

## **Resident Involvement is Key to Inbound Tourism**

On November 7, an "Inbound Summit in Setouchi" was held in Matsuyama, which gathered businesses aiming to revitalize each region through the inbound tourism industry. It was hosted by MATCHA, based in Tokyo, which collects information about Japan for visitors and residents from abroad. About 130 people from tourism-related businesses participated, and about 600 people watched online. They listened to the stories of trailblazers who have collaborated with local residents to create attractive content, in order to explore future possibilities. A Kagawa Prefectural official who is involved in the management of the Setouchi Triennale, a contemporary art festival held on islands in the Seto Inland Sea, emphasized the importance of collaboration between tourism businesses and residents. He said, "Islanders and volunteers are participating in the art production. Tourism that only involves viewing content is on its way out. From now on, how actively local residents are involved in efforts to introduce visitors to the region will be directly conveyed to tourists." A representative of Kita Management who is involved in accommodation businesses in Ōzu, predicted that the inbound tourism market is guaranteed to grow to a certain extent. He said, "We want to work together with residents to welcome visitors from overseas, revitalize the region, and create a sustainable town where young people will return."

(November 8, Ehime Shimbun)

## **New Hotel Opens in Narukawa Valley, Kihoku**

Kihoku, in south-west Ehime, has renovated the old "Narukawa Valley Rest Center Lodge" and reopened it as the "Narukawa Nature Hotel" on October 25th. The hotel has a separate indoor bath using hot water from the neighboring Takatsuki Onsen, and the town is promoting it as a place where visitors can enjoy nature and relax.

Located about 20 minutes by car from Uwajima, in southern Ehime, the hotel boasts beautiful valley scenery surrounded by clear streams and trees. Kihoku spent about 150 million yen on the rest center, which opened in 1987, and the designated manager "Arigato Service" (Imabari) invested about 130 million yen on renovations starting in 2022.

The hotel has five detached villas renovated from lodges in the forest, two of which are deluxe types (for 2–6 people) with private indoor baths offering views of the forest. The standard type (for 2–3 people) provides access to four

communal baths in the bathhouse building. Guests can enjoy French cuisine for dinner in the main building.

Prices including tax for a one-night stay with two meals for two adults start from 26,150 yen per person for the deluxe type and 23,720 yen per person for the standard type. Rooms in the main building (8 guest rooms) start from 8,855 yen per person with a Japanese dining plan. The hotel is closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. For inquiries, contact the hotel on 0895-45-2639.

(November 2nd, Yomiuri Shimbun Online)

### **Disaster Prevention Specialists Receive Thank You Letters**

The number of disaster prevention specialists reached 10,000 in Matsuyama for the first time in the country this August, and on September 25, the letters of appreciation were presented to six organizations that had cooperated in the training and other activities of disaster prevention specialists. The organizations are the Ehime University Disaster Prevention Information Research Center, which has conducted courses for disaster prevention specialists and for students, as well as the Matsuyama City Voluntary Disaster Prevention Network Conference, Fuji Co., Ltd., Hakujukai Social Welfare Corporation, DCM Co., Ltd., and the Ehime Prefecture Chūyo-District Postmasters Association. Mayor Noshi said, "We will continue to work on improving skills by conducting follow-up programs for disaster prevention specialists. We ask for your continued cooperation."

(November 1, Koho Matsuyama)

According to the Matsuyama City official website, disaster prevention specialists are people who are expected to play an active role in enhancing disaster prevention capabilities in various areas of society based on the principles of "self-help," "mutual aid," and "collaboration," and who have been certified by the Japan Disaster Prevention Specialists Organization as having sufficient awareness and acquired a certain level of knowledge and skills to do so.

### **Cooking Class for Inbound Travellers**

Smile Apron started a new project for inbound travellers to introduce how to prepare Japanese cuisine and Ehime's regional dishes.

Smile Apron was founded in 2022, and is based in Matsuyama. They plan and organize cooking classes and Shokuiku (Food and Nutrition Education)

programs for kids.

The cooking class for inbound travellers started this spring. The representative, Ms. Yuko Horie, found that there were very few experiential programs for tourists provided in Ehime prefecture. A program should be included in the itinerary prepared by travel agencies inside and outside of the prefecture in advance. It can also be arranged through the website of Smile Apron.

The first class was conducted in October. The menu consisted of imotaki (a one-pot dish of chicken, taro, konnyaku, shiitake and other ingredients), Matsuyama-sushi (sushi in a bowl with sea eel, pickled mackerel, shrimp, burdock root, carrots), and tempura. The participants said with a smile that they would try to cook them at home.

The menu can be developed suitable to the participants, considering allergies, and other food restrictions. When some difficulties are found on the ingredient, the alternatives could be suggested. Alternative ingredients can be substituted if needed.

The price for the class is ¥20,000 per person. The venue will be a rental space in the prefecture. The duration of the class is 2.5 hours including cooking and eating. An interpreter and a pick-up service can be arranged upon request.

Ms. Horie hopes more foreign tourists will learn about Japanese cuisine and traditional dishes of Ehime, and enjoy and understand Japanese food culture more. She is planning to establish a shorter program for those who have only limited time.

(October 31, Ehime Shimbun Online)

## **Average Age of Presidents in Shikoku**

The Takamatsu branch of the Tokyo Shoko Research, Ltd., a private credit research firm, reported that the average age of company presidents in Shikoku has become 16.6 years younger among the companies where a new president assumed office in the last year (August 2023 to July 2024).

There are 57,580 enterprises with headquarters located in Shikoku. New presidents were appointed at 2,046 companies (3.55%). with 657 companies in Ehime, 546 in Kagawa, 434 in Kochi, and 409 in Tokushima. The average age of presidents was 71.4 years old before the change, and it became 54.8 years old after the change.

By industry, the number of companies with a new president is 784 in the service industry, 346 in the construction, 228 in the manufacturing, and 180 in

the wholesale.

Across the country, there are 66,862 companies out of about 1.57 million which a president has changed during the same period, and it results a 16.7 years younger average age of the president.

The person in charge at the Takamatsu branch said that they found many enterprises facing a change of representatives. It is very crucial to change the president at the appropriate time for a sustainable business.

(October 20, Asahi Shimbun Digital)

## **Shodoshima and Ozu Win “Silver Award” for Sustainable Tourism Destinations**

Green Destinations, the Dutch international certification organization, announced that Kagawa Prefecture's Shodoshima Island (Tonosho Town, Shodoshima Town) and Ehime Prefecture's Ozu City were selected for this year's Silver Award for world sustainable tourism destinations, the first selections from Shikoku. Both regions were previously included in the “Top 100” list but are now ranked higher.

The top 100 includes five awards and certifications that are based on the percentage of compliance with 84 assessment criteria related to sustainable tourism. The Silver Award ranks fourth and requires more than 70% compliance. Shodoshima Town was selected as a Top 100 destination in both 2021 and 2022. This year, the Shodoshima Tourism Association, which brings together four tourism organizations on the island, collaborated with both towns to apply. This is the first time in Japan that multiple municipalities have won the award together.

Of the 84 criteria, 41 were judged to be in full compliance and 36 in partial compliance. High evaluations were given in the areas of “culture and tradition,” such as the preservation of rural kabuki theater, and “social welfare,” such as a universal beach event.

Shodoshima Town Mayor Masahiko Oe said, “We hope that receiving this award will promote the island’s tourism with the Setouchi Triennale and the Osaka–Kansai Expo coming next year.”

Meanwhile, Ozu City and the local association, Kita Management, have been working on tourism initiatives that utilize the castle town's streetscape and old houses, leading to consecutive top 100 selections in 2022 and 2023.

This year, 43 out of the 84 criteria were judged to be in full compliance and 32

in partial compliance. The preservation of townscapes, buildings, and cultural properties in the “culture and tradition” category were highly evaluated. The city was also highly evaluated for “environment and climate”, covering areas such as renewable energy and innovative transport solutions.

Mayor Takahisa Ninomiya said, "We want to see this award as a new starting point to further devote our efforts to preserving and utilizing historical resources, strengthening community ties, and promoting sustainable tourism-oriented development."

Nationally, Kamaishi in Iwate Prefecture won the Gold Award, one rank higher than Silver, for the first time. In addition to Shodoshima and Ozu in Shikoku, Takayama in Gifu Prefecture was selected for the Silver Award. Last year, Niseko in Hokkaido was selected for the Silver Award, and the year before last, it was Kamaishi.

Shinji Nakarai, executive director of Tourism Shikoku, which supports these efforts, expressed his hopes during a press conference held in Takamatsu on October 8th, bringing together representatives from both regions. He said, “The international recognition of both areas as sustainable tourist destinations should boost their appeal to foreign tourists and enhance Shikoku's brand as a leader in sustainable tourism.”

(October 17, Asahi Shimbun Digital)