

The Heart-Shaped Island in the Inland Sea

Iwaishima island

祝島

Travelers' Guide

Iwaishima / Kaminoseki-cho, Yamaguchi Prefecture

Issued by Iwaishima Net 21



Iwaishima Town Map

◎Manyō no hi (Monument with poems from the Manyō-shū inscribed on it)

In ancient times, Iwaishima was known as far as the capitals as an “island of the gods” where the gods and spirits that granted seafarers safe passage resided. Its name also appears in the *Manyō-shū*, the oldest Japanese poetry anthology from 9th century. The following two poems that are carved into the stone were reportedly written by government messengers on their way to Korea.



家人は 帰り早や来と祝島 斎ひ待つらむ 旅行くわれを

My loved one who remains behind wishes for my swift return,  
And like the name of the island, will wish well and wait for my return.

草枕 旅行く人を祝島 幾代経るまで 斎ひ来にけむ

Iwaishima, as its name suggests, must have wished well of the many generations  
Of travelers who had gone far, sleeping with the green grass as their pillows

◎Nerihei : Stone Walls with Plaster

“Nerihei,” is a type of wall unique to Iwaishima that is made from stacked stone and soil, and is fortified with plaster.



The style of construction is said to date to the late Edo Era. The sturdy construction of the walls, which keep the temperature cool in the summer and warm in the winter, protected the house to which they were attached as well as the surrounding hamlet from strong sea winds or fires. The walls have been well maintained and continue to protect the village today.



Local Iwaishima Products

◎From the mountainous regions:

biwa (loquat), mandarin oranges, sweet potatoes, kokko (small kiwi-like fruit), dried daikon (white radish)



◎From the sea areas:

dried octopus, boiled octopus, dried sayori, sea bream, yellowtail, horse mackerel, hijiki seaweed, wakame seaweed



◎Sweets & other goodies:

Yomogi dumpling Odamari ame hard candy  
Ishi tofu (heavy and extra-firm tofu)



Information

◎Lodging information

Misaki Ryokan 0820-66-2001  
Hamaya Ryokan 0820-66-2018  
Minshuku Kunihiro 090-1332-4897 (Japanese Style B & B)

◎Restaurants and Cafes

Restaurant Koizumi 090-6906-3644  
Cafe Wataya 090-7544-8169  
Iwata Coffee Shop 090-1384-5299  
Koiwai Shokudo (Restaurant) 0820-66-2231

◎Websites

Iwaishima Homepage <http://iwaishima.jp/>  
Iwaishima Visitor Center <http://iwaishima.jp/kanko/>  
Minshuku Kunihiro (also B & B) <http://iwaishima.jp/minsyuku/>

◎Charter Boat

Iwamoto 0820-66-2040  
Shimizu 0820-66-2206

◎Leasure Fishing Information

Fishing Union 0820-66-2121

◎Visitor Information

Iwaishima Visitor Center 090-1332-4897

Audio Guide to Iwaishima



Shima-nyan

Access

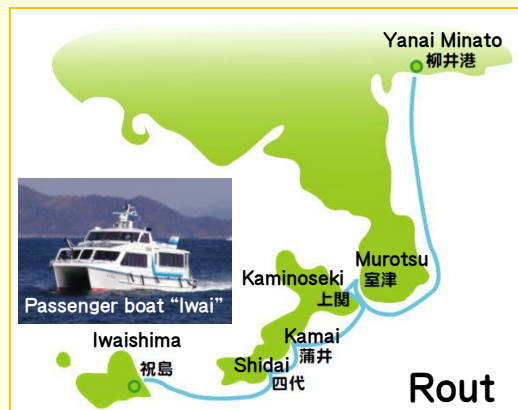


◎Passenger boat (info. Kaminoseki Kōun 0820-62-0102)

<Time required and Fares>

Iwaishima - Yanai Minato (Port of Yanai) approx. 70 min.  
Adults = 1580yen, Children under 12 = 790 yen  
Iwaishima - Murotsu Kō (Port of Murotsu) approx. 40 min  
Adults = 920 yen, Children under 12 = 460 yen

Yanai Minato is three-minute walk from JR Yanai Minato station.  
For visitors coming by car, there is a free parking lot at Murotsu.



<Time Table>

To Iwaishima				To Murotsu and Yanai			
Yanai Minato	—	9:30	15:45	Iwaishima	6:45	12:30	17:05
Murotsu	6:10	10:00	16:15	Kaminoseki	7:20	13:05	17:40
Kaminoseki	↓	10:05	16:20	Murotsu	7:25	13:10	17:45
Iwaishima	6:38	10:40	16:55	Yanai Minato	7:55	13:40	—



◎Iwaishima

Iwaishima is a small, heart-shaped island located near the western edge of the Inland Sea and southeast of Yamaguchi Prefecture. Most of the population of 300 households and 450 people on the 12-km-circumference island is clustered around one area. The nearly year-round temperate climate on Iwaishima is perfect for cultivating the island's signature fruits of *biwa* and mandarin oranges on its terraced, mountain fields. The island is also surrounded by a bountiful ocean, and the surrounding seas are particularly well known for rod-fishing sea bream. Iwaishima's unique stone wall construct "Nerihei," "Mr. Taira's Terraced Field," and friendly island cats are some of the popular attractions among tourist.

Iwaishima Sightseeing Map

◎Kokko:  
*legendary fruit that had been said to bring eternal life and youth*

There is a legend that that Shǐ Huángdì (Jofuku), the powerful Chinese Qin emperor (BC 259~BC210), sent his men to Iwaishima in search of this fruit as the remedy that would bring him eternal life and youth. Although they are no bigger than the tip of one's thumb, it is said that eating just one of the wild-growing Kokko fruits will add one thousand years to one's life. Kokko are in fact a type of kiwi fruit, and are typically harvested around December.



◎Ujimoto Farm

Ujimoto Farm is a pig farm that is devoted to sustainable and ecological agriculture. The pigs on the farm clean up weeds and cultivate the fields. Let's go meet these hard-working, friendly fellas!

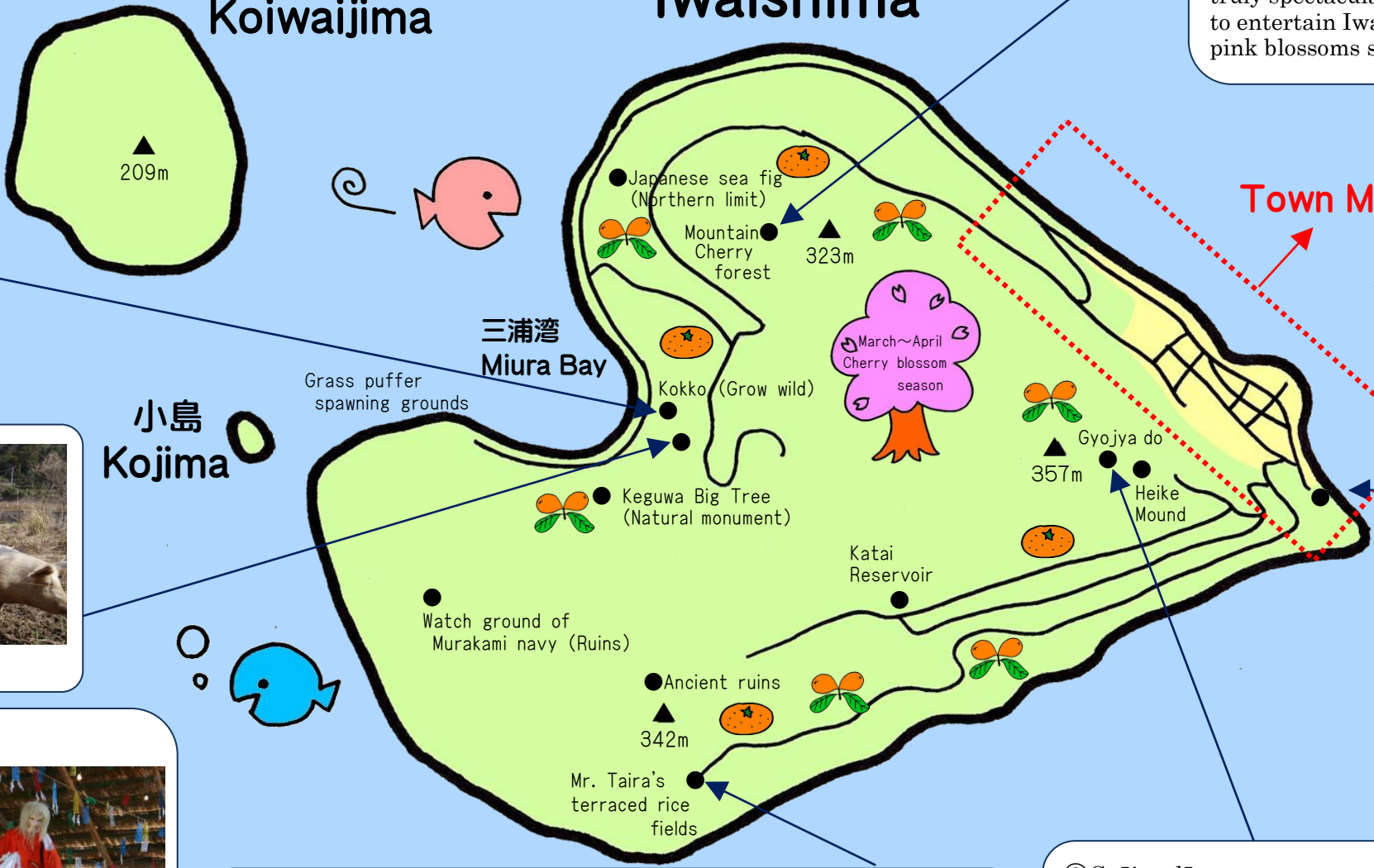


◎Kanmai-shinji (Divine Dance Ceremony)

About 1120 years ago, a delegation of Shinto priests returning from Iwashimizu-Hachimangu Shrine in Kyoto to their native Imigo in northern Kyushu became caught in a storm and were forced to take refuge on Iwaishima. At that time, as a token of gratitude for the warm hospitality and help that they received, the priests gave them seeds and taught the Iwaishima villagers how to farm, as well as showed them the ways to worship and seek divine blessings. After the priests' visit, conditions on the island greatly improved. Ever since this time, the people of Iwaishima have shown their appreciation by conducting the ceremonial "Otane modoshi" (Return of the Seeds) trip to Imi every August. In addition, once every four years there is a *kanmai*, or, the Divine Dance, ceremony that is held jointly between Iwaishima and priests invited from Imi. Some other events held at this time include a ceremonial boat sailing and 33 different *kagura* dances - performances which are dedicated to the local island deities.



小祝島  
Koiwaijima  
祝島  
Iwaishima

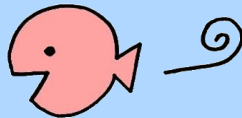


◎Yama Zakura (mountain cherry blossoms)

In ancient times, during the spring more than two hundred various types of mountain cherry blossoms on Iwaishima would bloom one after another until eventually the entire island became dyed in a cherry-blossom pink. This phenomena was likened to the famous Yoshino cherry blossoms, and Iwaishima was thus referred to as "the Yoshino of the Sea." At this time, it was popular for people to do *hanami* (cherry blossom viewing) from the sea by covered boats. Also in spring time, many whales gathered in the seas around Iwaishima to raise their young. The sight of the whales spouting water against a background of cherry blossom trees in full bloom was said to be truly spectacular. Today, the mountain cherry trees still continue to entertain Iwaishima villagers and visitors alike with their soft pink blossoms successively coming out in full bloom.



Iwaishima is famous for bream fishing.



◎Sea Glass Beach

Because of the rapid ocean tides that surround Iwaishima, small rocks and stones are often tossed about, rubbing against each other and smoothing over their once-rough edges. This happens to shards of glass as well which, after become smooth and polished in the ocean currents, often wash up on the beaches as "sea glass." Scattered across the eastern shores and beaches of Iwaishima, there are many pieces of sea glass which, when reflected in the sunlight, sparkle like small gems.

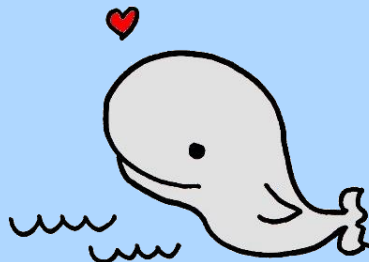


◎Gyōjya dō

At the top of the mountain is Gyōjya dō, a small *torii* and shrine where the legendary *Shugendō* (a mountain religion unique to Japan) practitioner En no Gyōjya is enshrined. The shrine, which is called "*gyōjya sama*" and is worshiped by villagers, is said to have mystical powers. The shrine is about a one-hour walk from the village, and is a steep ascent up the mountain.



I love the beautiful ocean



finless porpoise

◎Mr. Taira's terraced rice fields

Mr. Taira's terraced rice fields are some of the most beautiful terraced fields in Japan. The fields were created entirely by hand using levers over a span of three generations. In order to create flat rice paddies out of the steep mountain incline, high stone walls were built using a method called "tani-zumi" (valley stone-building). In this method, stones of all shapes and sizes, ranging from stones weighing several tons all the way to small pebbles, are carefully arranged in an idyllic and aesthetically pleasing way. The view from the tallest point of the stone wall, which is nine meters high, is incredibly beautiful. Although the fields are four kilometres from the village, and take about an hour on foot to reach, they are definitely worth visiting.

