

What's Up Aichi

— Timely Tourist Information On Aichi Prefecture And The Surrounding Central Japan Region —

Aichi Keeps Cool All Summer with Fish, Fantasy and Fashion

Island Hopping for Fun and Flavor

You know Japan is an island nation, but how many of the country's islands can you name? If you answered four, you get a "C". There are actually thousands of islands in the Japanese archipelago that are rarely explored by mainland Japanese, much less by foreign visitors. But many of the islands are just a quick boat ride away from the mainland, offering a chance to cool off in the sea breeze and escape the tourist trail while encountering a way of life that is a far cry from the hurried pace found in the city.

Two Aichi islands make great summertime escapes from the city, and from downtown Nagoya you can be there faster than you can say "landlubber."

It's a 45-minute trip down the Chita Peninsula on the Meitetsu train line from Nagoya station to Kowa station. A five-minute walk puts you on a quick boat to **Himakajima**, a small fishing island in the Mikawa Bay.

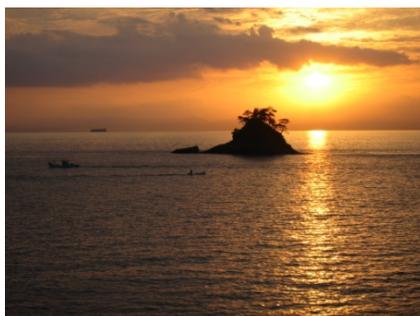


Netting reel fun in Himakajima

It is possible to explore Himakajima on foot, but unless you are up for a solid hike, consider renting a bicycle near the boat landing for ¥500 an hour. A half day is plenty of time to acquaint yourself with the island, but if you really want to experience Himakajima's culture, you might consider one of the many fishing options.

From May to July visitors can try their

hands at **clam digging** in the cool wet sand. If you prefer angling from the comfort of a boat to slogging through the mud, the island offers a **trip with a local fisherman** who will teach you the tricks of the trade. A great option for larger groups is **net-fishing**, where participants boat out to fishing nets and help gather the day's catch alongside the pros. And from July to September, kids have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to chase down and **catch an octopus** with their bare hands.



A picture-perfect Shinojima sunset

Travelers who are more interested in how the Mikawa Bay's fish taste than how they are caught should board the boat for **Shinojima** at Kowa station. At 25 minutes from the mainland, the trip to Shinojima is slightly longer than the one to Himakajima, perfect for building up an appetite for the island's rich variety of seafood.

Shinojima's many *ryokan* (traditional inns) and eateries offer **seasonal seafood courses** for overnight lodgers and daytrippers alike (reservations are recommended to dine at a *ryokan*). The island is best known for its poisonous blowfish (*fugu*), served during the cooler months, but an array of ocean delights, including conger, shellfish and squid, awaits summer visitors. Giant Ise shrimp are light and cool, perfect for a blistering hot day, and the shrimp that escape fishermen serve to fatten up octopus, another of the island's summertime favorites.

With your belly full, take some time to appreciate the feast that Shinojima offers for the eyes. Tiny uninhabited islands are visible from a craggy seashore that occasionally makes room for a sandy swimming beach. On Shinojima's southwest side lies Manyo no Oka. The site is the best place to end your island adventure with a view of the **Shinojima sunset**, considered one of Japan's most stunning.

World Cosplay Summit 2009

Have you ever dreamt of dressing up as your favorite *manga* character and living out epic adventures from the pages of Japan's comic books? Do you already do this and thought you were the only one?

Proud *otaku* of the world converge in Nagoya this summer for the seventh **World Cosplay Summit**. Cosplay (short for "Costume Play") teams from all over the globe will participate in a weekend devoted to comic book and animation fantasy on August 1 and 2.



Cosplay fans brighten up Osu Kannon Temple

Saturday is all peace, love and understanding as the participants bring their theatrics to the Osu district and are joined by Japanese *manga* and *anime* enthusiasts in the **Cosplay Parade**, a celebration of the subculture that began in Japan and has swept the globe. The Osu district's colorful arcade is the perfect complement to the flamboyant costumes that the participants craft from scratch.

On Sunday, the no-holds-barred battle begins with the **World Cosplay Championship**. Two-person teams have three minutes to bring an *anime* or *manga* scene to life on stage. Each team already beat out hundreds of competitors in preliminary rounds in its home country for the right to compete in Japan, and in the championship the competitors step it up another level. Carefully choreographed fights to the death and romantic scenes enrapture an audience that cheers on every move and follows every line.



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Heroes and villains take the stage in Nagoya

For updated information on the 2009 World Cosplay Summit, including venue details and results from preliminary rounds, visit the event's official website: (<http://www.tv-aichi.co.jp/wcs/2009/e/>).

Slithery Summer Snack

Every culture has its favorite cure for a scorching summer day. Americans love their lemonade, Italians jump for gelato, Spaniards savor sangria, and Mexicans muy gustan las margaritas. And Japanese? You guessed it. Eel!

Japanese chefs must have missed a memo. Instead of concocting a refreshingly cool treat, they put together a summer remedy that is best served fresh off the grill over a piping hot bowl of rice.



Irresistible eel appeal

The Japanese tradition of eating eel during the dog days goes back a long way. Legends surrounding it are linked to *Doyō no Hi* (literally "Day of the Ox"), which marks the middle of summer on the

Chinese calendar. Not everyone can explain exactly why the Day of the Ox is best for eating eel, but that doesn't stop them from carrying on the tradition. Though perhaps counterintuitive, there is solid scientific evidence to back the consumption of eel during the summer months. The slippery creature is packed with energizing vitamins and nutrients that are easily sweated out on hot days. This year's *Doyō no Hi* falls on July 19, but if you can't be in Japan on the official eel eating day, you're in luck. Since 2009 is the *year* of the Ox, any day figures to be a great time to eat eel!

Aichi is one of Japan's top eel producing regions, so there's always plenty to go around. Nagoya's local take on eel (*unagi*) is called *hitsumabushi*. The creature is brushed with a sweet sauce, slow-grilled to crispy perfection and served in bite-sized pieces over rice. Locals eat the dish in a three-step process, first savoring the eel and rice as is, then adding half of the seasonings that come with every order, and finally combining the last of the seasonings, the side of soup and the remaining eel over rice. The process ensures a chance to appreciate the natural flavors of the eel and enjoy a bit of zing.

So if you find yourself dragging a bit during your travels, slip into one of Nagoya's many restaurants serving *hitsumabushi* and reinvigorate yourself with a delectable eel meal. When you get a tantalizing whiff of grilled sweetness and spot a stylized う (the first character in *unagi*) on a restaurant shop curtain, chances are you are in the right place.

25th Arimatsu Tie-Dye Festival

Just when you thought it was safe to turn your old tie-dye t-shirt into a household rag, the Dead go and announce their reunion tour. You should have known. Like a Jerry Garcia guitar lick, some things never go out of style.

The tie-dyers of Arimatsu know that the one-of-a-kind patterns produced from their time-honored technique can compete with any fashion trend, and they keep producing their stunning tie-dye textiles as they have for 400 years. Twelve distinct patterns, usually produced in a deep-dark blue, are used to decorate *kimono* and other traditional clothes and, yes, t-shirts.

In the first week of June the town

celebrates the tradition that put it on the map with the **Arimatsu Tie-Dye Festival** (*Arimatsu Shibori Matsuri*). Visitors to Arimatsu are treated to a fashion show of local artisans' most prized *shibori* (tie-dye) creations. Demonstrations and hands-on tie-dye classes offer a chance to create your own piece alongside a master. A parade and music are also part of the fun, and visitors will want to spend some time in the **Arimatsu Tie-Dye Museum** to learn more about the tradition.

Free English tours, conducted by volunteer guides, will be available to festival visitors both days. The tour will stop at a traditional *shibori* merchant house and volunteers will explain the significance of the town's proud festival floats. The tours begin at 1:00. For reservations or inquiries, contact midorichigasaki@ybb.ne.jp.



Arimatsu is dyeing to welcome you this summer

The June events are centered around the Tie-Dye Museum, just a few steps from Meitetsu Arimatsu station on the Meitetsu Nagoya main train line. Visitors who cannot make it to the festival in June can visit the museum any time of year. The museum is closed on Wednesdays and admission is ¥300 for adults.

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