

In this edition, we visited Umegashima which is a small village, tucked in the mountains, about an hour's drive from Shizuoka's city center. Here we will share the wonders you can explore and experience in this charming mountainous area of Shizuoka city!



What is the Origin of the Name “Umegashima”?

After driving through winding roads, we arrived at this beautiful village along the Abe Kaido. Nowadays it is known as a tourist destination blessed with nature, but in the past it was known as 埋まる島 or ‘the buried island’, which came from the words 埋まる (read as umaru) which means to be buried and 島 (read as ‘shima’) which means island, due to the frequent landslides that occurred here. To overcome this image, plum trees were planted in 1992 and its name changed to using 梅 (read as ume) for ‘plum’. The buried island was transformed into a beautiful village worthy of its newly updated name ‘the plum blossom island’, Umegashima (梅ヶ島).



Refresh in the Relaxing Hot Springs!

Umegashima has a beautiful view of Japanese inns or ‘ryokans’ lined up along the river. We visited a ryokan called Yunoshimakan in this onsen village and were able to see the spacious and modern rooms that had been recently renovated, as well as the charming hot springs they had to offer. There are four private hot springs, which are divided into the four different themes of wind, forest, fire, and mountain. The one that was the most impressive and unique was the cave-like rock bath in the mountain-themed room. Ever since coming to Japan I have fallen in love with the hot springs, so I would love to try all four of these unique private baths one day. After seeing the ryokans, I would definitely recommend this area to anyone interested in trying a Japanese-style hot spring and inn. If you go outside the ryokan, across the nearby red bridge and up the stairs, you can see a magnificent waterfall surrounded by nature. This is said to be the source of Umegashima's hot springs. Around the corner there also lies a small shrine for hot springs, where we were able to offer our thanks to the deity of the hot spring.



Deepened Interest in Tea

Nearby the hot spring resort area, you can enjoy a variety of experiences. For our visit, we tried making black tea for the first time! First, we rolled the tea leaves against a washboard which created small scratches in the leaves and brought out its fragrant aroma. Using the washboard to rub the tea surprisingly required a lot of strength - it felt like a workout on its own! After leaving it for a while to finish the oxidation and fermentation processes, the black tea was complete. Throughout the process we had the assistance of both Mr. and Mrs. Tsuji from the Umegashima Club who helped guide us from start to end and thanks to them we were able to make our own packs of delicious black tea. We compared the taste of the black tea we each had made and were surprised at the difference in taste. We learned that tea making requires careful attention to detail at every step of the process, as even with the same tea leaves, slight differences in preparation and handling can affect the taste. Making tea is truly an artform!

Enjoy Shizuoka's Cuisine!

In Umegashima, you can enjoy not only beautiful scenery, but also delicious food! At the restaurant, Kogane no Sato, we ordered the “Umegashima Gozen” meal and tasted many ingredients this region proudly produces. We were able to enjoy Umegashima foods including amago trout raised in Uo-Uo no Sato, konjac made in-house, Umegashima-grown shiitake mushrooms, rice, and miso soup. In addition, the meals guests are served at Yunoshimakan are made with ingredients certified with the special “Shizuoka Food Selection” certification, so here you



can fully enjoy the ingredients that Shizuoka Prefecture is proud of. The wide variety of dishes make it a Shizuoka trip where you can truly and fully enjoy what Shizuoka has to offer.

A Village That Anyone Can Enjoy at Any Time

In addition to tea-making, Umegashima offers four-wheeled buggy tours, log-grown shiitake mushroom picking, and fishing experiences. There is also rich nature for you to explore such as the Umegashima Seven Waterfalls, one being Akasui Falls which looks beautiful in the autumn. Nearby there is a campsite where you're sure to have a great time if you would like to try an outdoors overnight trip with your family and friends! If you would like to relax there is also a day spa called Kogane no Yu, and the garden there is said to have a beautiful view during both the plum blossom season and in autumn when the leaves change color. Be sure to visit this charming village to fully explore and enjoy the sights, food, and experiences!

