of the people who live and work there. The magnificent landscapes in which “nature and people coexist” are the starting point of this national park. The words of people who are fascinated by this region will give you a chance to think anew about your hometown. The sights that should be familiar to you may strike a chord with you.

Each person’s story is filled with love for the Setouchi area.

Through *the Setouchi Story*, may your life be enriched!

Setonaikai National Park

Islands and the Sea That Keep Shining

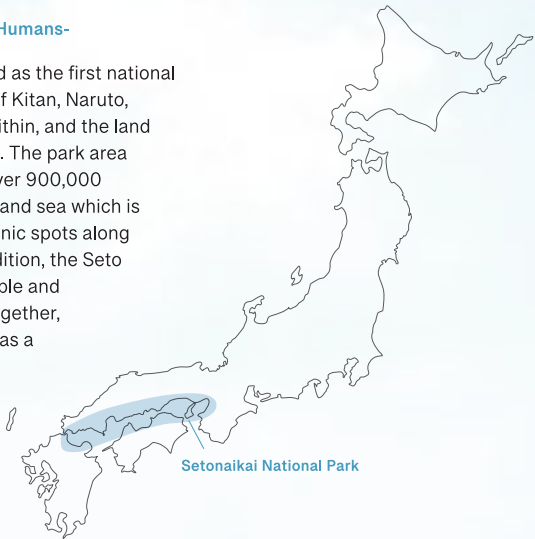
- An Inland Sea Archipelago Landscape with a Harmony between Nature and Humans-

Setonaikai National Park together with Unzen and Kirishima were designated as the first national parks of Japan in 1934. The vast area of the sea surrounded by five straits of Kitan, Naruto, Kanmon, Akashi, and Hoyo, with Bisanseto Strait at the center, the islands within, and the land area overlooking such sea and islands have been assigned as the park areas. The park area extends over 11 prefectures and is the largest national park in Japan with over 900,000 hectares including the sea area. It features archipelago landscapes of the inland sea which is comprised of a large number of islands of various sizes. There are many scenic spots along the coastline where these extraordinary landscapes can be observed. In addition, the Seto Inland Sea is a region where cultures have prospered from early on, and people and nature have coexisted. An amiable scenery of nature and people dwelling together, such as terraced fields on the islands and port towns which were developed as a place for people engaged in the fishery to wait for the tide to turn, is one of the biggest charms of this place.

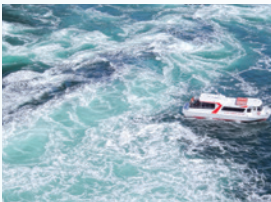
[Date of Designation] March 16,1934

[Area] 67,308 ha (Land area) 837,541 ha (Sea area)

[Relative Prefectures] Osaka Pref., Hyogo Pref., Wakayama Pref., Okayama Pref., Hiroshima Pref., Yamaguchi Pref., Tokushima Pref., Kagawa Pref., Ehime Pref., Fukuoka Pref., Oita Pref.



Mt. Washu (Kurashiki City, Okayama Prefecture)



Naruto Whirlpools (Tokushima Prefecture)



Mt. Shiude (Kagawa Prefecture)



Hoogahara (Ehime Prefecture)

Mt. Ojigatake, a series of beautiful exposed rock formations, and Mt. Washu, a panoramic view of archipelago landscapes

We will be visiting two areas in Okayama Prefecture; the Mt. Ojigatake area in Tamano City, and the Shimotsui and Mt. Washu area in Kurashiki City. Both areas offer panoramic views of Bisanseto Strait and the beauty of the archipelago landscapes of the Seto Inland Sea. Ms. HASUI, Rio, a former Tamano Hohoemi Marine Ambassador who knows the local area well, will be your guide as you tour around the park and discover its charms while listening to the stories of people involved in tourism such as hotels and cafes, and public transportation in the surrounding areas, and people involved in the national park, such as local industries and local governments.

We will start with the sightseeing train that will take us to Setonaikai National Park and the Uno area in Tamano City, the gateway to the islands of the Seto Inland Sea.



I will guide you through the fascinating people and places associated with the Setonaikai National Park!

Ms. HASUI, Rio

The Setouchi Story's guide

Born in Okayama City, Okayama Prefecture in 1998. Tamano is where she and her family often went to play from childhood, including Omocho-Oukoku (Toy's Kingdom) and Shibukawa beach. Hoping to help promote her favorite places full of memories to people in and outside of the prefecture, she worked as a Tamano Hohoemi Marine Ambassador from May 2017 to August 2019 (2 years and 3 months) when she was a student.





It gave me a chance to dig deeper
into the highlights of the Setouchi area
The most beautiful scenery I encountered only
because I served on this train as a conductor

Ms. KOBASHI, Rie

Conductor of La Malle de Bois

Ms. KOZUKA, Emiko

Furusato-okoshi-honbu
(Hometown Revitalization Headquarters)

— The sightseeing train “La Malle de Bois” takes passengers to a spectacular view of the Setonaikai National Park.
This is a story about the thoughts of the conductors of the sightseeing train.

Experiencing the joy of learning and communicating about the charm of the Setouchi area

KOBASHI : La Malle de Bois (a.k.a. La Malle) operated by the JR-West Okayama branch is a special sightseeing train that travels around the Setouchi area. I volunteered to be a conductor on that train because I wanted to promote my hometown area more. On a sightseeing train, the conductor values the interaction with the various passengers and can have a rich conversation, while on a regular train, the conductor and passengers have only the minimum conversation required for business. I want to share a lot of local attractions with the passengers, so I have been taking

more and more time of my days off to stroll around Uno Station and check out the local restaurants and photography spots that are recommended. This has allowed me to learn more about the area, and to challenge the local certification test, called “Sunny Land Okayama Certification Test,” which tests one’s knowledge of Okayama’s history and culture.

KOZUKA : I climbed Mt. Ojigatake, which is designated as the Setonaikai National Park, last year for the first time. The view from the top of the mountain was so spectacular that it made me forget

profiles / KOBASHI, Rie

Born in Okayama City, Okayama prefecture in 1981. Joined West Japan Railway Company (JR-West) in 1999. After working at Shin-Osaka Station, Okayama Conductors’ Station, and Okayama Station, she became a conductor when La Malle de Bois began operation in April 2016.

KOZUKA, Emiko

Born in Okayama Prefecture in 1984, she joined West Japan Railway Company in 2003 and is currently a member of the Hometown Revitalization Headquarters, Planning Section, JR-West Okayama Branch. She worked as a conductor at La Malle de Bois for about two years when she was in the Okayama Conductors’ Station.

everything and I could have stayed there for hours and never gotten tired of it. I am from the southwest of Okayama Prefecture, so I have rarely been to the Uno area. If I hadn’t been involved with La Malle, I wouldn’t have known that such a wonderful place existed. As part of its efforts to “coexist with the local community,” the Okayama Branch is developing the “Hometown Revitalization Project” to discover “good things” that lie dormant in the Okayama and Bingo areas and are unique to this area. The “Furusato Appare Nintei” certification is given to the best among the “good things,” and Mt. Ojigatake is one of them. Since I started working on the La Malle, I have become more interested in the little things about the local area. I also learned for the first time that the Sasagase River, which we used to pass by on the regular train, is the river where the peach is said to have flowed in the old story *Momotaro*. The more I learned, the more I wanted to follow the story. I also felt the joy of sharing the information I had gained with my passengers.

KOBASHI : Starting with “La Malle Setouchi (for Uno area)”, “La Malle Shimanami (for Onomichi area)”, “La Malle Kotohira (for Kotohira area)” and “La Malle Bizen Osafune (for Hinase area)” are now in service. Since the Seto-Ohashi Line is under the jurisdiction of JR Shikoku from the middle of the line, both the train driver and conductor change at Kojima Station, but the conductor of the “La Malle Kotohira” can remain on board as an attendant (guide). I didn’t know anything about Nabeshima, with its impressive white lighthouse that caught my eye while traveling along the Seto Ohashi Bridge, and Mt. Iino (also known as Sanuki Fuji), which straddles the cities of Marugame and Sakaide, looked and felt different depending on the angle and time of day. It was truly a series of new discoveries. “When the Seto Ohashi Bridge opened, the Yoshima parking area was very crowded. I was brought here as a child,” reminiscing about the times, I spend my days experiencing the charms of the Seto Inland Sea and its surrounding area.

KOZUKA : It’s rare for us to work on another company’s train like this. I also will never forget the beauty of the Seto Inland Sea that I saw while traveling along the Seto Ohashi Bridge. The fact that I was able to encounter that view not as a passenger but as an attendant moved me deeply.



La Malle de Bois started its service in April 2016 under the nickname “La Malle Setouchi.” The name of the train means “wooden travel bag” in French. The pure white body of the train is decorated with words related to travel and its windows are framed with black-bordered travel bags. Inside the train, there are spacious seats on the luxurious wooden floor and counter seats facing the

windows. There is also a bike space for four bicycles (reservation required) where bicycles can be loaded without folding. There are also books that introduce tourist spots along the route, and at the onboard sales counter, which has a collection of local goodies, you can enjoy souvenirs and food and drink in collaboration with local specialties.

An artistic sightseeing train filled with “Setouchi hospitality”

KOZUKA : La Malle de Bois is the first sightseeing train operated by the Okayama Branch. The train is full of attractions that no other regular trains are comparable to. Its unique appearance allures you to travel, and elaborately designed seats allow you to enjoy the scenery to the fullest. Particularly worth seeing are the travel-inspired artworks on display inside the train, some of which you can touch and appreciate! At the onboard sales counter, you can find products certified as “Furusato Appare,” as well as original goods, boxed lunches, and sweets, and even the passengers from Okayama Prefecture are often heard to say, “I didn't know there was such a specialty.” Many repeat passengers say that they can enjoy the extraordinary experience for a time when they can experience the good things of the Setouchi region while enjoying the scenery of the mountains and sea.

KOBASHI : There used to be a joyful train (the train for groups) called “Resort Saloon Festa” that ran in the Chugoku region, and the “mouth” on the front of the train, which looked like a fish, would open quickly and play a melody. I think that sightseeing trains are the ones that leave a lasting impression on you or allow you to experience surprises and emotions that ordinary trains do not. That's why the crew and I worked together to create a hospitality menu, including a handmade album of recommended places to take pictures and points of interest, to provide a memorable trip on La Malle. In the notebooks that passengers write freely about their memories of the trip, there are messages such as, “La Malle is the best!” and “I had a hard time after the earthquake, but now I'm happy



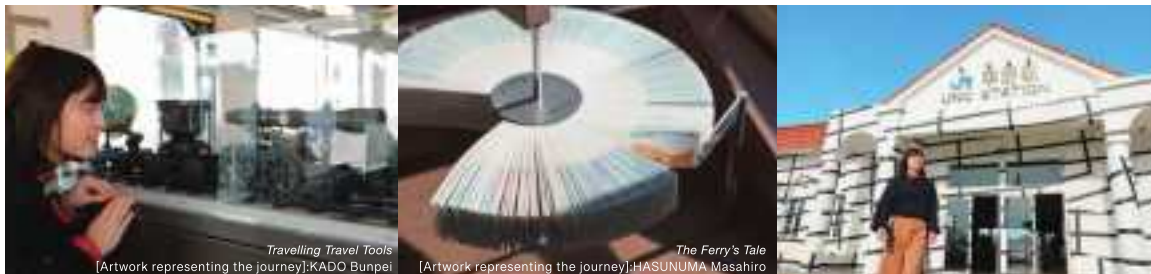
after riding La Malle.” I'm happy and encouraged by these messages.

KOZUKA : Italian artist Esther Stocker designed four stations, Tsuneyama, Hachihama, Bizentai, and Uno for the “JR Uno-port Line Art Project,” to be art stations. La Malle stops at Hachihama station for about seven minutes, so that is also a highlight. I am currently supporting La Malle as more of a behind-the-scenes person, but I hope to be able to create projects that will convey the appeal of La Malle not only to people outside Okayama Prefecture but also to people within the prefecture.

KOBASHI : Riding La Malle naturally brings smiles not only to our passengers but also to us, the crew. I want the locals to know more about the charm of La Malle. It's fun to ride for a change on holidays. I hope you enjoy it.



The sound of the bell, which resembles the “eight bells” rung by sailors to tell the time, is the signal for departure! The sophisticated interior of the train has a relaxed atmosphere like a hotel or cafe.



Inside the train are works by contemporary artists, and *The Ferry's Tale*, which uses a hand-cranked animation device called “Kinora,” can be enjoyed by turning the handle yourself. At Uno Station, the terminal station of “La Malle Setouchi,” you will be greeted by the installation of station building art created by Esther Stocker. The black lines on the white walls and the orange roofs shine against the blue sky, adding to the excitement of the trip.

Staff working on La Malle de Bois

Driver of La Malle de Bois



Mr. NISHIDA, Keisuke

The smiles of passengers as they travel are the source of my vitality

Many passengers take the sightseeing train to enjoy the riding itself, so we put a lot of effort into our operation. We recommend counter seats facing the window for those who want to take their time to enjoy the view, and reclining seats for two are the better choice for those who want to chat with family and friends. Be sure to experience the completely different atmosphere and interior decorations from regular trains. When the train stops at Hachihama Station on the way, I sometimes help passengers take commemorative photos, and it makes me happy to see their smiling faces. Since I am from Okayama City, I used to play at Shibukawa Beach when I was a child and still come here for fishing, so Setonaikai National Park is very familiar to me. I hope that my passengers will become familiar with it as well.



Sales staff at La Malle de Bois



Ms. KUBO, Yumi and Ms. IKEGAMI, Yurie

The charm of Setouchi through original goods

We have many repeat customers, so every time we see each other, we can have a good conversation like this; “I went here today and it was great.” We are both from Okayama City, but we sometimes learn about the attractions of Okayama from passengers who come from other prefectures. We have become familiar with the Setonaikai National Park area through our service on La Malle, and have had more opportunities to visit the area on our own. Collaborative goods with local specialties are very popular at the onboard sales counter. As many fashionable items appeared one after another, we liked them and bought this and that. Before we knew it, we had become fans of La Malle (laughs). The days of operation are limited, so when we are able to work, we feel excited from the morning. When you board the train, please listen to the original background music composed by Agematsu Mika, an arpa player.

The goodies on La Malle de Bois



Okayama Peach Cider (Okayama Direct Sales Network)

The carbonated beverage made from the hand-squeezed juice of fully ripe Shimizu White Peaches from Okayama prefecture. Rare wild cherry blossoms' honey produced by beekeepers in Okayama prefecture perfected the flavor.

Kurashiki Hampu Handbag (Medium) (KURASHIKI CANVAS Co., Ltd.)

A boat-shaped mini tote bag made of canvas woven in a striped pattern, with a gusset to hold more than it looks.



Pre-order
only
products

Traveling Setouchi Sweets Box (Fresh tart STYLE)

This is a set of five luxurious mini tarts made by STYLE, a fresh tart shop from Okayama, using seasonal fruits from Setouchi. This set is a treat, filled with the charm of Setouchi, sold only in La Malle de Bois. The original box in the shape of La Malle de Bois will become a memento of your trip.

mt masking tape set (KAMO I KAKOSHI CO., LTD.)

A set of 5 masking tapes including 2 patterns of La Malle de Bois original mts in an original box.



Recommended
by Ms. KOZUKA.



(JR limited product)
Tinplate La Malle de Bois

The Potential of Setouchi-Tourism

Contents to Enrich Your Life

Mr. KYOYA, Jun

Executive Director, UNOKOTOCHI Co., Ltd.

— In recent years, Mr. KYOYA Jun of UNOKOTOCHI Co., Ltd. has been focusing on tourism, taking advantage of the beautiful scenery created by the islands of the Seto Inland Sea (Setonaikai). He talked about the driving force behind the continued promotion of Tamano's attractions.

To promote the luxury and attractiveness of the Seto Inland Sea itself

The most attractive feature of Setonaikai National Park is the scenery of the Seto Inland Sea and the beauty of its many islands. When there is no wind, the Seto Inland Sea is like a lake with no waves at all. When you are out on the sea on a yacht cruise, you can experience the "calm" to the fullest. Since the opening of the Benesse House, museums and art spots have sprung up on Naoshima, which has become known as a mecca for contemporary art. In addition to the islands where the Setouchi Triennale is held every three years since 2010, there

are many other islands to visit, such as Manabeshima, which is popular for its fishery workers' cuisine, and Shishijima, which has a 1200-year-old giant camphor tree and a great view from the observatory.

Many fascinating and beautiful things lie dormant on each island that is not yet recognized by the world, such as food, scenery, and activities. Setouchi region has a lot of potential for tourism. The Seto Inland Sea itself is extremely luxurious, but there are still many people who haven't been to this area

profile KYOYA, Jun Born in Tokyo in 1965. Joined the Yasuda Trust & Banking Co., Ltd.(now Mizuho Trust & Banking Co., Ltd.) in 1988. Engaged in the relationship management business to provide solutions by coordinating various functions of the banking group companies, such as proposing financial, real estate, and human resource strategies to client companies. In 2008 transferred to Mizuho Bank, Ltd. In 2011 joined UNOKOTOCHI Co., Ltd. and became Executive Director. Appointed Representative Director of GIA Tamano Community Design in 2017.



UNOHOTEL

The hotel is just a 3-minute walk from Uno Port, the gateway to the islands scattered in the Seto Inland Sea. It is a lifestyle hotel that combines a homey casual atmosphere with an extraordinary, slightly luxurious atmosphere. The rooms with balconies allow you to enjoy the beautiful view of the Seto Inland Sea. At the hotel restaurant, you can enjoy casual and unpretentious dining focusing on seasonal ingredients from the Setouchi region. Just a minute walk from the hotel, there stands the "Setouchi Onsen Tamanoyu," which is popular because of a natural hot spring and Japanese cuisine.

and don't know about it even though they live in Okayama Prefecture. I am not originally from Okayama. I was born and raised in Tokyo, where I worked at a bank, but after moving to Tamano for good fortune, I had more opportunities to go out to sea for work and became more attracted to the charm of the Setouchi area. I cannot do my job unless I love it here, and I'm very happy to be able to work while enjoying the extraordinary. It's not that I didn't like my super-salaryman life or that I didn't find it interesting but that experience is still very much alive today. Of course, I know that I have to make the business work but I also enjoy the islands, the people, the scenery, and the conversations with the people there. All of these things are important and fresh to me, and I am "fertilized" by them every

day. At this age, I feel this way now. The Setonaikai National Park is not just Okayama, Kagawa, and Hiroshima, but it is a very large area. Many tourist attractions span multiple prefectures. I would like to work with cruise operators in other prefectures to create a cruise tour of the Seto Inland Sea from Hyogo to Okayama, Hiroshima, Yamaguchi, and Shikoku. Since there is a limit to the cooperation of the governments, it is important to build such a wide-area network on a private-sector basis. I believe that if we can build such a network on a private-sector basis and introduce and show the Setouchi area in a connected way, we will be able to convey the charm of the Seto Inland Sea to a wider audience and expand the range of things to do.

A newly created tourist base at the gateway to the islands of the Seto Inland Sea

The area around Uno Port used to be prosperous in the salt industry. UNOKOTOCHI Co., Ltd. was established in 1919 as a land management company for the salt field business. Originally, the company's main business was real estate leasing. When I came to this company, the city of Tamano was making a basic plan for the revitalization of the city center, and they owned a large tract of idle land east of Uno Station. We have also become involved in community development and tourism because we wanted to make the most of it to revitalize this area. What would make the Uno Port area more lively? We thought about it carefully together with the government. First, we opened the "Setouchi Onsen Tamanoyu," which offers a beautiful panoramic view of the archipelago of the Seto Inland Sea. As the population of rural areas continues to decline, so the population of Tamano City declines steadily every year. In

such adversity, the efforts of Naoshima and the Setouchi Triennale have been repeated year by year, so the number of inbound (foreign visitors to Japan) and other customers have increased gradually, and more and more people began to visit Uno. But to my surprise, they all passed through Uno. As soon as the passengers arrive at Uno Station, the ferries to the islands depart. In July last year, we opened the UNO HOTEL, a directly managed lodging facility in front of Uno Station, intending to become not only a base for people to travel to islands in the Seto Inland Sea, but also a base for customers to stay and explore the city. Accommodations are one element of a customer's stay. There is still unused land nearby, so we need to work with the local community to create a system that will allow many people to stay here, have an economic effect, and help revitalize the area.



The joy of the extraordinary experience in the Setouchi through cruises and uninhabited islands

At the time the city of Tamano created a basic plan for the "Tamano version of the City of Lifelong Activeness," a project to promote domestic migration and settlement using local resources, and began to move to revitalize itself through tourism, we wanted to do something new, so in April 2018 we started a yacht cruise business that tours the islands of the Seto Inland Sea. The yacht cruise business was originally proposed by the "Setouchi DMO (Destination Marketing / Management Organization)," a group of government and private sector organizations working together to revitalize the Setouchi region, based on the fact that yacht cruises are a customary vacation activity for Westerners and that the Seto Inland Sea is very calm and suitable for yacht cruises. We established a joint venture company, "Setouchi Yacht Charter," and started to market the company mainly to inbound customers. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we also began to promote domestically. Though we are trying various approaches such as making videos, sending out information on social media, publishing in magazines, and conducting monitoring tours, we are still not well known. I think you can't understand the comfortableness of a yacht until you try it. We also have plans for lunch cruises and sunset cruises that are easy to enjoy. However, like me, Japanese people tend to prefer a destination-oriented style of travel, where they go from place to place in

minutes. I want customers to spend a relaxing time on the yacht, eating and drinking and just cruising. This is the element that allows you to feel the charm of the Seto Inland Sea to the fullest. At the same time, we also opened a campground on our own uninhabited island, commonly known as KUJIRA-JIMA (whale island), located off the coast of Kojima in Kurashiki City. I myself visited this place with my friends when I was in my 20's. Of course, it was not as well maintained as it is now, so it was a "very unusual" place to visit. It was a chance to experience the charm of the Seto Inland Sea firsthand. After getting married and having children, I still come here every summer with my family. The special feeling of being able to rent out an uninhabited



On the open deck of the cruiser of Setouchi Yacht Charter with Mt. Ojigatake in the background.

island (limited to one group per day) seems to match the times we live in today. There is a wider range of users than yacht cruises, including families, companies, student groups, and weddings, and it is popular for various purposes. Whether it is the hotel or the yacht, visitors are very satisfied with the space and the time they spend there, and there are many repeat visitors, but it is difficult to convey the splendor of the Setouchi region with just words and pictures on flyers. The only way for people to understand is to actually visit and experience it, I think. I want to confidently introduce the charm and value of the Setouchi region to many people, including local people, and I hope they will enjoy it.

You will feel as if you are enjoying the Seto Inland Sea all to yourself, feeling the fresh sea breeze.



Luxury yacht cruise through the beautiful Seto Inland Sea



The onboard bedrooms, where you can stay overnight, are a stylish and relaxing space.

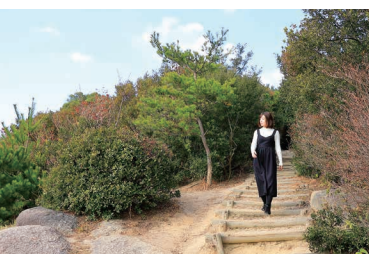


There are also special dining options such as Italian courses supervised by the chef.

Setouchi Yacht Charter uses a catamaran yacht, which allows you to enjoy comfortable cruising with less tilting and swaying. The ship is equipped with three guest rooms, a kitchen, toilet, washroom, and shower. The accommodation is up to six people for an overnight stay. There are various plans for touring the islands, including Naoshima, Teshima, Inujima, Shodoshima, and KUJIRA-JIMA, making it ideal for families and groups of friends. It's a great way to make unforgettable memories with your loved ones.

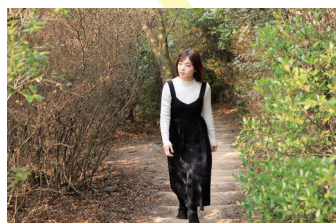
Setonaikai National Park
THE
SETOUCHI
STORY

*Walking along
Mt. Ojigatake*



From the parking lot, I headed for "Nikoniko-iwa," the symbol of Mt. Ojigatake. It took 15 minutes on foot. On the way, there is a rest stop where you can enjoy the view of the Seto Inland Sea.

Enjoying the forest bathing, I continued deeper into the mountain. When you reach the stairs on the way up, you're almost at Nikoniko-iwa!



Nikoniko-iwa
(Smile Rock)

I arrived at Nikoniko-iwa! As the name implies, the smiling face of the rock is very heartwarming. When you get closer, you will be amazed by the more powerful look of the rock than you imagined. It is a popular photo spot because you can walk right up to it.

Be careful when climbing. It's a rocky underfoot.



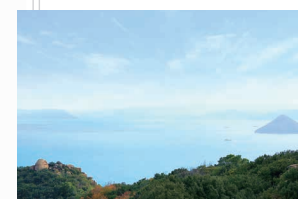
Mt. Ojigatake has many other uniquely shaped rocks with unique names, such as "Hitsuji-iwa (Sheep Rock)" and "Ojisan-iwa (Old Man Rock)," so be sure to look for them.

There are many rocks in front of Nikoniko-iwa, and the view from there is breathtaking. It takes a little courage, but please experience the beauty of the Seto Inland Sea with your whole body.



belk

The café locates in the Mt. Ojigatake Park Center. You can enjoy a cup of coffee which is carefully dripped one by one, and savor a luxurious time while looking at the quiet and magnificent scenery. The cheese terrine is also popular.



From the rooftop of Mt. Ojigatake Park Center, you can see Nikoniko-iwa.

Hand-drip coffee with special care



Every seat has a spectacular view.



The Setouchi Story

vol.3

Ideas inspired by the Setouchi landscape

A cozy place where you
feel like you've come home

Mr. SHIMADA, Shunsuke

Representative, ITONAMI Corporation

— Mr. SHIMADA, Shunsuke of ITONAMI Corporation, a company that plans and sells denim products made in Kojima and promotes the appeal of denim through various projects. I visited his base of operation, the “DENIM HOSTEL float,” a directly managed store and lodging facility at the foot of Mt. Ojigatake, to talk with him.

A base of operations in a production area with beautiful scenery, serving as a bridge between locals and tourists

The Seto Inland Sea, islands floating in the sea, boats coming and going, the Seto Ohashi Bridge, and the mountains of Shikoku. This scenery, which is also the motif of the logo of the ITONAMI brand, inspires me to think flexibly. I have more time to sit and think about things, and since I can watch the sunset, I can naturally feel the cycle of the day.

The sunsets are beautiful, and no matter how many times I see them, I am always impressed by their beauty. Hyogo Prefecture, where I was born and raised, also has Harimanada Sea, which is part of the Setonaikai National Park, but even though it's a short distance away, I rarely went there to see the sea. But the view here is incomparably better. The customers like it very much, too. Just like denim, which develops a unique texture as it ages,

I wonder if this view will look different depending on who I am at the time. I'm sure the scenery would feel different if I came here on a fleeting holiday after a busy day of work in the city. Originally, I started a denim-related business in Okayama City, selling denim from a mobile store, but I decided to establish a base of operations in Kojima, Kurashiki City, where jeans produce, where producers are nearby, and where you can enjoy the beautiful scenery of the Seto Inland Sea. I wanted to take root there and convey the goodness of denim. While looking around for a place, I happened to come across this wooden one-story building. I had never been to Shibukawa Coast or Mt. Ojigatake before, and to be honest, I had no idea there was such a beautiful place in Kojima. So I myself was lucky. Now that I've

profile

Born in Kakogawa City, Hyogo Prefecture in 1994. In 2014, while still a student at Okayama University, he started a denim-related business with his older brother YAMAWAKI, Youhei, and launched the brand EVERY DENIM in 2015. They did crowdfunding to produce goods and to travel around Japan for sales events in a camper. Opened the complex facility “DENIM HOSTEL float” in Kojima, Kurashiki City, Okayama Prefecture in 2019. In 2020, relaunched the brand as “ITONAMI”.



opened “DENIM HOSTEL float,” the sea is calm and I feel at home here, and Kojima feels more like home than Hyogo. So I feel like having come home at Kojima.

I want young people to experience the charm of the local area more. With this in mind, the guest rooms are colored in indigo, and denim fabric is used everywhere, including the fusuma, tatami-mat borders, and sofas, to create an inn where you can experience the relaxing local atmosphere. Also, the café was not in the original plan, but when we tried it, thanks to that, people of the same generation from nearby cities such as Okayama and Kurashiki Cities came to the café and learned about ITONAMI's efforts. There are more and more opportunities for local people to interact with visitors from far away, and that makes me very happy. When you travel, if you can build relationships not only with the people in the stores you visit but also with the people who live there, your interest and attachment

to the area will expand. In fact, there is a person who moved from Tokyo and started a new life after staying here. I think there are some good qualities of the local area that can only be realized by creating the prosperity of the area. For example, my favorite café “belk” near the top of Mt. Ojigatake attracts a lot of people from outside the city because of its good taste, and it has become a spot for the locals to show off. We want to create a place where the local people can take pride in this area within the Setonaikai National Park and not want to leave, or want to come back even once they have left. In order to do this, we need a landscape that soothes the soul, a place where we can belong, or something that makes us feel attached and want to stay. We want our base to be one of those things.



Outside the window, there spreads the view of the Setouchi archipelago beauty. Just looking at it will heal your heart.

float
DENIM HOSTEL

The “DENIM HOSTEL float” is located along the coast overlooking the Seto Ohashi Bridge. The rooms are decorated in an indigo color featuring denim and offer a view of the Seto Inland Sea. You can enjoy a peaceful time while sitting on the sofa by the window. The café attached to the hostel has a popular menu of anhydrous chicken curry, made with a blend of 11 different spices and cooked using only the water in the ingredients. The café is also particular about drinks, such as lemonade made with pesticide-free lemons directly from farmers on Iwagi Island in the Seto Inland Sea, and organic coffee.

The high level of techniques and the passion of the craftspeople that I noticed on the job site made me launch a brand

The turning point for me to start a denim-related business was when I met a designer of a jeans manufacturer when I was in university, and he gave me a tour of a denim factory in Kojima, the birthplace of domestic jeans. I always liked denim, so when I saw the production site, I thought it was purely cool and interesting. The craftspeople have inherited the techniques that are so highly regarded around the world that they are used in products for famous brands. On the other hand, I heard about the difficulty of manufacturing, the harshness of management, and the fact that manufacturing bases are moving overseas where costs are lower. I began to feel a sense of mission to do something. I wanted more people to know about the wonderful denim industry, its proud techniques, and the thoughts of its craftspeople, so my brother and I began to visit factories and workshops and disseminate information on the Internet. However, we couldn't introduce the products themselves because they were subcontractors and there were confidentiality issues, which was very frustrating, so we decided to make our own products that we could deliver to our customers and launched the original brand "EVERY DENIM", the predecessor of ITONAMI.

Since I was still a university student at the time, I mainly used the Internet, but on weekends my brother and I would visit various places and sell our products in the form of pop-up stores in guesthouses and cafés. I was also really interested in the region, the industries there, and the thoughts of the producers, so we bought a camper when I graduated and traveled around the 47 prefectures for a year and three months starting in April 2018.



Traveling around 47 prefectures in a camper with the "Denim Brother"
Mr. YAMAWAKI, Youhei

This was a trip to meet and talk with producers involved in food, clothing, and housing while holding sales events. The way of life of the producers closely connected to the local community looked very cool. I realized that it is very important to have people and places that warmly welcome visitors and show them around the town. Such people and places were memorable and satisfying, and we wanted to create a place like them ---- the place where we could tell people we met on our travels about the appeal of the Okayama or Kojima and the denim industry when they came here, and where we could experience the lifestyle and manufacturing here.

Production that involves everyone, expectations for a new approach to show off production area

After I came here, I renewed the brand name to ITONAMI. It was only when I set up my own base of operations that I started to think that I would like to work on products as a brand rooted in the local

community and involve the customers who wear the products in the manufacturing process. Currently, we are running a year-long project to enjoy the process of making clothes together called "Fuku-no-Tane (Clothing Seeds)," in which we distribute cotton seeds, collect the cotton that has been grown, make cotton yarn, turn it into cotton products, and give them away. Under the theme of "Let's get back together with clothes," we offer "fukuen (reconciliation)," a service to re-dye your old clothes with the indigo dye used in denim production. In addition, we are developing "FUKKOKU (reproduction)," a project that collects unwanted denim products, minces them for recarding, and then spins cotton yarns to weave them into the fabric to make products again. I have always loved doing fun things, so I am thinking of all sorts of ideas, but I would like to open the door to a wider range of people. We want to share our ideals of the way clothes are made, delivered, and used with as many people as possible.

As we were traveling, I felt that the production area of a brand has not become its consumption area. It may be because the production area is so familiar that it is difficult to feel the value of the brand, but I would like to change this image. As we grow older, we rarely get to see manufacturing sites, so when the pandemic of COVID-19 calms down, I would like to do a tour of a local denim factory. By watching the high level of dyeing, sewing, and processing skills of the craftspeople and the powerful movements of the machines, I thought that visitors would become more familiar with denim and get closer to the makers. We also want to increase the number of bearers in the denim industry, which is facing issues such as the aging of craftspeople and lack of successors. Even if you move here to work, your personal life is very important, but there are not many places to play around here.

In that sense, if this place becomes a place where you can spend your weekends in a meaningful way, I think people will be more willing to stay in this town. I hope I can be a conduit for that. We have prepared some part of the facility for glamping, and we would like to do many other things, such as creating a new way to show the production area and express the nature of the place. We feel that the local community has high expectations of us because we are young. In an environment where you can enjoy both the sea and the mountains, how far can we go with featuring denim? We continue to try various approaches from now on.



I fell in love with this Tencel dress at first sight, perfect for wearing while fluttering its skirt by the sea.



Mesh shorts with gusseted crotch, recommended for mountain climbing and marine sports, is just an example of the products that ITONAMI produces, which not only reflect their commitment to materials and functionality but also their love for this region.

Setonaikai National Park,
where nature and people coexist in harmony
Fascinated by the expressive landscape
of the Archipelago Sea

Mr. YAMAMOTO, Atsuhiro

Photographer for Setouchi Area

— For more than 20 years, Mr. YAMAMOTO, Atsuhiro, a photographer, has often been visiting Mt. Washu, which is known as the most beautiful spot in the Setonaikai National Park. He continues to show the “present” of the Setouchi area by photographing the unique charms of this region while experiencing the changes of the seasons.

Inspiring landscapes and the mysteries of nature around us. I want to share these moments through photography

There are two major attractions of the Setonaikai National Park, and the first is the amazingly expressive archipelago scenery. Even if you take pictures at the same place, the colors of the sea look different depending on the season, time, weather, and the sun's position and angle. When you combine them with islands, boats, and the silhouettes of the people who live and visit here, no two photos are the same, and it's always new to me. The other is that it is a national park where people live. The area around Mt. Washu has long been known for its fishery industry and once prospered as a major port of call for Kitamae-bune (northern-bound) ships

and other marine traffic. Although you may think only of nature when you hear the word “National Park,” Setonaikai National Park is an area where various industries and cultures were born and where it is made up of the coexistence of nature and people. So, instead of just seeing the scenery and going home satisfied, I would like you to enjoy your stay as much as possible by experiencing activities, interaction with people, and food culture unique to the area, such as talking with fishery workers in the Shimotsui district or with jeans craftspeople in the Kojima district of Kurashiki City.

profile

Born in Osaka City, Osaka Prefecture in 1965. After graduating from university, worked in restaurant management in Osaka City for about 10 years. In 1999, he moved to Kojima, Kurashiki City, Okayama Prefecture, where he worked as a system development coordinator before joining the Okayama Prefectural Tourism Federation in 2010. In addition to taking photographs, posting information, and making plans, he also serves as a volunteer for the Mt. Washu area and a nature park guide for the Ministry of the Environment.

I used to live in Osaka, but after I got married, I started to visit my wife's family in Kojima. Every time I came to Kojima, I was attracted by the moderately rural area, which was not too convenient but had moving scenery and the mystery of nature close at hand, which I wanted to convey in my photographs. I also really liked the sea, and I always wanted to live in a place with a lot of nature, so I moved here after my first son was born. Fascinated by the scenery of the Seto Inland Sea and the abundance of nature around me, I became even more addicted to photography, which had been my

hobby since I bought a single-lens reflex camera at the age of 16, and began to share its charms throughout Japan via the Internet. My favorite photo is the sunset from Mt. Washu, taken for a Kojima tourism poster. Mt. Washu has the perfect altitude (133 meters) to take pictures that show the depth of the islands as well as the magnificence of the Seto Ohashi Bridge. Mt. Washu is also selected as one of the “Japan's 100 Best Sunset Views,” and the sunset view of the Seto Inland Sea and islands in red is truly impressive. I was asked to help the local chamber of commerce and industry produce a poster showing the attraction of the sunset, and I went to Mt. Washu for many days for nearly two months. The altitude of the sun and the amount of water vapor in the air are also important in making the sky look beautifully burnt orange in a sunset photo. It was difficult to get a satisfying shot because the air was dry in the winter, but by chance, I was able to take a photo of the sunset, the Seto Ohashi Bridge, a train passing by, and a ship passing directly below, all lined up in a straight line. Even now, after visiting Mt. Washu almost every week and photographing this scene for more than 20 years, it's still the most impressive shot.

My style of photographing is to save “moments of emotion” in my photos. For example, I go to the park every year to check the best days for blooming flowers, fresh greenery, and autumn leaves. I sometimes try to anticipate weather conditions and go out to shoot rarely seen phenomena such as rainbows, seas of clouds, and snowfall. Of course, there are many times when I end up empty-handed (laughs). I am often asked, “How do you take pictures like that?” I think it's important to always have an image of what you want to take, and if you have a hunch, just go for it. In addition to photography, I have also registered as a “Mt. Washu Area Park Volunteer” with the Ministry of the Environment because I want to help the local community while being involved in the nature I love. I'm helping out in the Setonaikai National Park with nature guides and cleanup activities, as well as coming up with ideas to make Mt. Washu a more enjoyable place for



Kojima's tourism poster (left), featuring Mr. Yamamoto's photo, for which he is particularly attached



visitors. Based on research conducted by experts, I have been installing name boards on the trees along the trail since 2017, hoping that they would serve as a clue for those who are interested in the native plants in the area. Currently, there are about 60 trees, and we are still adding more from time to time. As a result of these activities, I have been appointed as a “Nature Park Guide” by the Ministry of the Environment in 2020.



© Atsuhiro Yamamoto



© Atsuhiro Yamamoto

The Seto Inland Sea from the Mt. Washu. This is a photo that can only be taken by Mr. Yamamoto, who has been visiting the area for many years.



Mr. Yamamoto volunteered to set up the tree nameplates, which have QR codes that enable you to quickly find out information about the plants. If you find any interesting trees, please check them out.



The sunset of this day from the top was so beautiful that it took my breath away.

From now on, I would like the local people to rediscover the beauty of Mt. Washu and be proud of this landscape, and I would like them to spread its charm through social media. Although it is currently a COVID-19 pandemic, I would like to

see it become a sustainable tourism area where the three aspects of tourism are good; for the tourists, for the community, and for the residents, and I hope tourists from all over the world will come to visit here as a destination.

The Shimotsui Townscape Preservation District, where you can experience the lives of people, culture, and history



For those who visit Mt. Washu I would like to encourage them to visit the Shimotsui area at the foot of the mountain. Shimotsui is a port town that flourished from the Edo to the mid-Meiji period with Kitamae-bune (northern-bound) ships, and is now known as a fishery town, and has been designated as a townscape preservation district by Okayama Prefecture. When I take photos, I make a point of stopping by a shrine or visiting a store first. I find that people's activities add warmth to my photos. I hope that tourists will find the Setonaikai National Park to be an attractive place in total to visit, where they can experience the lives of the people and their various cultures, and understand the region by juxtaposing it with its history.

As you stroll around Shimotsui, you will see small shrines for corals. In the islands and fishery areas of the Seto Inland Sea, it is customary to worship (or offer) coral caught in nets during bottom trawling. When I ask people in the local community or fishery workers why they worship coral, the answer is usually, "Because we've been doing it for a long time." Coral in the Seto Inland Sea itself is extremely precious and rare, and its unique white shape suggests that small fishing villages without shrines may have respectfully worshipped it as a sacred object to pray for the safety of the sea and good catches.

In the days when weather forecasts and typhoon information were not available as they are today, it was quite natural for fishery workers who worked in the sea, a place of constant danger, to have faith, and this is a custom unique to the Setouchi region that I personally find very interesting. As far as I know, in the Setonaikai National Park, such small shrines for corals can be found on Matsushima and Manabeshima Islands in Okayama Prefecture, and on Hitsuishijima, Honjima, and Sanagijima Islands in Kagawa Prefecture, and searching for coral is a part of the fun of island hopping.



The Shimotsui townscape preservation district retains the atmosphere of an old port town. I was guided to the stone steps of the Tatsuchi-no-ura-ni-mashimasu Shrine and back alleys, which were the setting for the anime film *Hirune-hime (Taking-nap princess)*.

Interviews with people working in Shimotsui

Director of the Shimotsui Shipping Agent Museum

Mr. DOUSHITA, Kazunori



A valuable museum that tells the history of Shimotsui

Shimotsui is located at the southernmost tip of Kojima Peninsula, which used to be an island. It flourished as a good port for waiting for the suitable wind and for the tide to turn on the Seto Inland Sea Route, and in the Edo period, ships from all over western Japan and Kitamae-bune (northern-bound) ships called at the port. At that time, cotton was grown on the rapidly reclaimed land around the town, and the herring meal brought in from Hokkaido was used as fertilizer, which led to the town's textile industry and the production of jeans. The museum is one of the constituents of cultural assets of the Japan Heritage Story *The Kitamae-Bune Sea Routes: Ports and Residences Built on the Dreams of Brave Seafarers*. We also have an information center introducing the three Japan Heritage sites in Kurashiki City, so please come and experience the history and culture of the city. As the president of the Mt. Washu Area Park Volunteer Association, I am also making efforts to improve the circulation of the area by placing information plates on both Mt. Washu and Shimotsui.

Representative of Yoshimata Shoten

Ms. YODEN, Yoshie



Changing careers to revive "Shimotsui wakame" a local specialty

Wakame seaweed from Shimotsui is grown in shallow waters, bathed in the sunshine, and buffeted by the fast tides off Shimotsui. Shimotsui wakame is thin and of high quality. Generally, wakame is boiled in hot water as soon as it is collected. However, "Shimotsui wakame," which is dried in the sun on the beach for a day without heating, is very fragrant and contains a lot of nutrients. In 2011, I quit my job as a teacher at an elementary school, where I had worked for 35 years, and reopened my family's marine products wholesaler, which was founded by my great-grandfather in the early Meiji period and discontinued in 1974. It's only now that people are finally recognizing the value of our products, and they are telling me how delicious they are. It is a time-consuming process and difficult to mass-produce, but we hope to make use of the precious blessings from the sea of Shimotsui for tourism.



The building, which was used as a shipping agent and herring warehouse in the Meiji period, was restored to open the museum in 1995. You can get a glimpse of the merchant houses of the time. The museum displays materials related to Shimotsui. In addition, there is a shop selling local specialties and a restaurant.



In the main building, you can experience the atmosphere of a merchant house from the Meiji to the early Showa period. Mr. Doushita says, "I would like to work with the local community and the government to make Shimotsui more like a tourist spot so that visitors can enjoy the entire town at their leisure."



The freshly caught sea bream is immediately dried in the sun. Although the catch is decreasing compared to the past, the fish caught in Shimotsui is still firm and delicious. The store also sells dried goods such as Nori (dried seaweed) and Niboshi (dried fish).



"What we are aiming for is not a clean sea, but a rich sea where people, creatures, and plants can live together," said Ms. Yoden, holding the main product, Shimotsui wakame. I was impressed by her smile.

Walking along Mt. Washu

Enjoy the
ever-changing
scenery from
place to place.



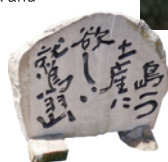
Mt. Washu offers a panoramic archipelago landscape of Bisanseto Strait and Shiwaku Islands and is the most famous viewpoint that has been praised as "the landscape that forms the core of the national park."



From the top of Mt. Washu, the magnificent view of the Seto Ohashi Bridge stretching to Shikoku and the islands scattered across the tranquil Seto Inland Sea is so impressive that it almost draws me in. The landscape will make us forget the passing of time and want to admire it forever.



As I walked along the trail from the Rest House, the view of the Seto Ohashi Bridge opened up before my eyes. On the way, I climbed up on a large rock and enjoyed the magnificent panorama all to myself. I took a deep breath to recharge my energy!



The Seto Ohashi Bridge, one of the "Japan's 100 Best Sunset Views," is breathtaking to behold in the evening.



Stone steps leading to the top of Mt. Washu, almost there.

Near the Visitor Center, there is a stone monument inscribed with a haiku poem, "I want one island as a souvenir, Washuzan," written by NAMBA, Tendo, a haiku poet from Kojima.

Top of Mt. Washu
(Shoshuho Summit)



Walk further in,
To the Japanese Gazebo
View Point!



It is a ten-minute walk from the top of Mt. Washu.

Japanese Gazebo
View Point



The
Seto Ohashi Bridge,
seen straight ahead,
is spectacular!

From the east to the south of the summit, we can see Kojima, Mt. Ojigatake, and Takamatsu on Shikoku in the distance. It is a 360° view spot with no obstructions whatsoever.

The preciousness of the natural
landscape around us all the time
Town planning to value it more

Mr. YABUKI, Kenta

Kurashiki City Tourism Section

Mr. MIYAKE, Toshiharu

Tamano City Commerce and Tourism Section

— Born in Kurashiki City and Tamano City in Okayama Prefecture, the two young city officials I visited this time are now in charge of local administration and promoting the Setonaikai National Park. What can we do to make the most of the charms of this region?
— Through dialogues filled with passion for the region, we will discuss the future of the region together.

Great views of Mt. Ojigatake and Mt. Washu, which I finally realized

— What do you remember about your hometown in the Setonaikai National Park?

MIYAKE : When I was a child, I often went to Shibukawa Beach and Shibukawa Marine Aquarium with my family. However, as I became a high school and university student and my range of activities expanded, I became more and more distant from them. When I entered the Commerce and Tourism Section and visited Shibukawa Beach and Mt. Ojigatake again, I was impressed by the beauty of the sea and the scenery. I had known the name of Mt. Ojigatake, but I had never been there before, and the timing was just right for Nikoniko-iwa (Smile Rock) to be in the spotlight, so I rediscovered the charm of the hometown.

YABUKI : I had visited the observatories of Mt. Washu when I was little. When I returned to my hometown for employment and visited there again after a long time, I rediscovered that it was a place where I could enjoy the view from various angles, not only from the

Second Observatory but also from Shoshuho (top of Mt. Washu) and Japanese Gazebo View Point where you can see the Seto Ohashi Bridge straight ahead. The Seto Ohashi Bridge is lit up at night, mainly on Saturdays, and on rare occasions, it coincides with a full moon. The lights of the bridge, the moonlight, and the reflection of the moon on the sea surface made a fantastic night view. When I climbed Mt. Ojigatake for the first time, I was very impressed by the spectacular view from the rooftop of the Ojigatake Hill Rest House, a tourist rest stop near the top of the mountain. Because I was mentally exhausted from the work related to the July 2018 heavy rain disaster, I remember that my heart got healed and I was almost in tears. That's when I found out that the Ojigatake Hill Rest House was managed by Kurashiki City, and I felt like I was destined to be in charge of facilities at the Tourism Section soon after (laughs).

Public-private partnership aims to create liveliness and increase tourism in the national park.

— What kind of efforts are the governments making to boost the local area as a scenic spot designated as a national park?

MIYAKE : Mt. Ojigatake is being promoted as a Mecca for bouldering. The coast of the Seto Inland Sea is an area of granite, and there are various places that are easy to climb. Among them, Mt. Ojigatake attracts many climbers because it offers a panoramic view of the sea at the top of the mountain, and the parking lot is close by, so it is only a five-minute walk from the parking lot to the crag. You can enjoy a variety of leisure activities such as hiking and paragliding, and we are also pushing for the popular café “belk” in the “Mt. Ojigatake Park Center” near the top of the mountain. With the spread of social media and “belk’s” good communication skills, it is a great match for young people. I’ve heard that the parking lot fills up very fast when the weather is good.

YABUKI : The Kokumin-shukusha at the foot of Mt. Ojigatake was closed down in March 2012. After that, it was torn down, and while the future is uncertain, young people such as “belk” and “DENIM HOSTEL float” are interested in this place and are working on the business. Kurashiki City has also implemented a “trial sounding” program to have private-sector businesses use the Ojigatake Hill Rest House on a trial basis starting in the fall of 2020. Based on the results, we are now considering effective ways to use that location in the future. The impact of “mt cafe at Ojigatake,” which is a café opened only a limited period from July to August last year by KAMOI KAKOSHI CO., LTD., a company in Kurashiki City that produces the “mt” masking tape, has been great, and the wind is blowing very well.

MIYAKE : Shibukawa Beach has been selected as one of the “100 best beaches for swimming” by the Ministry of the Environment, one of the “100 best seashores in Japan,” and one of the “100 best white sand and green pine trees in Japan” and a large swimming beach is opened every year (for the past two years, the beach has been closed to prevent the spread of the COVID-19). We are now having private businesses work on the renovation of the glamping facilities, and we hope to revitalize the area through cooperation between the public and private sectors.



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Bouldering at Mt. Ojigatake, known as the best scenery and environment in Japan

profiles / YABUKI, Kenta

Born in Kurashiki City, Okayama Prefecture in 1984. Joined the Kurashiki City Government in 2007. After working for the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, the New City and Town Development Promotion Section, and the Welfare Support Section, he was assigned to the Tourism Section in 2019. He is in charge of planning and implementing policies that utilize tourist facilities and resources.

MIYAKE, Toshiharu

Born in Tamano City, Okayama Prefecture in 1992. Joined the Tamano City Government in 2014. After working in the Taxation Section of the Policy and Finance Department and being transferred to Izumiotsu City in Osaka Prefecture, he was assigned to the Commerce and Tourism Section of the Industrial Promotion Department in 2019. He is in charge of the management of national parks, bathing areas, and tourist facilities.

YABUKI : I think the participation of the private sector will create a lively atmosphere. In July last year, Mt. Washu installed a manhole cover with a design of Pocket Monster characters on the observatory, and they are helping to attract visitors. Last year, as a new attempt, I planned a tour called "Cream Soda with a Great View" in which we visited Mt. Washu and Mt. Ojigatake and tasted cream soda with a high level of perfection that would make a great picture on social media at a nearby café, but it ended up being a mirage due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I really hope to make it happen this year.

— Do the cities of Kurashiki and Tamano often work together as a team?

YABUKI : We are working together to celebrate the anniversary of the Setonaikai National Park on a large scale. In addition, the "Sunset Festa," where you can enjoy the sunset over the Seto Inland Sea with music, is held every year alternately at Mt. Ojigatake and Mt. Washu, with officials from both cities cooperating at Mt. Ojigatake. With the Setouchi Triennale coming up this year, I expect more people to come to Uno, so I would like to promote activities to make Mt. Ojigatake, which is located on the border of the city, more lively and bring more people to Kojima.

MIYAKE : For the people who come to Mt. Ojigatake, it doesn't matter whether it's Kurashiki or Tamano, and everyone in the council of related organizations has expressed a desire to promote the area together. New hotels are also being built in Tamano City, and I would like to cooperate with Kurashiki City to create a system that will help revitalize the local economy by encouraging people to come and go. It takes about one to two hours by bicycle from Uno Station to Kojima Station. There is also a cycling course along the Seto Inland Sea in the Shibukawa and Kojima areas recommended by Okayama Prefecture, and I feel that if we can create a flow from Uno to Kojima and from Kojima to Uno, it will improve the touring experience.



Cream soda at the "Toki-no-kairo (Corridors of Time), the Classical Music Coffee Shop" The fantastic interior is also popular.

An opportunity to reacquaint yourself with your hometown, creating a mechanism to enjoy it again and again

— How would you like to be involved in the creation of a town that local people can be attached to while promoting it as a tourist destination?

MIYAKE : I was transferred to a municipality in Osaka Prefecture as part of a personnel exchange program, and since I was born and raised in Tamano, that was the first time I saw Tamano from the outside. With the calm Seto Inland Sea, the scenic Mt. Ojigatake, and the proximity to the islands that are the sites of the Setouchi Triennale, I thought that it would be hard to find such a blessed place for tourism. People who have never left Tamano feel that what they have now is ordinary. I was able to rediscover the charm of my hometown through my work, but I don't think local people who have never left Tamano have much of an opportunity to rediscover it. When I spoke with the businesses involved in the bouldering event at Mt. Ojigatake,

they were not only passionate about Tamano, but also thought that their efforts would help the population involved increase, and that opening stores in the area would become an economic advantage. In this way, a virtuous cycle would be created: the more stores open and the more people come to the area. Then the more media and social networking sites would focus on it, the more the locals would recognize it again. It would be great if people would think, "Why not go there?"

YABUKI : I'm sure many of the visitors came to Mt. Washu when the Seto Ohashi Bridge opened and now have no idea to re-visit. However, the same place will become something fresh if there is a different purpose. That's exactly what the Poké Lids and Cream Soda tours are all about. If you change the way you show the place or the way you approach it, you can enjoy the same place over and over again. If we can add some kind of value to the scenery here, more people will come to visit with that as their goal. It is our job to find, uncover, and introduce such things. I would like to think carefully about what the government can do



while listening to the voices of local private businesses, NPOs, and local people.

MIYAKE : It is necessary to create a mechanism that makes people want to go there, not just because there is a tourist attraction. The aquarium also collaborates with Yoshimoto Kogyo Co., Ltd. on projects such as puzzle-solving events. I think it is worthwhile to work on this project just to have visitors say, "It was fun," or "It's a nice place," and I would like to make the city more attractive by giving shape to everyone's thoughts.

YABUKI : I agree with Mr. Miyake that Kurashiki has a lot of resources that can be used as a tourist attraction, such as industry, the sea, the mountains, and the streets of the Bikan Historical Area. In addition to Mt. Washu and Mt. Ojigatake, the Setonaikai National Park also includes Yugasan, which is visited by many worshippers, Ryuzan Hill, which is popular for hiking, and Tsusen-en Garden, which has beautiful azaleas and night views. I want to continue to protect these wonderful landscapes, which have been designated as national parks, and I hope that many people will enjoy them.

The Setouchi Story

Year Published / March 2022, 1st Printing.

Publisher / Ministry of the Environment,
Chugoku-Shikoku Regional Environment Office
11th Floor, Okayama Joint Government Building No.2,
Shimoishii 1-4-1, Kita Ward, Okayama City,
Okayama Prefecture 700-0907, Japan
Tel : +81-86-223-1586 FAX : +81-86-224-2081
URL : <http://chushikoku.env.go.jp/>

Planning and production / RYOBI HOLDINGS Co., Ltd.

Art direction and design by KATO, Kuniko

Design by AKIOKA, Yoko

Writing and proofreading by UCHIDA, Ayako

Translation by KATSUHARA, Miki

Photography by TAKAHASHI, Kosuke (WONDERFUL PHOTO)

Printing / Dai Nippon Printing Co., Ltd.

※ The data in this booklet is as of March 2022.

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

As a guide for the Setouchi Story HASUI, Rio

The Seto Inland Sea, which shows a completely different expression each time, fascinates and heals me every time, even though I was born and raised in Okayama. Of course, the original nature is wonderful, but I felt that the Setonaikai National Park has been maintained as an attractive place thanks to the efforts of everyone involved. I could feel the great love for the Setouchi region from everyone I talked to this time, and it gave me a very warm feeling. I hope that the beautiful scenery of the Setouchi area and their thoughts will be shared more widely and deeply.

Editor's Note

Have you enjoyed the *Setouchi Story*? The people I interviewed this time are attracted to the Setouchi area and have taken actual action with a passionate desire to share its charms with as many people as possible, and are working hard to boost the region. What I felt was that the presence of such people in this region is the greatest asset of all. Mt. Washu and Mt. Ojigatake have an atmosphere and charm that cannot be conveyed in a photograph. Please come and meet the people and feel the richness of the Setouchi area firsthand. I also hope that this will be an opportunity for the people who live here to become attached to and proud of their hometown, which has been designated as a national park. Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all those who cooperated in the production of this booklet.