

## **Art and Life of the Seto Inland Sea**

Along with the 90th anniversary of the designation of the Setonaikai National Park, a special exhibition titled “The Sea and I ART/LIFE,” is open from February 7 till March 24 at the Prefectural Museum of Art in Matsuyama City. It conveys the charm of the Seto Inland Sea through history, paintings, folk art, and architecture, where we can reflect our life along the Seto Inland Sea coast from multiple angles.

According to the museum, when the Seto Inland Sea was designated as one of Japan's first national parks on March 16, 1934, the tourism to the Seto Inland Sea started to gain popularity. The exhibition introduces landscape paintings by painters related to the area. Folk crafts such as Iyokasuri kimonos and Tobe ware are also displayed from the perspective of connecting the nature and resources of the Seto Inland Sea area to the future. Buildings such as the Saijo Eiko Church (in Akiyashiki, Saijo City), designed by Shizutaro Urabe, is also displayed. A “Folding Screen with Seto Inland Sea Route Map,” which is a decorative version of a navigational map from the Edo period (1603-1868) (stored in the Imperial Palace San-no-maru Shozo-kan) is on display until March 4.

The main visual used in the exhibition's posters was created by a sketch artist under the pseudonym Shunshun, from Hiroshima Prefecture. His work depicts the Seto Inland Sea as seen from Mt. Kiro-san on Oshima Island in Imabari using only a ballpoint pen. He said, “Drawing with only dots and lines made me feel like I was washed over by the gentle waves of the Seto Inland Sea. I hope people feel hope from my work.”

The Prefectural Museum of History and Culture in Seiyo City, southwestern Ehime, and the Prefectural Museum of Science and Technology in Niihama City, eastern Ehime, are also holding exhibitions on the same theme from February 17th to April 7.

Additional information:

The Museum of Art, Ehime website: <https://www.ehime-art.jp/blog/?p=3140>  
(February 8, Ehime Shimbun)

## **Ehime Marathon Supported by Startup Business**

The 61st Ehime Marathon was held on February 11, where a record 10,547 people participated. Five days before, the Ehime Shimbun company, one of the sponsors of the event, announced that it would issue completion certificates with finishing times using non-fungible tokens (NFTs) that prevent digital data from being copied or tampered with. The company announced that it would distribute the NFTs to those who request it, using the distribution service “2.99,” which allows anyone to obtain an NFT with their own Google account or Apple ID. On the day of the event, they helped participants with the NFTs at a special booth in the venue. This was part of the prefecture's project, called Ehime Startup Co-Creation Promotion Project, which matches startups from around the country with companies in the prefecture, to create new businesses. This was the first time in Japan that

NFT completion certificates with finishing times were issued and distributed at domestic marathon events.

(February 7, 12, Ehime Shimbun)

## **Ehime University Career Development Program for International Students**

The Ehime University Career Development Program for International Students, which provides career education to international students and support for finding employment in Ehime Prefecture and Shikoku, was selected as the only program in the Chugoku and Shikoku regions for this year's "Program for Enhancing Employment of International Students" conducted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT).

This MEXT program encourages universities to support international students who hope to get a job in Japan. The goal is to increase the percentage of international students graduating from or completing their studies at Japanese universities and then gaining jobs in Japan to 50% by the end of 2025. This is the second time since 2007 that Ehime University has been selected for this program. Hiroshige Nishina, President of Ehime University, said, "In a society with a declining population, we want to develop talented international students who excel in their respective academic fields as highly skilled professionals. We hope the program will revitalize the prefecture and the Shikoku region as a whole."

The current program began in January of this year with local business groups and companies using project funds from MEXT (up to 31 million yen per year). The project, which lasts until the end of 2025, includes providing international students the Japanese language education necessary for business as well as classes to learn about corporate culture and the characteristics of local industries with the participation of employees from companies in the prefecture, as well as providing problem-solving internships.

Networking events and tours with companies in the prefecture will also be held to help international students gain a clear idea of their future employment options. In addition, Ehime University provides support by offering its expertise and assistance in finding employment in Japan for international students studying at other universities in the four prefectures of Shikoku.

Tomoko Itsuki, Director of the International Student Employment Promotion Program Promotion Office, said, "We want international students to deepen their understanding of Japanese corporate culture, but we don't want them to act like the old saying 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do.' Rather, we hope they try to make use of their unique perspectives and actively contribute".

(February 6, Asahi Shimbun Digital)

## **Botchan Ressha to be Reoperated in March**

The Iyo Railway Co., Ltd. announced that Botchan Ressha, a tourist train, which has been out of service since November 2023 will resume operation on March 20. It will be operated only on the weekend and holidays except the year end and new year's holiday. The reason they will be able to resume is that they have been able to secure enough the train crew.

The Iyo Railway Co., Ltd. reported that the accumulated deficit resulting from the operation of Botchan Ressha would be about 1.4 billion yen. At the meeting of the group considering Botchan Ressha organized by Matsuyama city and consisting of the people from economic community and tourism industry last December, Iyo Railway asked for support from the city.

The city conducted a survey on LINE about Botchan Ressha. The result showed that more than 80% of respondents supported resuming operation. However, only about a half supported the idea that the city provide financial support.

Mr. Ichiro Shimizu, the president of Iyotetsu Group Co., Ltd. commented that he would continue the discussion with the city and stakeholders since he knew that the situation would be very tough. The Iyo Railway Co., Ltd. struggled to secure a crew under the circumstance of a serious shortage people, and implemented a pay raise in January which will take effect in April.

(February 1/January 27, Asahi Shimbun Digital)

## **Yuzu Craft Beer to Taiwan from Matsuno**

Japandemic Company, brewing craft beer under the brand "DD4D", has started selling craft beer made with yuzu peel from Matsuno. Characterized by a refreshing yuzu aroma and acidity derived from yeast, the beer is also exported to Taiwan. The company's president, Keita Yamanouchi (34), said, "This craft beer can be made only during the yuzu harvest season. We hope people enjoy the sense of the season with the beer."

Yamanouchi, who studied brewing in Tokyo, returned to Ehime and set up tanks in a corner of his family's apparel store DD4D (Chifunemachi, Matsuyama City) and began brewing beer in 2019. In 2021, he rented a building, which used to be a rice warehouse, in Sumiyoshi near the Mitsu port, and started operating a second factory. Approximately 100,000 liters of beer and low-malt beer-like beverages are produced annually. They have brewed about 200 types of craft beer so far and sell about 10 of them They also offer citrus beers such as Iyokan and Kawachi Bankan.

The yuzu beer was created following a request by Matsuno, known for its yuzu cultivation. Yuzu peel harvested by Noriyuki Mori (40) of Toyooka, Matsuno in November last year was used to make the beer. The beer is of a type called "sour ale". It has a pleasant acidity, with a juicy yuzu flavor and a peach-like flavor produced by yeast. The company has brewed 1,200 liters in one tank and has been selling it under the name "Yuzu Jingle", starting this month.

The retail price is 680 yen (including tax) for one 350 ml can.

A formal announcement was held on January 12 at the second factory in Matsuyama City, and the mayor of Matsuno, Hiroshi Sakamoto, who tasted the beer, said, "It has the aroma of yuzu and is delicious with a refreshing taste. I hope you also try making other beer with peaches and plums from Matsuno." Mōri added, "I never imagined that yuzu could be made into beer. I'm happy that my yuzu has been used in this new craft beer."

Yamanouchi enthusiastically stated, "Among the thousands of hop varieties available, we used one with a slight white wine-like aroma to bring out the aroma of yuzu. We want to continue to work with agricultural producers to create new craft beers".

Yuzu Jingle will be sold at rest stops in Matsuno and on the Japandemic website, and will also be offered at restaurants in the town and elsewhere. Mōri's yuzu is also used in the company's standard beer, "Yuzu Buro", an American West Coast-style India pale ale (IPA) with a characteristic bitterness. 1,200 liters has been brewed and sales are scheduled to begin at the end of this month. For inquiries, contact Japandemic (089-932-7764).

(January 25, Yomiuri Shimbun Online)

Additional information:

Japandemic website: <https://japandemic.co.jp/collections/online-store>

## **Joint Research to Eradicate Malaria**

A research group from Mount Kenya University, the biggest private university in Kenya, visited the Proteo-Science Center at Ehime University for collaborative research to eradicate malaria. The aim is to develop an antibody test to identify asymptomatic carriers by using ENDEXT technology which was developed by Ehime University.

Both universities are carrying out this project for the early diagnosis and treatment of malaria. The center concluded an Agreement of Academic Exchange and Cooperation with Mount Kenya University in May 2023, and has invited 6 professors, researchers and graduate students since then.

The joint research project aims to establish a diagnostic measure using blood serum to identify an asymptomatic carrier. Utilizing EXDEXT technology, it will be a test which can easily and quickly recognize an antibody created in the body of a malaria patient.

Associate Professor Eizo Takashima at the center expects that new diagnostic measures can contribute to identifying asymptomatic carriers to prevent infection since many cases of transmission from such carriers are reported.

Mr. Bernard Kanoi, Senior Research Fellow, who finished his Ph.D. course at the Ehime University at Graduate School of Science and Engineering of, explained the current situation of the malaria epidemic in Kenya where 70% of the land was designated as a malaria endemic area. He commented that many children and expectant mothers were the ones who were the most affected although the number of reported cases of malaria was decreasing.

He hopes that this joint research will contribute to eradicate malaria, and that the interaction between the students in Japan and Kenya strengthens the ties through research, and helps them find new skills.

(January 24, Ehime Shimbun Online)

## **Fish from Imabari to a Sushi Restaurant in Tokyo on the Same Day**

A demonstration trial was conducted on January 22 in which fish caught near a remote island of Imabari City (Ehime) were transported fresh to a sushi restaurant in Tokyo on the same day by using a drone, a route bus, and a regular air service.

The trial was undertaken by Taiho Industrial (infrastructure project company, Takamatsu City), Imabari City, and Iyo Bank (Matsuyama City), among others. A fisherman from Ebisumarū, a fresh fish wholesale company on Ōshima Island facing the Kurushima Strait, caught two red sea bream and three squid in the nearby sea and transported them to Ōshima pier before dawn of the same day.

The polystyrene box containing the red sea bream and other seafood weighed approximately 7.5 kg. The box was tied to the drone at the pier and took off. The drone flew at about 35 km/h and landed at Imabari pier on the opposite shore in just over 10 minutes. From there, the box was loaded onto an express local bus to Matsuyama Airport, then flown to Haneda Airport. It arrived at a sushi restaurant in Ebisu, Tokyo, at around 3 pm.

Ebisumarū is known for its unique technique of preserving fish and receives orders from famous restaurants all over the country. Immediately after being caught, fish are under stress as they thrash about in the net and can develop an unpleasant smell if they are shipped as is. Usually, the red sea bream and other seafood brought in by drone on the day were kept alive overnight in a fish tank to relax, and were then killed just before being transported.

Yōsuke Ōgami (32), a fisherman at Ebisumarū, said, “Until now, the fish would arrive in Tokyo two days later before noon. If the fish could be delivered on the same day, we expect the satisfaction levels of sushi restaurants and customers to increase. It may also lead to the improvement of washoku, the traditional cuisine of Japan.”

This project received a grant from the Ministry of the Environment to explore the challenges of logistics using drones in underpopulated areas. In an attempt to explore efficient use of drones, another test was also conducted after the demonstration trial, in which bento (Japanese lunch box) were loaded at Imabari pier and then transported to Ōshima Island for residents and tourists.

(January 23, Asahi Shimbun Digital)

Additional information:

Ebisumarū, established in 2010 on Ōshima Island, is well known for having a unique processing method of transforming caught fish into high-quality ingredients, which attracts

famous restaurants across the country and results in constant orders from them. There is a waiting period of a few months to six months. In 2021, Ebisumaru received the Terroir Award in the Japanese version of the French restaurant guide “Gault et Millau 2021,” which is given to producers taking on unique challenges.