

# MATSUYAMA OUTLOUD, June 2025

—Voices of the WGO? Staff and Members of the Volunteer Guide Seminar—

## Summer Destinations

Mitsuhamama seaport had always prospered as a gateway to the sea, but with the development of land and air routes, the dockside bustle of the port town disappeared. Until recently, that is. Now luxury passenger ships have come to anchor.

I certainly feel the number of inbound tourists is increasing because the other day, I stood in front of a crowd of foreign tourists from the Norwegian Spirit as a volunteer interpreter. They bombarded me with questions, mostly for directions to the city's two main tourist destinations: Matsuyama Castle and Dogo Hot Spring.

Many tourists wanted to use their limited time here wisely, so they naturally felt it inconvenient that the bus, trams, and some of the taxi companies wouldn't accept credit cards.

Naturally, it's necessary to strengthen the inbound tourism infrastructure. For tourists who want to visit famous places, we can prepare shuttles or loop buses that accept credit cards, for example.

While assisting tourists to get where they wanted to go, a traveler who couldn't tolerate the back pain he was suffering approached me and asked for the location of the nearest chiropractor. I looked it up, called them up and booked him a reservation.

One member of city hall staff, not conversant in English, was trying to guide them using Google Translator on his iPhone, dealing with this sudden influx of tourists one by one.

Inevitably, staffers and volunteers in charge of tourist traffic will have to improve their English skills.

It would be a good idea to encourage high school students to volunteer as English interpreters and incorporate those skills into English communication classes. This way, students would learn to communicate with foreigners in real life situations.

While passengers were waiting for a bus back to the seaport, I gave an impromptu historical trivia lecture about the castle and hot spring, and the look in their eyes said they were interested. That was the best thing of the day.

They talked about the cleanliness of the city, delicious local dishes, and the memorable experiences they'd enjoyed that day, so I felt proud of living in Matsuyama.

Needless to say, wherever they go tourists spend lots of money, so businesses in town will be revitalized by the positive economic effect. A good impression of this area will lead to the expansion of inbound tourism in the future, and we can expect that our town will become more attractive to travelers. In order to encourage these positive results, we should try to provide better tourist hospitality.

(Miwa N.)

I'd intended to write an essay on how groups of young Japanese women at shopping malls tend to behave like ten year olds on crack, but the topic somehow seemed counterproductive. It's not as if there's anything I can do about it.

So instead, I'll write about one of my favorite summer destinations, Tengu Highlands.

Tengu. I heard somewhere that tengu with their long noses and red faces, were partly modeled after 18th century Dutch and Portuguese visitors to Japan.

And after Commander Perry and crew of his black ship suddenly appeared off Yokohama in 1854 with cannons pointed at the capital and a long list of demands for the shogun, parents would frighten kids with tengu stories in order to get them to, “Stop playing that damn' noisy shamisen and do your homework!”

Matsuyama in summer can be a sizzling 30 degrees Celsius. Up there in Tengu Highlands, located in-between Ehime and Kochi prefectures, the temperature plummets to about 8, and people in t-shirts and shorts hurry about hugging themselves from the cold. Everybody that is except the cows peppering the mountainsides. And with cows, there is, naturally, ice cream.

Even with the low temperatures, tourists eat the famous Kochi salt soft cream. You have to eat it. It's famous.

The only other souvenirs of note are yellow bathroom slippers with faces that look like what would happen if you cooked a Simpsons cartoon character in a microwave oven.

The landscape, however, looks like an Arctic summer, green rolling hills studded with boulders probably left behind by retreating glaciers tens of thousands of years ago.

Shikoku Therapy Road, a walking trail carpeted with soft wood chips and decorated with multiple beautiful views, is a pleasure to feel beneath your feet.

I took the opportunity to walk my Boston terrier Patrick there. Patrick necessarily equates any body of water with a bath and any raised platform with a visit to the vets. And a thermometer in his butt. He isn't crazy about heights, and rounding curves on the cliff hanging trail, he caught sight of several scenic views of bodies of water and occasionally hit the dirt.

Tengu Highlands is (literally) a cool summer destination whether you're dog or human. Or Commander Matthew Perry or even a tengu.

The best way to get there is in a car driven by a cheerful and fun-loving companion.

But if you have neither car nor companion, you might have a problem, because in tourism-infrastructure-deprived Shikoku there isn't any other way to get there.

Figures.

Well, there's always the mall.

(Ed.)