



Seto Sea Art Tours: Setouchi Triennale Edition

Seto Sea Art Festival Tour: Day 1

The first day will be arrival in Takamatsu City; a city stuck somewhere between the simple rusticity of the countryside and the sleek modernity of a metropolis, a city still trying to figure it all out and find its own voice. The evening will be a great opportunity to explore downtown Takamatsu on your own two feet, a chance to interact with locals and explore this city that so many choose to call home.



Seto Sea Art Festival Tour: Day 2

After breakfast, you will take the ferry from Takamatsu Port bound for the island of Shodoshima. The ride will take about an hour giving you the chance to relax as the blue currents of the Seto Sea or take a stroll on the upper deck to view the verdant island hills that dot the azure waters like emeralds.

Once on Shodoshima, the theme of the day will be “machi-nami,” a Japanese term that means to walk through the older city blocks to take in any, art, culture, architecture, and small-town life that one may stumble across.

In this regard, Shodoshima is a perfect candidate. Exhibiting an almost Mediterranean atmosphere with a strong streak of self-reliance, Shodoshima could be considered a microcosm of Shikoku itself. Complete with its own version of the 88 Temple Pilgrimage, Shodoshima is also famous for maintaining traditional methods of producing “somen” (a type of thin noodle), soy sauce, sake, as well as cultivating olives.

These themes of tradition, sustainability, and self-reliance can be felt and tasted as lunch will be dishes prepared using ingredients from the island itself. Hidden in a renovated “somen” factory, Kitchen Uchiniku grants the opportunity for a complete farm to table experience using locally sourced ingredients to prepare dishes representative of the island.

The final stop on Shodoshima is the set of the Japanese film “24 Eyes.” The movie is based on the 1952 novel of the same name by female author Sakae Tsuboi and debuted as a film in 1954. The movie itself is the tale of a schoolteacher in rural Japan and follows her career through the rise of Japanese Nationalism in the 1920s up until after the war in 1946.

Showcasing the effects of nationalism, the war, and Japan’s eventual defeat, the tale is about small-town life as Japan took some of its early tragic steps onto the world stage and the eventual results. It is a spot to appreciate on many levels and will surely be one of the many highlights on your journey around Shikoku.



Seto Sea Art Festival Tour: Day 3

After breakfast, its back on the ferry—this time bound for Naoshima, well known for being a haven for artistic creativity.

On the island you can enjoy touring the various artistic landmarks via private car. These will include the renovated art house projects as well as the iconic Naoshima pumpkins located right next to the crashing waves of the Seto Sea.

Examples and displays of contemporary art next to the beauty of the region are sure to have a lasting impression on the ferry back to Takamatsu, where you will have another opportunity to explore nighttime Takamatsu.

For this night we recommend venturing into the shopping arcade or “shotengai.” The main streets are filled with every imaginable shop, but a trip down a side alley or back street highlights the Shōwa atmosphere Takamatsu preserves so well. Karaoke lounges dusky with smoke and thick with bitter-sweet songs of the past, izakayas with dimly lit red lanterns beckoning weary salarymen, and “Italian” restaurants with a uniquely Japanese spin on the menu and atmosphere are well worth exploring while here.



Seto Sea Art Festival Tour: Day 4

Another day that begins with a ride on the ferry. This time bound for Teshima, a hidden gem among the waters of the Seto Sea. Less known than Naoshima, this small island contains some of the most transformative and exciting artistic experiences that can be found.

Chief amongst these is the Teshima Art Museum. Despite the name this structure is a work of art that has been designed to blend seamlessly with the surrounding hills, rice terraces, and overlooks a sweeping wash of the Seto Sea.

The structure itself is cavernous and sculpted from concrete with windows to invite the sun, wind, and other elements into the interior. In the stillness of this sculpture once can experience a work of art that is never the same and changes with the seasons, weather, and the viewer.

The serene yet variable interior challenges us to consider what this thing we call “art” really is. And, depending on the day, season, and mindset these answers can change considerably. Yet, every visit pushes closer and closer to the truth of what that thing really is.

In addition to Teshima, you will also visit the tiny island of Inujima. During the early days of the turn of the century, this small island boomed as a copper refinery operated for about ten years before closing. The refinery was abandoned and forgotten, seemingly along with this tiny island.

Recently, however, this abandoned refinery has become the flagship project of an initiative to reclaim and recycle the abandoned structures of an invasively industrialized past and transform them into works of art to be appreciated and to serve as a warning for the future.

Covered in ivy and surrounded by plants that creep over the facades and smokestack of this former powerhouse of industry, it serves as a kind of open-air art exhibit that preserves and beautifies the history of this small island.



Seto Sea Art Festival Tour: Day 5

The day will start earlier with breakfast, then departure by private car to Mitoyo City. Of special note in this area is Motoyamaj,i temple number 70 of the 88 Temple Pilgrimage.

This temple is unique among the 88 as being the only temple whose main deity is Batō Kannon, or literally Horse-Head Kannon.

Typically depicted with wild flowing hair and three faces overcome with rage, this deity has a small horse head in its crown And typically holds various items in its many hand including swords, axes, wheels, flowers, prayer beads, bells, or even spears. According to some, Batō Kannon consumes our bad thoughts, evil deeds, and spiritual obstacles, disposing of them for us.

This deity alone makes temple number 70 well worth the visit and after visiting perhaps everyone can find something out about themselves.

After a bit of enlightenment its back on a ferry to the island of Awashima. Shaped like a Y, this island is a place of beaches, green hills, and ancient trees amid the azure waters of the Seto Sea.

Despite the scenic charm however, this place was also the location of Japan's first naval training school. Here young sailors were taught the art of naval warfare and exposed to nationalist dialogue. As with the set of "24 Eyes," this place has layers of meaning and such a highly textured location is surely worth a visit.

In the evening it is back to Takamatsu for rest, reflection, and further exploration of the city at your leisure.



Seto Sea Art Festival Tour: Day 6

The final day will be spent unhurried in Takamatsu City. After, breakfast and hotel check out, it will be off to Ritsurin Garden.

One of the best examples of classic Japanese architecture and gardening, the sprawling garden is a relaxing end to your journey in Kagawa.

Some 400 years in the making, this garden has been maintained and expanded upon by the various Lords of Takamatsu. In addition to the ponds brimming with overfed koi fish, shady pines, and colorful seasonal flowers, it is also rich with the trappings of the past.

A prime example is a pond and canal created so the Lords could enjoy duck hunting as well as species of plants from Kyushu that were gifts from other feudal lords.

On this day you will also have the chance for a boat ride along the teal waters of the pond as well as an opportunity to enjoy tea in a traditional tea house that overlooks the garden.

And during this time is a grand opportunity to reflect on the past 6 days. In these days you've seen so much of something more than just Japan. Tōkyō and Ōsaka are not without their charm but are they the real Japan you've been seeking?

In the smallest prefecture of Japan, you've experienced some of the finest art in the world, you've come up close and personal to local culture, there has been stunning scenery, fantastic dishes, and you've heard the echoes of the past. And now, you are finally doing the very "Japanese" thing of drinking tea in a lovely garden rich with history. It is easy to do any one of those things, but to do them all in this bizarre and wonderful little place is certainly worth something.

Maybe you came here for the art, the temples, or maybe even the udon. But we hope that you leave with something more.

