

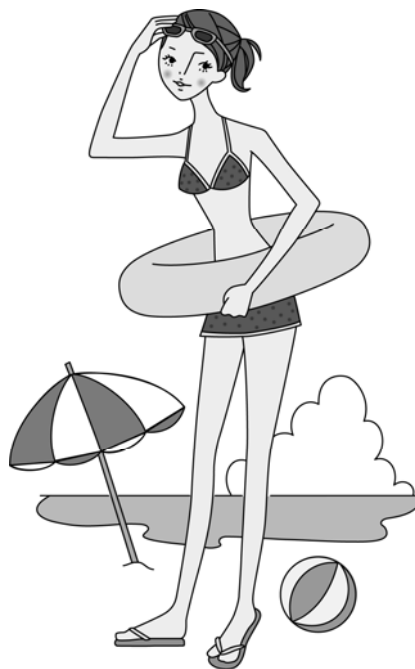
The Beaches are Open!

by Noriko Ehara

The third Monday of July is a National Holiday called "Umi no Hi", Marine Day. It is a day to thank the sea for its blessings and pray for the glory of Japan as a maritime country.

Many insider readers will want to visit a beach in summer. Most of Okayama's public beaches (海水浴場 Kaisui Yokujō) are officially opened for the summer at a ceremony held at the end of June or in the beginning of July. It is called "海開き (Umi Biraki)" and usually involves a Shinto ceremony to pray for safety throughout the open season.

In this month's edition, we list some of the more popular beaches in Okayama, their official seasons for this year and an explanation of how to access them by car from Okayama. (Phone numbers listed are those of the local government.)



Open until Aug 31st Ph. 086-528-2511
Facilities: seaside clubhouses, shops, toilets, showers, changing rooms, rest houses
160 free parking spaces, 600 more paid spaces.

Access: 1 hour from Okayama City. Head to Tamashima, (Kurashiki City) on National Route 2, turn left onto Route 398, and then follow the signs from Route 47.

●Ushimado Swimming Beach (牛窓海水浴場)

Ushimado, Setouchi City
Open until late Aug Ph. 0869-34-9500
Facilities: seaside clubhouses, shops, toilets, showers, changing rooms, rest houses
Parking for 100 cars. (Not free.)

Access: 45 minutes from Okayama City. Follow the signs from Oku Interchange on the Okayama Blueline.

●Shibukawa Swimming Beach (渋川海水浴場)

Shibukawa, Tamano City
Open until Aug 31st Ph. 0863-81-1823
Facilities: seaside clubhouses, shops, toilets, showers, changing rooms, rest houses
Parking for 1000 cars. (Not free)
Access: 40 minutes from Okayama City. Head to Tamano City on Route 30, turn right onto Route 427. Follow the signs from Route 430.

●Desaki Swimming Beach (出崎海水浴場)

Numa, Tamano City
Open from July 17th to Aug 24th Ph. 0863-41-1108
Facilities: seaside clubhouses, shops, toilets, showers, changing rooms, rest houses
There is also an area for dogs at this beach!
FREE Parking for 250 cars.
Access: 40 minutes from Okayama City. Head to Tamano City along Route 45, turn left onto Route 74 and follow the signs.

●Sami Swimming Beach (沙美海水浴場)

Kurosaki, Tamashima, Kurashiki City

●Mishawaka Swimming Beach (西脇海水浴場)

Ushimado, Setouchi City
Open until late Aug Ph. 0869-34-9500
Facilities: seaside clubhouses, shops, toilets, showers, changing rooms, rest houses
Parking for 200 cars. (Not free)
Access: 50 minutes from Okayama City.
Head to Ushimado, (Setouchi City) on Route 28, then take Route 234 and then follow the signs from Route 232. (Very near Hōden Beach, below)

●Hōden Swimming Beach (宝伝海水浴場)

Hōden, Okayama City
Open from July 17th to Aug 17th Ph. 086-944-5000
Facilities: seaside clubhouses, shops, toilets, showers, changing rooms, rest houses
Parking for 280 cars. (Not Free)
Access: 40 minutes from Okayama City. Head to Ushimado, (Setouchi City) on Route 28, then take Route 234. Follow the signs from Route 232. (Very near Nishiwaki Swimming Beach, above.)