Okayama Prefecture Setouchi Guidebook

Tomorrow I’m off to Setouchi

Travel to Setouchi City
After some hectic days at work, I take my favorite convertible out of the garage tingling with excitement like I’m a kid again. Getting behind the wheel after so long fills me with nostalgia in a certain way.

We drive down west on the highway. Clearly the idea of exploring Setouchi has enchanted both of us. My wife seems to ponder the driveway while she skillfully buckles her seatbelt.

"Hey, tonight let’s stay at a pension at the cape so we can see the morning sun tomorrow!"

We head for the west under a blue sky. The seacoast road and the blue Line road that shoots through Setouchi City fascinates us with their dunes, setting our minds free. Nests floating on the distant waves, exotic streets.

We head off the gently winding road towards the cape, accompanied by the rhythmic beat of the engine.

“What an enchanting look.”

Under a blue sky, the two of us head for the west.
I was a student when I first heard the name Yumeji Takehisa.

Since then, the story of his tearful farewell with Hikono has been imprinted more deeply in the corner of my heart than even his paintings or poems.

In a town in Setouchi City called Oku there is a place so pristine it could be called Yumeji’s unsullied landscape.

Young Yumeji saw before him a boundless future, the hills and fields he ran through were surrounded by beautiful mountains and rivers.

That’s where we found Yumeji, with a freshly shorn head.

We found him at the restored atelier of Shosen Sessho, having overcome the absurdity of life and wishing now for a life of quiet.

With Yumeji’s sorrowed back turned to us, he seemed to call out again and again for the mountains.

“History is still alive here.”

Going to see young Yumeji
I once heard a song verse that goes “the graceful moonlike curve of Bizen Osafune…”

The verse compares the renowned, elegant shape of the Osafune swords to the moon.

The history of smithery at Bizen Osafune dates back to the Heian era and more than 40 percent of existing historical swords are said to have been made at Bizen.

Bizen Osafune has turned out master swordsmiths at each juncture of every era, which brought it renown as the “Sword Empire.”

For centuries, Bizen Osafune continued to produce masterpiece swords. It all changed on one day however, as dark clouds were cast over its history as a period of long rains and rainstorms began in the year 1591 (Genroku 19).

Muddy streams flooded from the Yashii River, relentlessly, assaulting the master swordsmiths and their families and devastating Bizen Osafune’s smithery in a night.

Among those who narrowly escaped was Toshizo Tokusada, who went on to make his mark on history as a master swordsman, from the late Muramachi era (1336-1573) onwards.

Witnessing the dreadful sight he was left speechless.

Six years later, together with his son, devoted himself to reviving the Bizen Osafune smithery on the same land that had been completely destroyed by the flood.

In the shade of an elegant masterpiece sword one can catch a glimpse into a master swordsmith’s way of life.

“The Japanese spirit has been handed down here”
Traveling in Setouchi City
A Guide for Six Recommended Courses

Setouchi City is blessed with a mild climate all year-round. Get to know the beautiful islands floating before your eyes as well as the mountains, bountiful with nature! Setouchi City, located about three hours by car from the Kyoto-Osaka-Kobe region, comprises three areas: “Japan’s Aegan Sea” Ushimado, “Yumetake’s hometown” Oku and the “Home of the Sword” Osafune. A well-organized tour plan will include each place of interest to make your travel in Setouchi more enjoyable and rewarding. Drivers and riders will also find many irresistible spots of interest to drop by along the easygoing roadways of Setouchi.

SET-chan
The official mascot of Setouchi City

A “Luxury Course”
A complete plan that includes traditional art, restaurants and delicious food. Recommended for travelers who want to experience all the best of Setouchi.

1. “Shizen Osafune Tokei Village” (P13)
2. “Shiro no Senmaida, Yumetake’s birthplace” (P12)
3. “Okayama Ieki Village”
4. “Yu-Ya Koryukan Mall” (P16–P19)
5. “Usinomiya Maru”
6. “Yumetake Park” (P18–P19)
7. “Shomachi Karakko Street” (P10)

Accommodations!
Japanese-style hotels and guesthouses in Ushimado (P18–P19)

B “History and Culture Course”
Come appreciate the world-renowned masterpieces of “Shizen Osafune” and the history of the birthplace of Yumetake. In the evening, you can take a ride through the Setouchi branch in the port town of Ushimado.

1. “Ushimado Olive Garden” (P13)
2. “Historic Sites in Fukuoka” (P12)
3. “Try the local “Dodobase” dish, an original unlisted sushi” (P15)
4. “Oko Local Museum” (P24)
5. “Yumetake’s birthplace—Joanji Temple” (P15–P16)
6. “Shimomachi Karakko Street” (P15)

Accommodations!
Japanese-style hotels and guesthouses in Ushimado (P18–P19)

C “Shopping and Gourmet Course”
Setouchi has oysters in winter, and functions grape and mandarin picking in summer and autumn. There is seafood in the market all year-round.

1. “Ushimado Olive Garden”
2. “Historic Sites in Fukuoka”
3. “Try the local “Dodobase” dish, an original unlisted sushi”
4. “Oko Local Museum”
5. “Yumetake’s birthplace—Joanji Temple”
6. “Shimomachi Karakko Street”

Accommodations!
Japanese-style hotels and guesthouses in Ushimado (P18–P19)

D “Marine Leisure Course”
Ushimado, known as “Japan’s Aegan Sea,” and a marine resort town, is always bustling with swimmers. The quiet sea here is ideal for water activities.

1. “Ushimado Fisherman’s Cooperative”
2. “Historic Sites in Fukuoka”
3. “Try the local “Dodobase” dish, an original unlisted sushi”
4. “Oko Local Museum”
5. “Yumetake’s birthplace—Joanji Temple”
6. “Shimomachi Karakko Street”

Accommodations!
Japanese-style hotels and guesthouses in Ushimado (P18–P19)

E “The Isolated Island/ Macedon Island Course”
Masuda Island, oases in the Seto Inland Sea, is a rich treasure of nature. You can also ride to the Yumetake mountain trail in addition to enjoying cycling, snorkeling and rock fishing.

1. “Setouchi Kirikikikan” (P23)
2. “Hotel Limani”
3. “Ushimado Olive Garden”
4. “Oko Local Museum”
5. “Yumetake’s birthplace—Joanji Temple”
6. “Shimomachi Karakko Street”

Accommodations!
Japanese-style hotels and guesthouses in Ushimado (P18–P19)

F “Experience-in-Nature Course”
Experience the natural environment in the abundant, natural mountains of Setouchi City and the Seto Inland Sea as well as seasonal vegetables and fruits.

1. “Cliff Taki Falls” (P11)
2. “Ohiyama Wild Bird Forest” (P18–P19)
3. “Oya River” (P18–P19)
4. “Kurone Green Park” (P18–P19)
5. “Osafulne Beautiful Forest” (P18–P19)

Accommodations!
Osafulne Beautiful Forest Cottage (P18–P19)
Enjoy the Sea

Ushimado, also known as "Japan's Aegan Sea," from a story that years ago, a Greek traveler was impressed by the similarity in scenery between Ushimado and his home, the Aegean Sea. Water sports are one of the thrilling attractions of seaside resorts like Ushimado. At the yacht harbor, one of the largest in western Japan, as many as 400 yachts and cruisers are moored. A broad range of water sports enthusiasts have been enticed by the thrill of sailing here with wind power and nothing else.

The impressive spectacle of colorful sails competing with each other from spring to summer will consistently please your eyes. Sea kayaking, i.e., rowing a kayak out on your own toward a small, nearby island, is also recommended. During an adventurous sail in the inlet or around the island, you may come across something new or unfamiliar at the shore, such as some small fish or a kite ray.

Of course, you can get your dose of marine sports even when you’re not on the sea. Nishiwa Swimming Beach at Yoyogahama, one of the many scenic beaches in the Ushimado area, is equipped with swimming pools in summer, as is the Ushimado Swimming Beach. These beaches are also famed as great fishing spots among sports fishermen. After a day of fishing, including its rich fish, as well as boat fishing, surf casting, and that fishing.

Fun in the Sun at Maejima Island

Situates about five minutes away from Ushimado by ferry, Maejima is a verdant island expressed by its alternate name “Mikojima, Green Island.” When you arrive by ferry, take a deep breath and take in the most outstanding view in the island at the observatory, which overviews the magnificent landscape. From here, you can get a panoramic view of the Ushimado Port and the mountain ranges of the mainland. After taking a look around the town of Ushimado, why not rent a bicycle and take a ride along the Green Road which winds halfway around the island? Its quite nice to ride a bicycle on the coastal roads, breathing in the refreshing winds in the background and feeling the wind on this small island which is perfect for cycling. One can fully appreciate the island with a day trip to Maejima, but if you really want to have some fun at the beach, staying overnight is a good option. For a small group, a renting guesthouse will do nicely. For families, a quiet seaside campsite is recommended. It’s up to you where to stay and how to enjoy yourself.

Recycling in the Hills, Recreation in the Sky

Heading up the scenic Olive Road on a bicycle from the beach area will take you to the Ushimado Olive Garden, which commands a full view of Ushimado. As you approach you’ll see some 2,000 olive trees extending along the sunny slopes. If you visit when the olive flowers are in bloom, expect to be carried away with the unusual fantastic sight, as the landscape is tinted with light yellow all over. A pathway at the bottom of the garden leads to the Roman Hill, which resembles an ancient Roman house. Peep out and take a walk or have a picnic with a packed lunch. The Ushimado area is also rich in exotic sites like great windmills, which are found here and there.
Stroll in the Shiomachi Karakoto Street

If you turn one street back from the ferry landing at the side, you’ll come out on “Shiomachi Karakoto Street” which returns to the “Isle era” theme. Situated on the east side of the Unihama area, this street serves as a reminder of the past before the city. Reached via a port town, from Edos to the 13th year of the Showa era (from the 17th century up to the 1950s). Among the traditional buildings scattered along the street, there are historical reviews of the changing times. Honen-ji Temple (associated with missionaries from the Korean Peninsulas), a truss bridge, a key-covered white-washed walls and latticed doors of old sake warehouses, the beautiful limit of the Toritaondo House Museum. Ushimado Cultural Museum (former Chugoku Bank). Discover your favorite classic scenery while chatting with your wife or husband or take a walk together with friends and take some pictures.

1. Shiomachi Karakoto Street
2. Toritaondo House Museum
3. Ushimado Cultural Museum
4. Filming site of the movie “Kanzo
5. Honen-ji Temple
6. Former Ushimado Post Office
7. Toritaondo House Museum

Come Savor Setouchi:

There are so many ways to enjoy Setouchi City’s mild climate.

1. Seto-ai-Akabene
2. Sunset in Unihama
3. Ushimado Mean Road
4. Oshino Taki Falls
5. Michino-ko-En
6. Ushimado Kaiyu Cultural Museum
7. Jozanetoushita
8. Kaikyo Park

Road Trips and Leisure for the Whole Family

If you take a drive on the Blue Line, you might be surprised to see a good number of leisure spots one after the other. Matsuyama-kii (Ryosankei Station), a fully stocked destination for the whole family, offers a wide range of entertainment. From battery-driven cars, miniature train rides and gyu-nauts to a swimming pool for the kids, you can let your children play safely while shopping for seasonal vegetables or enjoying the local food. In the Kurokami Green Park area, you’ll be treated to freshly-picked seasonal fruits that can be hand-picked. The surrounding area has many spots good for outdoor activities such as camping or athletics.
**Watch Tourist Spot Setouchi**

**Yumeji Takehisa**—genius painter and lyrical poet set adrift

Yumeji Takehisa, born in present-day Honjo in Oku Town, Setouchi City in 1864, dominated the art world as a genius poet and painter with his unique lyrical style, becoming an icon of Taisho romantic modernism. His paintings of beautiful girls with dreamy faces brought him an established reputation and made him a very popular artist, hated by the world in his day. Even now, his works have a spark that refuses to fade away.

The treasured home of Yumeji, genius painter and lyrical poet set adrift is now surrounded by beautiful mountains and rivers.

*Yumeji’s Birthplace* P30-32

Yumeji lived in this house until the age of 18 here in this birthplace. As a home artist, he wrote his life stories.

*Shunen Senmetsu* P33-34

Yumeji’s father, Shunsen, was a painter. Yumeji’s birthplace is in the heart of the home, and the name of his son, Yumeji, is incorruptible. The birthplace has many memories of the artist’s life stories.

*Soak in the Taisho romance ambiance at Yumeji’s atelier, where he authored many of his works*

*Take a walk up to Jomyo Temple at the top of the Yumeji Promenade, Yumeji’s ‘unspoiled megalopolis’*

Jomyo Temple P27-28

Jomyo Temple is widely known as a temple associated with Yumeji Takehisa. With many of Yumeji’s paintings inside, the temple grounds create a calm and peaceful aura.

*Visitors can watch the swarotetsu’s tempering process here which involves a traditional method to remove impurities by pouring hot liquid metal into a temperature of 1350 degrees, before it becomes an iron sword.

See Antique Shrines, Temples and Historical Sites

*Local history from the Musashimura to the early Showa era on display*

Bizen Fukusa Local Museum P20-22

The museum is a modern atelier built in the early Taisho era (1912-1926) before its renovation. Exhibits include a wide range of samples from the weapons of Bizen Fukusa in classic medical books, paintings and calligraphy works.

*The houses of Fukusa retain remnants of Bizen Fukusa, once the most prominent commercial town in the Chugoku region*

Houses of Fukusa P20-22

The houses of Fukusa retain the original beauty of the town, and the houses were used as business centers, like the traditional town of Bizen Fukusa. The town is known for its crafts and its historical charm.

Kyozen Myojin Temple P25-26

Myojin Temple is a Shinto temple in the heart of the town, where the main hall is located. The temple is known for its beautiful architecture and its historical significance.

*Get to know Osafune’s ancient culture, with clues from ancient Sue earthenware*

Sue Ancient Museum P39-40

The Sue Ancient Museum is located in the heart of the town, featuring artefacts from ancient Sue earthenware. The museum is home to some of the finest Sue earthenware in Japan and is a must-see for anyone interested in Japanese history and culture.

Bizen Osafune Japanese Sword Museum P29-30

The museum is home to over 1000 Japanese swords, including the swords of Osafune, the famous swordsmiths.

Toshimatsu Imazumi Memorial Hall P23-24

This museum exhibits the life of Toshimatsu Imazumi, a master swordsmith, who is known for his craftsmanship and his unique technique of sword-making.

Bizen Osafune Forge

A variety of masterpiece swords from Bizen Osafune, Japan’s “swarm of swordsmen” city, are on display. The museum also contains a collection of irreplaceable items, including swords, bows, and arrows.

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Toshimatsu Imazumi Memorial Hall P23-24

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Jomyo Temple

Located in the heart of the town, the Jomyo Temple is dedicated to the worshipped deity of the swarotetsu.

Tennosu Shrine, age-old supporter of swordsmith craftsmanship, protector of swarotetsu

The museum is home to over 1000 Japanese swords, including the swords of Osafune, the famous swordsmiths.

*Get to know the seacoast regional history of the Sato island Sea at the site of the remains of the early Nyofo to the Kamakura era*

Seaside Museum P37-38

The museum is located on the coast, featuring artefacts from the seacoast regional history of the Sato island Sea.

Leatherware Shrine P21-22

The shrine is located in the heart of the town, featuring artefacts from the seacoast regional history of the Sato island Sea.

Sato Ancient Museum P39-40

The museum is located in the heart of the town, featuring artefacts from the seacoast regional history of the Sato island Sea.

Kyozen Shindō Temple Historical Site Park P35-36

This park is located in the heart of the town, featuring artefacts from the seacoast regional history of the Sato island Sea.
The key to discovering Setouchi’s delicious food is to listen to what the local people say. Good dishes known only to a select few are popular with Setouchi natives.

The gentle sunshine and the smell of the sea, those are the first things you’ll notice upon landing at the port town of Setouchi. But once you’ve taken in the lake sea and the lush greenery of the mountains, the urge to find some delicious food will be all the stronger. As the reputation of Setouchi’s seafood is so high in and around Okayama, chefs come to buy it from all over the Kansai region. In oyster season, which Setouchi City is famous for, it’s worth the effort to visit a local festival as vendors will hand out shucked oysters free for tasting. For those who are keen to taste all sorts of seafood, staying at a guesthouse that offers local seafood dishes will be a good choice. There are many other varieties of dishes using materials fresh from the sea, such as the French-style seafood set served at hotels, the sea bream grilled with olive oil and salt or the locally loved “conger eel bowl.” Setouchi has plenty of superb gourmet foods that tend not to be seen in big cities. Next, let’s talk about Setouchi’s famous Japanese cakes. Cakes from long-established shops are a great treat made with carefully chosen seasonal ingredients produced in Okayama, the “Fruit Empire.” Among others, the “Yumé” series has a wide variation, and is ideal as a souvenir. Try also the simple taste of Nakazakiyaa’s sweet crackers and the “Karakoudori Manju (bun).” Another Japanese sweet to be recommended is the “Ume Ichimonji Manju” of Otsuane. This sweet bun which the townpeople innovated about 16 years ago is now an indispensable specialty in the Otsuane area. Once you taste it, you’ll understand the passion and commitment these shops have to their products.

Sea Bream Grilled with Olive Oil and Salt

“Sea bream grilled with olive oil”-compliant with Setouchi’s specialties ingredients, is a suitable autumnal dish that could make a “Yumé” Griffith restored bow in its own sense.

You might not be able to get away from the sea but if you find the time, then try the Sea Bream.
Buy

Let’s Go Shopping

Setouchi City has a selection of souvenirs that will preserve the memories of your trip: fruits of the sea, food from the mountain and traditional craft works.

After enjoying all that Setouchi has to offer, don’t forget to choose a souvenir that will truly please someone. There is a wide variety of souvenirs in Setouchi City, from seasonal foods that are not sold in other cities to traditional craft products produced with methods handed down for generations. However, perhaps your first choice will be some fresh seafood from the Seto Inland Sea. Processed goods made with food from the sea and mountains are worth a look as well. These products are excellent souvenirs since anyone can enjoy the flavor of Setouchi in any season. It’ll be a good idea to buy one for yourself as well to look back on your trip. Another thing to keep in mind is to please everyone for whom you are giving Setouchi souvenirs. If you want to buy a pastel-colored tiger charm or some traditional “sword goods,” be sure to check where you can buy them before you set out. These products are only sold at a few places. Don’t miss them!

Olive Products
Some 2,000 olive trees grow in the Olive Garden on the gentle hillsides of Iwashima. There are different varieties of olive products, ranging from olive oil, used for cooking by local people, to preserved or salted olives. Ideal for a “taste of Setouchi.”

Olive Oil
Olive oil is grown in the temperate climate of Setouchi.

Matcha Green Tea
Matcha was born in Matcha during the Edo era after the tea masters of the Okynaya Teahouse, made matcha produce uniquely for their enjoyment. In restrictive features they are a distinguished form and a refined, delicate style inherited from Kiyosato Kyosaku was.

Matcha Lovers’ Wave
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Fresh sea food and locally produced vegetables are in great demand at this bustling, fresh food market.

Yu-Yu Kanyukan Mall
In Setouchi City, farmers’ markets are found here and there, on coeasides, at “Michi-naka” and at other places. The Yu-Yu Kanyukan Mall located at the Kanyukan Park on the Ozone Blue Line, sells many seasonal fresh vegetables and fruits. For souvenir shopping, this is the place to go. The art gallery is quite a cultural spot and attracts many people.

Oyster Goods
Oysters are a popular delicacy in Japan, and Setouchi is famous for its oysters. The Setouchi oyster is a unique variety that is grown in the Setouchi region. The Setouchi oyster is known for its sweet and mild flavor, making it a popular choice for sushi and sashimi.

Oyster Goods
Baked oyster in soy sauce and seasoned oyster are two dishes rapidly gaining popularity as an appetizer with sake. Processed oyster goods, Setouchi oyster, are available all year round. Even in the off-season, you can find them at “Misuwaka” (Bakudake Station) as well as other places.

A lively handmade tiger is a gift for boys.

100% additive-free traditional food with a natural flavor, unchanged since its innovation.

The smiling face of the Korean missionaries.

Korean Doll
The lovely face of the simple, clay doll was inspired by the Korean Dance of Iwashima. It represents many tourists to take a home. The Korean Dance originates in the “Dance of the Children” which was performed by the Korean missionaries when they stopped in Setouchi.

Bam Pottery
Pottery stores which have moved from the Setouchi City to Setouchi City, where the old Setouchi-ware becomes familiar and popular in the area. They are located in those popular areas and can be found in Setouchi.

Bam Pottery
Opened in front of Ushimado, Forty-Eight-

Bam Pottery
A delicate bubble bowl is an example of Ushimado pottery.

Bam Pottery
The shipwrecked tiger has been a famous gift to celebrate the birth of a baby boy around the Setouchi era. Today, it is used festively as a mascot for all kinds of events involving traffic accidents. The shipwrecked tiger is a homemade folk handicraft handed down through generations of farmers and housewives.

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Luxuriously spend your time at a stylish hotel overlooking Japan’s "Aegean Sea."

For your visit, a guesthouse with a homely atmosphere is fine, but for those who want to fully enjoy a resort experience, an Unishimado resort hotel is the way to go. White Greek-style buildings make you feel as if you were at the edge of the Aegean Sea. At seaside hotels, the Sado Island Sea opens up before you. Indulge yourself luxuriously at your own pace.

Experience total relaxation at an intimate hotel surrounded by blue seas, blue sky and green forest.

If you want to savor some Setouchi seafood, the best choice is to stay at a guesthouse near the port. Setouchi fresh vegetables and seafood are often included in recipes here. Your tongue will be tickled. You can enjoy a homely atmosphere as well as the feeling of vacation at pensions scattered around the areas of Misaki, Milk Land, Olive Garden etc. in Unishimado. You may hit it off with a friendly pension owner and have a long chat. If you’re planning to have your full of outdoor activities, choose an accommodation to suit your destination, seas or mountains; how about a cottage in Maizima Island or in Oeafune?

1.3.3.4. Pesciino Village
There are many pensions ready to welcome you with warm hospitality in areas like Misaki, Milk Land and Olive Garden.

6.6. Ohayama Sea Village
7. Ohayama Wild Bird Forest
8. Uminoseki Beach Hotel
9. Oeafune
10. Kasato
11. Tsumonai
12. Sado Island
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Setouchi City, set against Seto Inland Sea, lies in the southeast part of Okayama, the “Land of Fine Weather,” just one hour’s drive to the popular tourist destination of Kurashiki City. Planning to stay awhile at a resort? Sounds good. Your plan will be even more exciting if you take a themed tour like the “local craft products” or “historical houses” tours around Okayama Prefecture.
Setouchi City, where the sea is calm and the chirping of birds can be heard, is aptly described as a "quiet town surrounded by nature."

On the day of a festival, however, this peaceful town has quite a different look, filled with feverish excitement and a vital spark.

A variety of events are held as the seasons change, in the sea, mountains, or downtown, passing down local history.

We’ll introduce you to some fun and charming events during your stay in Setouchi City. Join the locals and celebrate together.

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March

Ningyo-kuji: Buddhist Rite for Old Souls (Ozu Area)

April

Genghis Festival (Ozu Area)

May

Nembuta (Procession of the Buddhist Statues; Oshikamado Area)

June

Corn Harvest Festival (Ozu Area)

July

Ushimado Fireworks Display (Ushimado Area)

August

Kinosaki Puppet Show Festival (Ozu Area)

September

Kinosaki Golden Festival (Ozu Area)

October

The Ushimado Autumn Festival (Ushimado Area)

November

Ushimado Autumn Festival (Ushimado Area)

December

Setouchi Balloon Festival (Ozu Area)

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Let us take care of your Ushimado sightseeing. We’re your tour volunteers!

We heard that a local tour guide is available for free in Ushimado, so we went down to the "Ushimado Kinenkan" to see what we could find out from Ms. Yoshida, a tourist volunteer. The "Ushimado tourist volunteer team" started in 2001 in order to energize tourists in Ushimado. In all, there are 21 members on the team, 8 men and 13 women. As it is a purely volunteer activity, the tour guide is offered free of charge, although the tour guides are not professionals, they’re friendly and warm-hearted people, like the boat captain we met, who is quite well-informed on local topics. We asked Ms. Yoshida what motivated him to take up volunteer activity. "After I had retired, I wanted to be of some help to my hometown Ushimado, and for myself, I’ve always loved history so that was a big part of it," she told us.

If you go on a trip to Setouchi, why not check with a tour guide? You might get to hear some interesting local stories or perhaps some inside information unlikely to be found in any guidebook.

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*Adapted from an article given at the volunteer’s ceremony, Mr. Setouchi Kinenkan (2009/03/01)*