Welcome to the home land of pearls and ama women divers
Ama's sunshine smile welcomes you

500 or more out approx. of 2,000 women divers in Japan live in Toba. Meet, chat and laugh with breezy women of the sea.

LEARN

Toba Sea-Folk Museum
The museum features nearly 60,000 materials of oceanic culture with focus on ama culture, along with fishery, wooden boats, festivals, and sea’s environment. Its innovative wooden building has been awarded the Prize of A&J (Architectural Institute of Japan).

TEL: 0599-33-6006
Address: 1731-68 Ogitou, Usunuma-cho, Toba-City
Access: Take Kamome Bus from Toba Sta., get off at Hakuobutukan, and walk for in a minute.

EXPERIENCE

Ama hut visit
“Ama-goya” is a cabin where amas rest to warm themselves up. Enjoy fresh seafood grilled in iriiri fireplace and a chat with currently working amas.

[Location details are provided for Osatsu Kamado, Ama-goya, Toshihime Shimanotabisha Ama-goya, and Ama Kazukime Shrine.]

WORSHIP

Ama Kazukime Shrine
Ama Kazukime Shrine enshrines legendary ama named Ohen, who dedicated an abalone to Emperor’s Princess, Yamato-hime-no-mikoto. This shrine is regarded as having divine favor in preventing dizziness during diving, and is worshiped by local amas and divers nation-wide.

TEL: 0599-25-1157 (Toba Tourism Division)
Address: 372 Kusaki-cho, Toba-City
Access: Take Kamome Bus from Toba Sta., get off at Kusaki, walk for approx. 5 min.
Stroll about Osatsu Area

Osatsu Area has many ama-related sites. Stroll about the area and see their culture.

Osatsu Ama Bunka Shiryokan
Learn about the town history, living of ama, and how they collect food in deep sea. The center features ama tools, iso-gi or diving kimono, and experience workshop of scraping abalone with a special chisel.
TEL : 0599-33-7453
Address : 1228 Osatsu-cho, Toba-City
Access : Take Kamome Bus from Toba Sta., get off at Osatsu, walk for approx. 2 min.

Shinnan Shrine, Ishigami-san
Ishigami-san is a modest shrine by the approach to Osatsu’s guardian shrine, Shinnan Shrine.
It is believed to “make one wish to come true for a woman,” and has been worshipped by amas from old ages. Today, it is regarded as a “power spot” where many women visit from all over Japan.
TEL : 0599-33-7453
Address : 1227 Osatsu-cho, Toba-City
Access : Take Kamome Bus from Toba Sta., get off at Osatsu, walk for approx. 7 min.

Gozaya
This souvenir shop & cafe is located by the approach leading to Ishigami-san.
Besides ama souvenirs, the shop in reformed 80 year-old folk house with nostalgic interior displays historical items related to ama.
TEL : 0599-33-6770
Address : 1406 Shinnan-jinra Sando, Osatsu-cho, Toba-City
Access : Take Kamome Bus from Toba Sta., get off at Osatsu, walk for approx. 5 min.

[About Ama]
Ama is a woman who skin-dives in the sea and collects food like abalones, turban shells and seaweeds.
Their existence can be traced back to 2000 years ago as a number of abalone shells and tools called “awabi-kooshi (abalone scraper)” made of deer horn were found at Shirahama archaeological site of Jomon and Yayoi Period. Today, about 500 out of approx. 2,000 ama in Japan reside in Toba and still dive for living.

[Ama’s Tools]

“Iso-nomi”
Chisel to scrape abalone from rocks without hurting them.
There are a variety of iso-nomi in length and size to use suitably by location.

“Iso-megane”
Diving goggles which became popular in Mid-Meiji Era. Now, far-sighted and near-sighted types are also available.

“Tanpo”
Float ring with net to keep collected sea urchins and turban shells, and to rest holding on to it.

Protection symbols for ama
Domain: Senman symbols are marked on ama’s diving-kimonos, towel, and chisels to protect them from misfortune at the sea.

Conserving ama culture
Ama is a professional diver who dives without any equipment to collect abalones and turban shells. Their way of fishing is simple but requires patience, and it has been conserved and passed on as a living culture from the ancient times to the present. In 2014, the value of "Traditional skin-diving skill of ama in Toba-Shima" was acknowledged and designated as an intangible folklore cultural asset of Mie Prefecture. Ama culture is a prideful heritage of Japan, and now has moved a step forward to be added to UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage list.
Father of Cultured Pearl
Kokichi Mikimoto (1858-1954)
Kokichi Mikimoto is the World’s Pearl King who was born in Toba and lived in Toba. He succeeded cultivating pearls for the first time in the world in 1893, and exhibited his pearls in many world exhibitions. He was a man with global perspectives, and deeply introduced the beautiful nature of Shima area as well as the charm of pearls. He has left many humorous words of wisdom, also.

Town where pearls were born
Toba is a place where Kokichi Mikimoto cultured pearls for the first time in the world. Let the elegant beauty of pearls take you away.

Pearl Theme Park
Mikimoto Pearl Island
Island where pearls were born for the first time in the world.
Enjoy a day on the island visiting Pearl Museum and Kokichi Mikimoto Memorial Hall, shopping pearls, and watching ama dive and fish in traditional white diving kimono.
TEL: 0590-25-2028
Address: 1-3-1 Toba, Toba City
Access: From Toba Sta., approx. 5 min. walk.

Celebrate the 30th wedding anniversary,
The Pearl Wedding Anniversary
The 30th wedding anniversary is called “pearl anniversary.” You can have a Pearl wedding ceremony on the 30th of each month (excluding February and December) in a chapel in Toba city, the birthplace of pearls and the town of wedded love.
TEL: 0590-25-3019 (Toba City Tourist Association)

3 PLACES TO VISIT

1. Come and visit Toba Aquarium where we proudly exhibit the largest number of species of marine life in Japan!
Toba Aquarium
Toba Aquarium is the only aquarium in Japan that keeps dugongs. Come and see our cheerful sea otters and eel pout and enjoy exciting shows by our seals and walruses.
TEL: 0590-25-2555
Address: 3-5-6 Toba, Toba City
Access: From Toba Sta., approx. 10 min. walk

2. Have fun with dolphins!
Toba Bay Cruising & Dolphin Island
Approx. 50 min. cruise sail through a scenic bay area of Toba. The boat also calls at Iruka Island, where you can touch dolphins and see dolphins and seals in the show. You can even go fishing!
TEL: 0590-25-3145 (Toba City Tourist Association)
Access: From Toba Sta., around approx. 10 min. walk (Toba Marine Terminal)

3. Savor harvests of the sea and field!
Toba Marche
Buy varieties of seasonal seafood and farm-goods harvested in Toba and Shima area, directly from the fishermen and farmers. Try any ready-made dishes, they are fresh! The attached restaurant serves Toba’s local cuisine in buffet style.
TEL: 0590-21-1080
Address: 1-2383-42 Toba, Toba City
Access: From Toba Sta., approx. 2 min. around walk.
Town blessed with sea harvests

The sea of Toba, where the Black Current and the sea water of Ise Bay meet, is blessed with seafood.

Fill yourself up on delicious fish and shells harvested from the sea.

Iwaizakana (celebration fish) of Japan

Japanese regard ‘Ise-ebi’ (lobster), ‘Tai’ (sea bream), and ‘Awabi’ (abalone) as celebration food, and in Toba, where these foods are reaped plentifully, call them ‘Iwaizakana (celebration fish) of Japan’.

Ise-ebi [lobster]

As lobsters have long barbel which looks like a beard and bent posture, they are regarded as a symbol of ‘longevity.’

With gorgeous looking, they are often used for New Year’s decorations and precious gifts.

Tai [sea bream]

As the fish name, ‘Tai’ appears in a word ‘omoteTai’ (meaning celebrative), ‘Tai’ is a fish that Japanese always serve in celebrating occasions like wedding, entrance to school, and New Years.

Their noble figure and beautiful coral color have always convinced the Japanese, from ancient times, to bring good fortune.

Awabi [abalone]

Abalones have been dedicated to Grand Shrine of Ise as ‘Noshi-Awabi’ or stretched and dried strips of abalone.

Legend says a healthy baby with beautiful eyes will be born when a mother eats an abalone while she is pregnant, and it is regarded as a lucky food for safe delivery.
Relax  TOBA ONSEN-GO Spa Village

9 hot-spring spas located along the Pacific coast of Toba are collectively called “Toba Onsen-go Village.” Have relaxing time in open space bath with widespread ocean view.

Feel at Home  Four inhabited remote islands

The time passes slow on the island, making visitors feel unwind and at home. Off the coast of Toba Bay, there sit four islands each with unique history, culture, and food.

Kamishima
Kamishima is the stage for “The Sound of Waves,” a pure love story between a young fisherman and ama on the island, written by Yuko Mishima.

Toshijima
Toshijima is the largest island among four, and has very attractive scenery, seafood, and history.

Sugashima
The island is famous for “Sugashima Lighthouse,” the oldest existing brick-built architecture in Japan.

Sakatejima
It is a peaceful island with hundreds of water iris blooming in city-designated natural territories, Ayame-cho.

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Toba City

- Municipal flower, tree, bird
  Municipal flower: Hama-nadeshiko (fringed pink)
  Municipal tree: Yamato Tachibana (Citrus tachibana)
  Municipal bird: Kamome (Seagull)

- Population/Households (as of 2014)
  Total: 20,657, Males: 9,750, Females: 10,907
  Households: 8,441

- Number of Visitors/Overnight Guests
  (Reference: Tourism Division 2014)
  Visitors: 4,426,535
  Overnight Guests: 1,861,065

- Sister/Friendship Cities
  Sister City: Santa Barbara, U.S.A.
  Friendship City: Sando City, Hyogo Pref.

- Area (as of 2014)
  100.05 km²

- Climate (as of 2014)
  Average temperature: 15.3°C
  Annual precipitation: 2,219.5mm

- Remote Islands
  Kamishima (Area: 0.76 km²) Coastline: 3.9 km
  Toshijima (Area: 6.98 km²) Coastline: 26.3 km
  Sugashima (Area: 4.52 km²) Coastline: 13.0 km
  Sakatejima (Area: 0.51 km²) Coastline: 3.8 km

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