

SOUTH-WEST JAPAN – NAVIGATION NOTES, *PLAINSONG*, 2021-24 v2, May 2024; **minor updates in July 2025**

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Companion notes for the Philippines:

https://liveicomgrshot.blob.core.windows.net/rccfiles/FeedbackFiles/20250827_7340_RCC%20Cruising%20Information%20Philippines%20Plainsong%202024-25%20v2%2008-13-25.pdf

These notes incorporate my earlier 2021-23 notes, updating them if I have additional information, and add harbors south of Ushibuka, Kyushu, down to Okinawa from 2024:

- Substantive updates to the 2021-23 notes are shown in **green**; minor changes of order or style are not noted
- Information that is not first hand is shown in italics.

PASSAGE NOTES

HAWAII TO JAPAN

(FOR JAPAN TO THE PHILIPPINES, SEE THE END OF THESE NOTES)

Jimmy Cornell has good coverage of this route in World Cruising Routes. The best time of year is March-April. I chose April, to arrive in warmer weather at the Japan end. Although typhoons are unusual at this time of year, I did encounter one. So I think March would have been a better choice, not least because by the time one got to Japan it would be April and therefore not particularly cold, at any rate in the south of Japan.

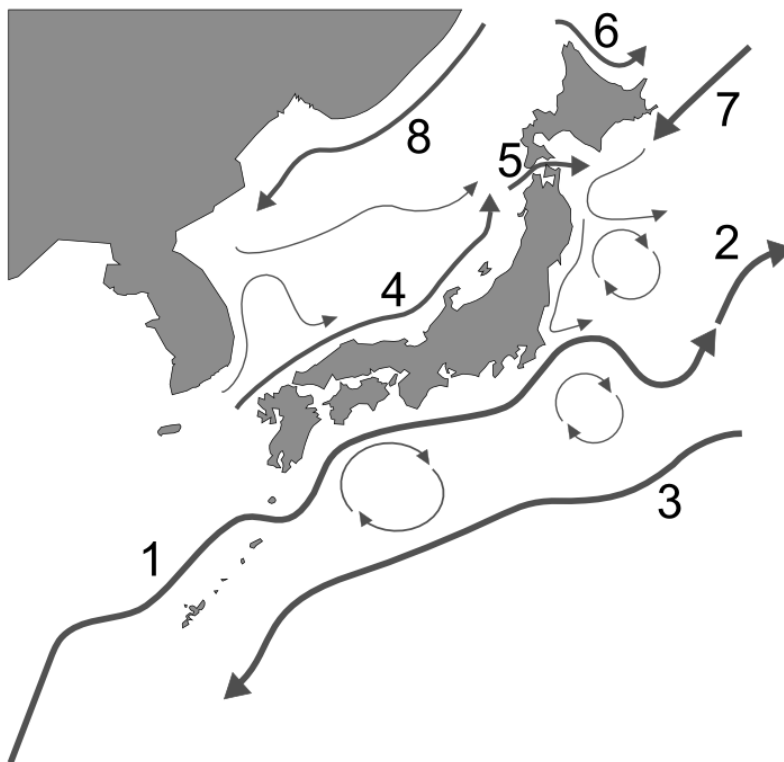
If one's destination was northern Japan, one might contemplate following the great circle course. But this course tangles with the long line of islands, atolls and rocks that stretches some 1,500nm northwest from Kuai to Midway Atoll and beyond; and it also takes you into the variables and increases your likelihood of encountering the lows that roll off the Asian mainland and track eastwards across the Northern Pacific.

So the more conventional route is to sail more or less due west from Hawaii, staying in the trade winds until 160°E or so before curving up towards your destination in Japan. If you were going to Okinawa, then of course sailing west from Hawaii is the only option (and what a great one). In April, I found that I could sail in a band of approximately 20-24°N without losing following winds. As you leave the trade winds on your northwesterly curve towards Japan, the weather becomes more variable and headwinds are possible.

This stretch of ocean is very empty, though there are a couple of isolated islands that you need to keep an eye on: Wake Island at 19° 17'.7N 166° 37'.9E and Minami-Tori-shima at 24° 17'.2N 153° 58'.8E.

Once you are east of the Ogasawara Gunto and the chain of islands that runs north from there towards Tokyo, however, it is a very different ocean. The shipping increases dramatically, with what seems like a more or less north-south offshore shipping lane to and from Tokyo and Yokohama to the north followed by intense shipping near the Japanese coast.

You also have to negotiate the Kuroshio Current, which runs basically southwest to northeast along the Japanese coast but which is more complicated than that because of eddies and countercurrents.



Ocean currents around Japan: 1. Kuroshio 2. Kuroshio-Zokuryu 3. Kuroshio-Hanryu 4. Tsushima-Danryu 5. Tsugaru-Danryu 6. Sohya-Danryu 7. Oyashio 8. Liman-Kanryu
By Tosaka, CC BY 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4265173>

Wikipedia has a good article on the current: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kuroshio_Current

Like the Gulf Stream, the Kuroshio meanders and changes over time. The Japanese Coast Guard publish a bulletin on its latest behavior:

https://www1.kaiho.mlit.go.jp/KANKYO/KAIYO/qboc/index_E.html

My own experience of it was a strong southeasterly setting stream that I estimated at about 3 knots for a few hours only. It is unsettling at the time because it is quite an impediment to progress, but the good news is that it does not last for very long.

In 2024, when crossing the Kuroshio Current between Japan and the Philippines, I upgraded my PredictWind subscription to get ocean current data. This was definitely worth it for a major current that would have a significant effect on the passage, but probably not for coastal sailing or a passage on which the currents are not very important. PredictWind have subsequently launched a separate PredictCurrent app.

OTHER ROUTES TO AND FROM JAPAN

For other routes to and from Japan, see my *Pacific Crossing Guide* (<https://rccpf.org.uk/pilots/229/Pacific-Crossing-Guide>) and 2024-25 Philippines Notes in the RCCPF database cited at the very top of these notes.

DESTINATION NOTES

SOUTH-WEST JAPAN: THE SETO NAIKAI AND WESTERN KYUSHU

Most of these notes are based on cruises in 2023 and 2024; those from 2021 are marked as such; 2024 updates to the earlier notes are in **green**. For more information about cruising in Japan, and particularly ports of entry and departure, routes through Japan and leaving a boat in Japan, see the *Pacific Crossing Guide*, 4th Edition (<https://rccpf.org.uk/pilots/229/Pacific-Crossing-Guide>; **but see also the post-publication update on formalities at Wakayama, below**).

Sailing in Japan requires a different and not very RCC-esque mindset. A lot has been written on this both within the RCC and outside, so I do not try to be comprehensive in these notes, a good deal of which repeats/updates what has been written in the excellent notes by other RCC boats like *Quicksilver*, *Kokiri*, *Sunstone* and *Sadko*. See also the consolidated introduction to Japan in the 2013 RCC CCI, updated to early 2015 but not including *Quicksilver*, who visited later in 2015. Search via: <https://rccpf.org.uk/Pilotage-Notices>

See also the excellent 2024 notes of s/v *Tengah*:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pwgsy_DwixffzjDMH-NY4yVwSrbf-SyX1IYEbRNM3Ek/edit?tab=t.0

Notes from my own experience are in normal typeface. Notes on places or topics that I have only been told about, or from other sources, are in *italics* and I indicate the source. The direction is east to west through the Seto Naikai and then north to south down the west coast of Kyushu and on to Okinawa: from Osaka to Okinawa, one might say. I realized in retrospect that most foreign boats cruise Japan from south to north. Well, sorry about that; you'll just have to read these notes upside down.

In general, I do not mention depths for harbors and anchorages, because my own observation was only a snapshot at some random points between springs, neaps, etc. But I do not believe that there is anywhere mentioned in these notes that would trouble a boat drawing 2m or less, and probably 3m or less as well, unless specifically called out in the notes from my own experience. (Bridge and powerline heights, however, are a different matter, and are mentioned more explicitly in a few places.)

General introduction to cruising in Japan

These notes are mostly about south-west Japan. But I believe that many of the comments in this general section apply to cruising anywhere in Japan. They cover the same ground as many other people, but at least they are up to date as of 2023-4.

Entry formalities for Japan

Entry into Japan is somewhat complex but not unsurmountable; it should definitely not be thought of as a barrier to cruising in Japan. It involves the Coast Guard, Quarantine, Immigration and Customs, each of which is a separate organization. Several good accounts of what is required can be found online, the most reliable and most likely to be up to date of which is Noonsite: <https://www.noonsite.com/place/japan/formalities/>

The Coast Guard requirements are here: <https://www.kaiho.mlit.go.jp/ope/apply/hoan00-e.html>

However, I used Kirk Patterson as a clearance agent. Kirk runs Konpira Consulting to help visiting yachts and is very knowledgeable, well connected and helpful. Not only did he negotiate my entry in very difficult and special circumstances during the Covid pandemic in 2021, but he also helped a great deal with suggestions and information for coastal cruising, reservations when required and advice on where to leave the boat long-term. This was particularly helpful in a Covid year because on several occasions Kirk had to negotiate with marinas or harbors to allow me to visit during a state of emergency. <https://www.konpira-consulting.com/index.html> His links to entry information and many other important topics are here: <https://www.konpira-consulting.com/useful-links.html>

The critical thing when entering Japan is to obtain two documents that make subsequent cruising much easier:

1. A Closed Port Permit. This is issued by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism and means that you can visit any port in Japan and do not have to clear in and out of any more ports as you go along:
<https://www.mlit.go.jp/en/maritime/specialpermission.html>
2. A Naikosen, which is a Customs document giving a foreign vessel the same status as a domestic Japanese vessel. This means that you don't have to fill in any further Customs information once you have cleared into the country. You may well meet the Customs authorities or Coast Guard from time to time during a cruise (harbor authorities seem to report the presence of a foreign yacht to the nearest Customs office and the office, in turn, may want to speak to you on the phone or come and visit in person). If the local Customs officials are not fully up to speed on foreign yachts, they will try to get you to fill in a General Declaration and a Crew List. But with a Naikosen, you usually don't have to; showing them your Naikosen (or faxing/emailing them a copy if necessary – harbor offices will normally fax it for you) will generally satisfy them and be the end of the matter, **at least for the Customs. The Coast Guard, on the other hand, may insist on a General Declaration, at minimum.**

It is not impossible to obtain these two documents after your first arrival in Japan; but it is much more complicated to do so and the easiest solution is to persevere until successful when you first arrive. However, the granting of a Naikosen is not automatic and can differ from office to office and time to time. Some local Customs offices are less willing to issue the Naikosen than others (the Ogasawara Islands, for example, have a bad reputation in this respect; **Wakayama became next to impossible in 2025**). So it is worth considering this when choosing a port of first entry. (Kirk Patterson is very knowledgeable about the prevailing situation, which changes over time as the Customs staff rotate in and out of local offices, or check on the Sailing Japan WhatsApp group).

For a fuller treatment of formalities, see the *Pacific Crossing Guide*, 4th Edition, and Noonsite.

Ports of Entry (south-west Japan and Okinawa)

There are various options for southern Japan and the Seto Naikai. The typical port of entry for vessels entering Japan directly to the eastern portion of the Seto Naikai has generally been Wakayama. Most recently, however, boats under 20m arriving at

Wakayama have been told that they must use an agent (which is probably legally incorrect) and have had difficulties obtaining a Naikosen. This may change again as Customs officials get rotated from office to office, but for now, at least, both Kirk Patterson and other cruisers are recommending avoiding Wakayama. For this area, Kirk recommends [Shin Nishinomiya](#) instead.

Boats coming to the Seto Naikai from further south in Japan will normally have cleared in somewhere in Okinawa or the southern islands (see [below](#)). Those coming from South Korea will normally have checked in in Tsushima. For Hokkaido, see the 4th Edition of the *Pacific Crossing Guide* (2024).

~~Since I was required to do a 14-day quarantine on arrival during the Covid pandemic in 2021 and the maximum length of stay in Wakayama is seven days, I wasn't able to go there. Instead, Kirk Patterson negotiated with the authorities to enable me to enter at Tannowa, which would have me for my required 14 days and more. I don't know whether this arrangement could be repeated in future. If it could be, I would prefer to go straight to Tannowa; but if not, then entering at Wakayama before moving on to Tannowa or elsewhere after a week or less would be absolutely fine too. [Post-pandemic and with the difficulties at Wakayama, this is no longer relevant/reliable unless and until Wakayama reverts to normal.]~~

Charts

Both Navionics and C-MAP chart packages are adequate for Japan if you use them with caution; C-MAP's presentation is easier to use. But the gold standard for coastal charts in Japan is a Japanese app for Android and iOS called new pec smart. The app is regularly updated (though not all harbor information is completely accurate), shows current aquaculture locations, has bridge and cable heights, provides some tide, current and weather information and displays dynamically as a live navigation app on a tablet or smartphone, including AIS data. Its monthly subscription is very reasonable. <http://mapple-on.jp/products/newpecsmart>

Historically, the app has been a huge hassle for foreign sailors to obtain. In 2024, however, MAPPLE ON Co. started distributing new pec smart through third parties. Kirk Patterson is one of them. Licensing the app through him would save enormous headaches and make the next two paragraphs irrelevant. But however you get it, and painful though it might be if you do it directly yourself, new pec smart is well worth it.

The biggest problem with new pec smart for foreigners is that it is only available through the Japanese versions of the Google Play Store and the Apple App Store and you cannot download it onto a device with a non-Japanese app store account. That means that you have to create a Japanese app store account. Both Apple and Google place significant restrictions on relocating your normal account from one country to another. So a simpler, though more expensive, solution is to have a separate device used only for your Japan account.

Even then, your troubles are not over, at least on Android devices. In Google's Japan Play Store you cannot pay the monthly subscription with a foreign credit card and getting a Japanese credit card is impossible for a non-resident sailor. So you have to use Google Play gift cards bought at convenience stores in Japan instead. Although this is easy enough to do, Google sometimes rejects a valid gift card (so it is very important to keep your convenience store receipt until the gift card has been accepted). There is an appeal procedure, but it is rather

unpredictable: sometimes a day or two, sometimes much longer. Apple's App Store appears to be less restrictive on payment mechanisms.

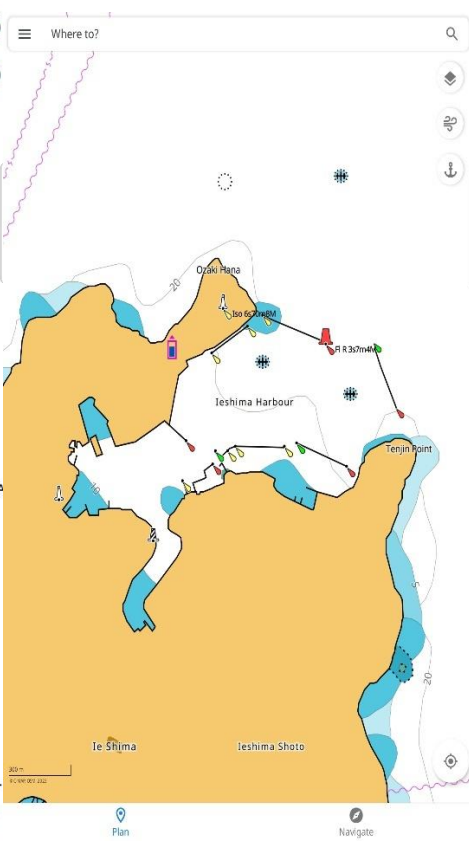
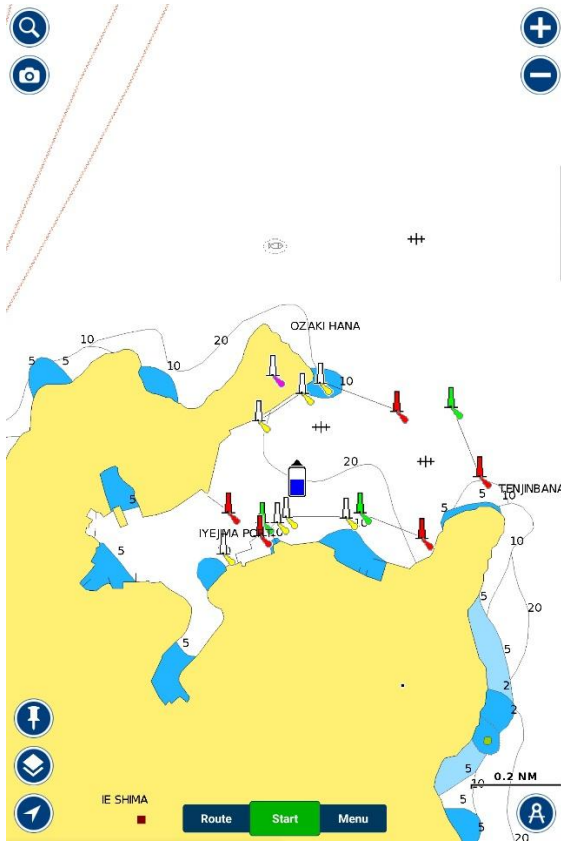
The other catch is that the new pec smart app is in Japanese only. But with the help of a Japanese speaker the early screens are relatively easy to get through and once inside the app, the navigation functions are relatively intuitive for anyone used to chartplotters and navigation apps. Again, a little time spent with a helpful Japanese speaker will give you enough familiarity with the app to use its basic functions, even if you don't understand everything.

The Japan Hydrographic Association (JHA) used to publish very handy Small Port Guides containing detailed chartlets for every harbor of significance in Japan. These are now available only for download in pdf format, which might seem even more handy (and can be printed out) but in fact becomes unwieldy because of the number of files and the fact that, since the charts are in Japanese, to a non-Japanese speaker it is hard to tell, at first glance, where a chart is covering. New pec smart is basically an electronic version of the same information in a much more manageable form, once you have overcome the initial hurdles.

Here is a randomly-chosen comparison of Navionics (top left), C-MAP (top right), new pec smart (bottom left; 'NPS' later in these notes) and a Google Maps satellite image for Ieshima in the eastern Seto Nakai. In front of Japanese Cuisine and Inn Shimizu (see Google image), there is a pontoon which yachtsmen having lunch or staying at the inn can use:

- New pec smart shows the inn ('H') but not the pontoon
- Navionics and C-MAP show the pontoon, just, but not the inn
- New pec smart shows the sea station at the head of the harbor (a house symbol with a sailboat inside it); Navionics and C-MAP do not
- New pec smart shows the aquaculture areas north and east of the harbor entrance – not critical in this case, perhaps, but extremely useful in other areas
- New pec smart's tide information is the best and the easiest to use.

In general, NPS has more information than the other two, but it can be useful to use at least one of the western chart packages in conjunction with it, not least for place names.



Japan time zone: UTC+9

Buoyage: IALA B – red right returning

Weather

The weather in southern Japan is not really the best for sailing, not least because there is often not much wind in the Seto Naikai, at least in the spring and summer. There are many better sources, but my very amateur and probably unreliable summary is:

- Okinawa definitely has a different climate from southern Honshu, the Seto Naikai and Kyushu
- Winter: rainy and tending toward cold; definitely cold in northern Kyushu, not so bad in Okinawa; tendency towards strong northerly winds interspersed with frequent lows rolling off the Asian mainland
- Spring: rather nice
 - In Okinawa it is nice by late March/early April
 - In the Seto Naikai it is chilly in March and still a bit chilly in early April but it warms up nicely through the month; May is a bit bi-polar between very pleasant and wet/humid/hot towards the end of the month
 - March and early April are cherry blossom season in Kyushu and Honshu (it is earlier in Okinawa and moves north with the temperature)
- Remainder of the year in Seto Naikai/Kyushu:
 - Rainy season: late May through June into July; lots of rainy, humid days interspersed with rather nice ones; hot and humid by the beginning of July
 - Summer: hot and steamy
 - Autumn: October is nice but getting chilly towards the end of the month
- Remainder of the year in Okinawa
 - I don't know.

Typhoons are a real factor from about May to October and especially August and September. The whole area covered by these notes is at risk, but especially Okinawa.

For weather, many local sailors just use [windy.com](http://www.windy.com), which I also found very convenient. I also used all the models available through PredictWind. Of these, I generally found ECMWF to be the most accurate, and this is the default model for windy.com in any case. The Japanese Met Office forecasts for the Seto Naikai and western Kyushu were, surprisingly, the least useful. They covered too large an area to account for all the local variations among islands, mountains, etc. and fairly consistently were much too pessimistic. Their typhoon forecasting, on the other hand, is excellent. For local land weather, I found Weather Underground to be the most useful.

The most important thing, perhaps, is advanced warning of typhoons. I find this the most convenient place, but there are others via Kirk's links below:

<https://www.jma.go.jp/bosai/map.html#6/36.102/128.5/&elem=root&typhoon=all&contents=typhoon&lang=en>

Tides

It is important and fun to work the tides both in the Seto Naikai and in some parts of western Kyushu where there are narrows with strong tides:

- Tides: https://www1.kaiho.mlit.go.jp/KANKYO/TIDE/tide_pred/index_e.htm
- Tidal streams: https://www1.kaiho.mlit.go.jp/KANKYO/TIDE/curr_pred/index_e.htm

The Japan Hydrographic Association publishes hard copy tide tables.

Kirk has a good list of weather, charts and tidal information on his Useful Links page:
<https://www.konpira-consulting.com/useful-links.html>

For Japanese-only written sources, Google Lens is invaluable in translating kanji, hiragana and katakana into English – in shops and all manner of situations as well as on charts.

Harbors

Anchoring is relatively uncommon among Japanese sailors. One of the principal reasons is the widespread aquaculture. Even if there is nothing visible on the surface, some bays have aquaculture equipment on the seabed, sometimes disused and sometimes waiting for the appropriate season to be put back into use. These are often marked on new pec smart charts with hatched lines (but not so often on Navionics or C-MAP, which is a problem); if you can see nothing on the surface, it is OK to sail through them, but not OK to anchor. In addition, the coastlines of even the small islands are often developed; and the bottom in many bays is rock rather than mud or sand.

The result is that one's sailing is far less likely to lead to isolated anchorages and lonely spots than in many other countries and, since harbor arrivals have to be planned and sometimes reserved in advance, may be less spontaneous than one might prefer. The reward, once one has got used to this, is that you have far more encounters with Japanese sailors and others and a deeper immersion in the culture – as well as far more language challenges!

As with many things in Japan, there are subtle gradations of mooring option in Japanese harbors. The three most common types are:

- Marinas – full-service yacht facilities; generally require a reservation; can be expensive, but not always. A variant is a Fisharina, which is a marina run by a fishing cooperative
- Pontoons in harbors and bays; may require a reservation, particularly those that are municipally run; sometimes attached to hotels or restaurants for guests/diners; rarely expensive, often extremely cheap, sometimes free; limited facilities
- Sea walls in fishing harbors; no reservation required; typically free.

Some of the marinas and pontoons are grouped together in a network of Sea Stations (Umi no Eki). The Sea Stations differ greatly in sophistication, but even if they are just a pontoon, they usually provide more facilities than fishing harbors. Their website is pretty useless because the map is schematic, they do not provide coordinates for individual Sea Stations and their addresses often do not come up on Google Maps. But they are useful places if you can find them: <https://www.umi-eki.jp/en/index.html>

If a harbor is not a Sea Station or does not have a well-known pontoon, the challenge in many places is to know exactly where you can moor and where you cannot. Many sea walls and some pontoons have black and yellow striped markings near the edge. This is supposed to mean that local boats cannot moor in that part permanently; but it is often not observed in practice and in any case doesn't automatically mean that visiting yachts can use it (for example, a ferry may use it or fishing boats may unload there). Nevertheless, black and yellow stripes are a good starting point. Things to look out for are signs of ferry activity (for example gangways or

permanent mooring lines) and fishing facilities (maybe a fish processing plant or trucks behind the quay), in which case it wouldn't be a good spot, even if it has yellow and black markings.

Another thing to beware of are Japan Fisheries fuel docks. JF has a large network of facilities across the islands, often marked with their logo (but, of course, not always – or perhaps the unmarked ones are independent). In any case, a fuel dock normally has a small hut on the shore behind the pontoon with a large signboard like a computer screen that indicates how many litres of fuel a boat has taken on board. This usually means that you can't go to an otherwise-inviting pontoon. But there are exceptions: in Futae, Shimoshima, for example, the fuel dock has two pumps and pontoons, only one of which is in use. [The fuel at these JF facilities, unfortunately, is only for fishing boats.](#)



Example of a fuel hut – Futae. There are two black indicator screens above the white door

All these ambiguities need figuring out, typically on the spot by talking to fishermen. It is easy enough to ask, 'Is it OK [to go here]?' ('Daijoubu desu ka?', which sounds like 'Daijobu deska?', because the 'u' is silent), pointing to the spot you are interested in. The problem is that you rarely get a clear yes or no answer; more frequently, it is a longer explanation that a non-Japanese speaker cannot understand. But one thing *is* very clear: if you get arms crossed in an X, that means no.

Pontoons are much more convenient than walls, which are sometimes too high to be convenient, at any rate at low tide, and often gnarly with vertical fendering, rough surfaces, barnacles, etc. Some boats carry boards to go outside their fenders; some carry large-diameter fenders; some carry both. [Large-diameter fenders are the best, because boards often fall below the bottom of vertical fendering when the tide is low; the topsides can then touch the vertical](#)

fendering or the board can get caught on the underside of the vertical fendering as the tide starts to rise again; at worst, this would rip off the board or the fitting to which it is attached.

Either way, expect your fenders to get very dirty (mostly from the black rubber that comes off the fixed fendering on both walls and pontoons), expect the dirt to get transferred to your topsides and expect your mooring lines, fenders and boards to take a beating. Many local boats, especially fishing boats, use very large polystyrene fenders with orange fabric covers. They are cheap but they are not worth it: first they crush under large loads, then they start to disintegrate, with awful consequences for the ocean, and finally the remnants are a headache to dispose of.

***s/v Tenga's* cruising notes, cited above, have great advice and detail on mooring.**

If you are on a pontoon, you need to figure out – if you don't know in advance – whether fees are due to a municipality or private owner. Often you will be visited before you have had been able to figure it out. Pontoons sometimes have water and/or electricity, but don't bank on it. **Even in a fishing harbor, it is good practice or at least polite to visit the fishing cooperative office if you can, particularly if you have a Japanese-speaker on board, just to say hello and confirm that you are OK where you are (though I must admit that I never did until I was sailing with Japanese shipmates).**

Most harbors, except the smallest, have a gas station not far away from which diesel ('dizeru', pronounced more like 'deezair' and often translated as 'light oil') is available, sometimes on small trucks that will come right down onto a pontoon or to a harbor wall.

Black water pump-out stations don't seem to exist in Japan. But there are nearly always public WCs within walking distance in fishing and other harbors. Like the Sea Stations, they differ in sophistication, from squat-type WCs with no soap or towels to heated European WCs with hot-air hand dryers and cut flowers. Once you have got used to heated loo seats you will be hooked.

Chandlery and marine services

You will come across small chandlery stores in various harbors. Their stock tends to be limited, however, and they are often oriented towards fishing and power boats. However, they and marinas will usually order items for you through a catalog, with delivery in a few days. Many Japanese sailors, of course, do it themselves by ordering chandlery items online. Yuukou Marine is a widely used site and is pretty easy to use in (partial) English and with a foreign credit card; marinas will generally let you ship to them in advance of your arrival, but check with them first. <https://www.yuukoumarine.jp/>

Yanmar engines are very well supported throughout Japan. You will find service centers in many larger fishing harbors. The same goes for the main Japanese outboard brands like Suzuki. Beyond this, machine shops and engineering resources are not far from many harbors, especially if there is a fishing fleet nearby, and by asking around you may well be able to find someone to troubleshoot a problem, weld a part or whatever.

Laying up and boatyards

The first consideration if leaving a boat in Japan for a long time is protection from typhoons; a second is probably the availability of a boatyard and marine services; a third would be cost; and a fourth might be convenience for transportation – pick your own order of priority among these criteria.

Here are some suggestions in this part of Japan, with a lot of input from Kirk Patterson and local and foreign sailors. For those not in italics, see the subsequent notes for more detail.

- Honshu
 - Tannowa Yacht Harbor, near Osaka (tannowa-yh.jp)
 - *Kanon Marina, Hiroshima (kanon-marina.co.jp/en)*
 - *Okinoshima Marina, Okinoshima, near Hiroshima (okinoshima-marina.jp)*
 - *Boatyard with a reputation for being very helpful for visiting yachts*
- Shikoku
 - *Nio Marina (nio-marina.com)*
 - *Niihama Marina (niihama-marina.com)*
 - *Good reputation for engineering*
- Kyushu
 - Fukuoka
 - Marina Marinoa (sasaki-corp.jp/offices/marine/nfmarinoa)
 - Fukuoka City Yacht Harbor – generally known as Odo Marina (fyh.jp)
 - *Huis Ten Bosch Marina, north of Nagasaki (htb-marina.com)*
 - Noboritate/Oyano/Oyanojima, near Kyushu/Amakusa

Trash

One of the paradoxes of Japan is that it is incredibly tidy and yet there are no public litter bins or trash cans anywhere. Getting rid of trash from a boat can be tricky – as tricky for local sailors, I discovered, as it is for foreign boats. The basic distinction is burnable (including plastic and food waste) versus non-burnable (glass, cans, metal, etc.). At minimum, you should separate your trash on board into these two categories. Better still, separate it into: glass; recyclable drink cans and plastic bottles; other plastic; burnable, such as food waste; and remaining non-burnable, like metal.

If you are at a marina, they will be able to guide you on what to do with all this (it differs by municipality and hence by marina). Sea stations sometimes have facilities too. Outside of marinas and sea stations, recyclable drink cans and bottles are easy to get rid of because almost every soft drink vending machine has a special trash can for those, only, next to it. Then, for the rest, it depends where you are. The best solution is to look in the supermarkets at what trash bags they sell, because larger ones will normally have what is required in that particular locality (Nagasaki, for example, has ten different categories in total, including bulky item pickup, for which one can find bags for three or four categories in the large supermarkets). Bags are usually transparent, so no cheating!

Next, your challenge is where to put the bags that you have separated your trash into. I found no better solution than asking around; the many wire containers for bagged trash that you will see on streets in small villages are not a lot of help without advice/permission, because they have complicated and obscure rules for what is allowed and what is picked up when, which are pretty much unfathomable.

Propane

Foreign propane tanks are very difficult to refill in Japan because of legal requirements for safety reasons. It is worth asking at marinas. But be prepared to buy and adapt a local tank for temporary use if necessary.

A viable alternative is to buy a small camping stove and put it on top of your normal gimbaled cooker (like this, for example: <https://toirokitchen.com/products/portable-butane-stove-by-iwatani>). The small gas canisters for these so-called cassette stoves, about twice the size of a beer can (and usually called bombes; <https://www.amazon.co.jp/-/en/Nitinen-Cassette-Cylinder-Pack-Japan/dp/B01HI7QIO4>), are widely available in supermarkets, hardware and smaller stores. The stoves themselves can be bought in most hardware stores for less than 5,000 yen or so. You don't have an oven or grill/broiler with this solution, of course, but the cassette stoves work very well for a single-burner solution.

Onsens

Public hot spring baths, or onsens (sento if the water does not come from a natural hot spring), are a way of life for Japanese cruisers, and there are many in the harbors around the Seto Naikai, western Kyushu and further south. It is well worth getting over whatever misgivings one might have about onsen etiquette and public nudity (I had many), to discover that a pleasurable addition to cruising life onsens are. There is a good deal about the topic online (for example here; <https://www.insidejapantours.com/blog/2015/02/17/japanese-etiquette-101-how-to-onsen/>), so I will only add one caveat should anyone on board have tattoos: tattoos are normally not allowed in onsens and as far as I can tell nor is partial cover-up. If anyone has a tattoo, it is important to check with the onsen before going in: sometimes they will make an exception; sometimes they will not; and sometimes they will guide you to private facilities.

Most onsens have public spaces or rooms to relax in as well as the baths themselves, and larger ones often have a restaurant, so one can really make an evening of it.

The money myth

I have not yet found Japan expensive, at least if you make sensible choices. Admittedly, the yen was mostly 135-150 or better to the US dollar most of the time I have been there, but even at less favorable rates, a decade or two of deflation has brought everyday prices in Japan down to very affordable levels. Of course, it is easy enough to find very high prices for things like high-end hotels and restaurants, perfect fruit perfectly wrapped, etc.; and the shinkansen bullet train is not cheap (but there are low-cost airlines). And Tokyo is more expensive than the areas I have been in. But marinas, harbors, everyday supermarkets, small restaurants, even less fancy hotels – all very reasonable (often laughably so in the case of the harbors).

Surprisingly, though, Japan is a very cash-oriented economy and most smaller stores, restaurants and izakayas (and even some large supermarkets) don't accept credit cards. I have had to get large amounts of cash on various occasions when paying a marina for several months at once in cash. The only places that accept foreign debit cards for cash withdrawals are the ATMs in Post Offices and at the convenience store chains like 7-11, [Family Mart](#) and

Lawson's. In fact, convenience stores – konbini's – are your friend for many things and the quality of their take-out food is excellent.

Other information sources

In addition to the RCC information mentioned at the beginning of these notes, there are many other sources and tips for cruising in Japan, including these:

- Kirk has a good starter list: <https://www.konpira-consulting.com/cruising-japan/tips-and-tricks-for-cruising-japan.html>
- Don's Pilot for Sailing in Japan: <http://donsaigou.com/ehakutikouro.html>
- For the Seto Naikai: <http://www.setouchi-cruise.jp/en/>
- Notes collected by Jaap and Marijke, s/v *Alishan*, to 2018: <http://boatingjapan.blogspot.com/>
- **[s/v Tengah](#)**

There are also many blogs by other yachts. Some of these are quite dated now and (like these notes) any blog reflects only a moment in time and a personal experience; so they are not always up-to-date or accurate. But among the more interesting ones are:

- *Buffalo Nickel* (2019–22): <https://buffalonickeblog.com/category/destinations/japan-2019-2021/> This does not have a great deal of detailed cruising information but is great fun and gives an excellent flavour of cruising in Japan (in this case, in a powerboat)
- Hundred Rabbits (s/v *Pino*; 2019–20): https://100r.co/site/sailing_in_japan.html Incidentally, the Hundred Rabbits folks must be pretty amazing; their site is remarkable: <https://100r.co/site/home.html>
- *Migration* (2016-17): 27 and 28: <https://migrations.brucebalan.com/27-tomodachi/> Bruce's site also a great source for satellite imagery charts
- *Bosun Bird* (2011–12): bosunbird.com
- Peter Aston's charming book *Seto Summer* (2000), though not a blog or cruising guide as such, has a good (albeit not very current) list of harbors in the Seto Naikai, which can also be found here: http://www.illywhacker.com/cruising_data/japan_passage_data.htm (If this link does not work, start at www.illywhacker.com and click through to the Japan section.) The book also has an excellent bibliography of books about Japan.

The most comprehensive formal source for port information, though, is the Japanese cruisers' Facebook group ('JCFB' for short in these notes). It is all in Japanese and the Facebook translation function is idiosyncratic, to say the least. The group is private but it is possible to apply to join without speaking Japanese. If nothing else, the group's Google map of harbors and mooring spots within harbors (click on Featured) is very useful. The red pins on the map (editor has been there) and blue (other members have been there) are more current than the turquoise (old/may not be useful any more) ones. The yellow circles are onsens.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1028122484284889>

There is also an English-language Facebook group for cruisers in Japan. I have not found it particularly useful, not least because the answer to many questions posed by members is 'Talk to Kirk Patterson' (though this is good advice). **But the group is getting better over time.** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/32487983176>

There is now also an English-language Sailing Japan WhatsApp group:
<https://chat.whatsapp.com/HEDHeJ1sF35JRE2PX50KuI>

Finally, Japanese sailors are extremely helpful and very keen to share their knowledge. It is well worth interrogating them for navigation and tourism (as well as food!) information and suggestions as you go along.

Sailing in the Seto Naikai

The Seto Naikai is a wonderful cruising ground, protected from the Pacific to the east and south and from the Sea of Japan to west, scattered with innumerable islands and surrounded by attractive, hilly countryside (though it is also very developed along many of its main shorelines with sizeable cities and some heavy industry; and even among the small islands you will unexpectedly come across shipyards). You can island-hop to your heart's content without ever being far from all shore-side facilities. The UK analogy for this sort of protected water would be, say, the upper part of the Firth of Lorne and the Sound of Mull – though everything else is very, very different.

There is a lot of shipping in the Seto Naikai (I reduced my AIS alert range to 0.3nm because anything more drives you crazy and isn't necessary unless visibility is very poor); there are also a lot of fishing boats, from tiny amateurs to fairly large commercial boats, and many areas marked out for aquaculture. I was warned about long, unattended fishing nets as well, though I have not experienced any problems with them; on the rare occasions when I have seen them, they have been pretty obvious. But as a result of all of this, Japanese sailors rarely sail after dark in the Seto Naikai.

The shore along much of the Seto Naikai has been bent to civilization's will: every bay has a village and every village has a fishing harbor. So the shoreline is a maze concrete seawalls, breakwaters, moles, groins and goodness knows what. There is hardly a mile around Osaka Bay that is not concrete.

Sailing south from the Seto Naikai

If you are headed to Okinawa from the western Seto Naikai, you can sail down either coast of Kyushu. The west coast is the more interesting one, from what I gather, not least because the *harbor entrances on the east coast tend to be shallow* and the distances between harbors is greater. *One possible exception to this might be Marinpia Musashi in north-eastern Kyushu, where there is a marina that is popular with Japanese sailors (not least because of its proximity to onsens and Oita airport; source: local sailors). <https://www.marinpiamusashi.info/>*

Certainly, from my own experience, the west coast of Kyushu and its offlying island groups offer wonderful cruising grounds. There is much less shipping traffic than in the Seto Naikai, the scenery is beautiful, the history and culture are very interesting and the harbors are mostly quite quiet. The coastlines are less developed than further north. There are two big cities on the north-west and west coasts of Kyushu: Fukuoka, which has the better facilities for yachts, and Nagasaki, which I found a very interesting and attractive city. Outside of these, however, the towns and villages are pretty small and are often a sad testament to Japan's declining population.

South of Kyushu there is a long string of islands all the way to Okinawa and beyond. One can mostly hop down this chain in day-sails, though there are a few longer gaps where overnighing can be useful or essential. The islands start to change as the climate becomes more sub-tropical and there are lovely places to visit, particularly the popular Yakushima and Amami Oshima. These are discussed in detail below.

HARBORS IN THE SETO NAIKAI

South-east approach to the Seto Naikai

Wakayama (2021)

34°10'N 135°10'E

Wakayama Marina: 1530 Kemi, Wakayama City, Wakayama Prefecture +81-641-0014 (in Wakayama Marina City)

wakayamamarina.com

Wakayama is a fairly sizeable town of some 300,000 people located on the east side of Kii Suido, the funnel-like channel that narrows towards the most easterly of the entries to the Seto Naikai and Osaka Bay. Wakayama Marina City has a modern marina embedded in an entertainment complex with food markets, a hotel, an *onsen* (hot spring) and a European architecture theme park. The marina is generally welcoming to foreign yachts, though it has a seven-day limit on visiting boats. So for those who want to stay longer in this area, Tannowa, a pleasant 20nm day sail to the north, is a good place to move on to. Both towns have easy train connections to Osaka, Japan's second city, and its two airports. Wakayama has all the facilities of a large town with a port, including ships' chandlers. Tannowa is more limited, but it is easy to get to Wakayama from Tannowa by train.

In between Wakayama and Tannowa lie the Tomogashima cluster of islands, which act as the barrier between the open sea and the protected waters of Osaka Bay. The westernmost channel is the one used by larger ships, but yachts (and small coasters) can pass between Jinoshima and the Honshu mainland to the east; it saves time if bound for pretty much anywhere on the Honshu shore and is safer. The tide runs at two to three knots but the channel is not tricky.

Wakayama and Tannowa tide tables (local time):

www1.kaiho.mlit.go.jp/KAN5/tyouryuu/tyouryuu.html

Tomogashima Channel tidal estimator:

www1.kaiho.mlit.go.jp/KAN5/tyouryuu/stream_tomogashima.html

Tomogashima Channel tidal atlas: [www.mirc.jha.or.jp/cgi-bin/w/w-](http://www.mirc.jha.or.jp/cgi-bin/w/w-tcp?AREA=tomogashima)

[tcp?AREA=tomogashima](http://www.mirc.jha.or.jp/cgi-bin/w/w-tcp?AREA=tomogashima)

Surrounding area tidal atlas: www.mirc.jha.or.jp/online/w/w-tcp

Osaka Bay

Tannowa Yacht Harbor (2021-23)

Entrance buoys: 34° 20'.8N 135° 10'.9E

Tannowa Yacht Harbor: 6190 Tannowa, Misaki, Sennan District, Osaka Prefecture +81-599-0301

tannowa-yh.jp

Tannowa Yacht Harbor entrance chart and instructions: tannowa-yh.jp/pages/64/

Osaka Bay Tannowa Yacht Club: tannowa-yc.jp

I could write a whole book about Tannowa – I love it! It is the first place you encounter as you sail north from Wakayama on the Honshu shore and it is well worth a stop.

The entrance is easily identified from a distance by the two white apartment buildings just west of the marina and a strange-looking building clad in steel at its east end. Visiting yachts are accommodated at the outer end of Q dock, at least to start with.



Tannowa – source, Tannowa Yacht Harbor website

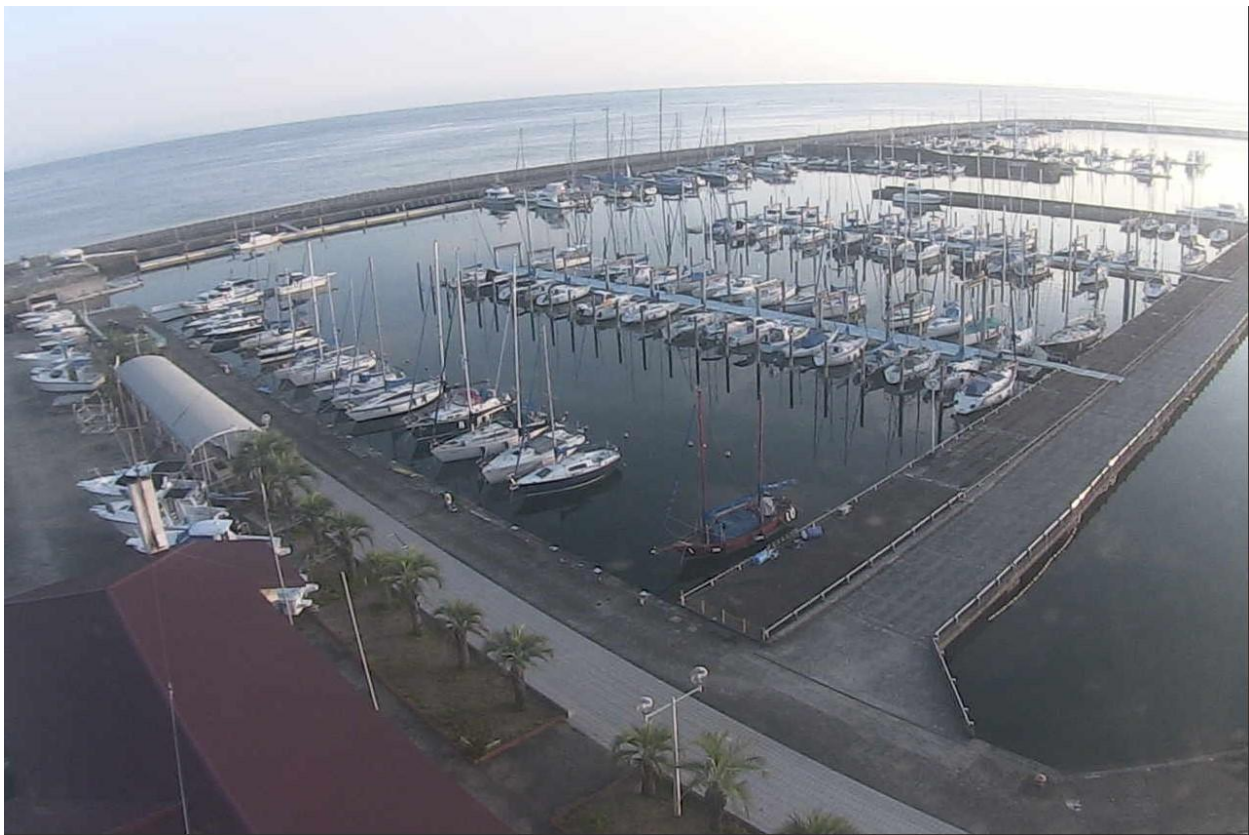
The marina has all facilities including long-term mooring and a boatyard which can haul out boats (in cradles) up to about 40' or a little more. The staff are very helpful [the former manager, Takeda-san, who was mentioned in the previous version of these notes has retired]. Tannowa is relatively well protected from typhoons and should definitely be on anyone's list of options for a long-term stay. If you leave the boat unattended, you can arrange with the marina staff to look after the boat while you are away (for example, running the engine regularly, etc., and even haul out to scrub the hull and check/change the zincs). I was told that the marina prices were expensive by Seto Naikai standards, but compared to California they were very reasonable (about half). Cash is the strongly preferred method of payment in Tannowa.

The boatyard facilities are for short-term haul-out only (not storage). The yard only has one large cradle, so they want you to do the work and get back into the water to free the cradle up for others. But it is not a full-service boatyard. Although the marina staff can provide some help with work, chances are that you will either be doing it yourself or arranging for help from

outside the yard. Supplies such as anti-fouling can be ordered through the marina (or bought online and delivered). You can access help and other services like a sailmaker, engineering, etc. through Takeda-san.

Larger boats above 45' or so, or those wanting more extensive services on site, typically go across Osaka Bay to Shin Nishinomiya Yacht Harbor for haul-out and boatyard work, where there is a full-service yard. Shin Nishinomiya Yacht Harbor: 4-16-1 Nishinomiya, Nishinomiya City, Hyogo Prefecture +81-662-0934
sinnisi-yh.co.jp

Tannowa Yacht Harbor is home to the Osaka Bay Tannowa Bay Yacht Club, whose members are almost overwhelmingly welcoming to foreign yachts and where *Sunstone* (RCC), in particular, is warmly remembered.



Tannowa Yacht Harbor at dawn from their live webcam, <http://61.194.239.110:8001/axis-cgi/mjpg/video.cgi?camera=4&fps=5&resolution=1280x720>

Tannowa itself is more of a large village than a small town. It has a supermarket on its outskirts (Trial, bikeable from the marina or a fairly long walk), a post office with an ATM, a very nice, traditional coffee shop (Hiroshige Coffee Club, near the post office), a few small restaurants and cafes, a 7-11 (which also has an ATM), a good launderette (more convenient, really, than the small machine at the marina, even though it is much more expensive; Sunny Laundry, across the main road from the 7-11), a hardware store (beyond Trial on the main road; bikeable) and a railway station – and that's about it. It is very quiet at night and the marina is attractive.

Recommended restaurants:

- Southern Taste okonomiyaki restaurant is great: 2713 Tannowa, Misaki, Sennan District, Osaka 599-0301 – a bike ride from the marina
- Seaside Café Snafkin, at the base of the white apartment tower right by the marina
- Café and part-time takoyaki take-out, across the side street from 7-11
- The izakaya on the right-hand side of the road from the marina to the post office is also fun in a super-casual, scruffy kind of way
- The restaurant across the road from the fishing harbor does very nice fish/seafood lunches
- Trattoria Da Pinocchio in Fuke, near Tanagawa station (longish bike ride; or train/taxi); Sennan gun, Misaki-cho, Tanagawa, Osaka 599-0311

The drawback, perhaps, is precisely Tannowa's small size. You have to go to Wakayama for some things. But it is easy, and cheap, to get to a large shopping mall near Wakayama University by train, as well as to the center of Wakayama. In the other direction, it is easy to get to both Osaka, Kansai airport and destinations beyond by train. In fact, trains are so frequent that I stopped bothering to check the timetable.

Tannowa is also a good base from which to explore the Kansai region of Japan, which includes Osaka, Kyoto, Nara and the wonderful scenery, temples and shrines of the Kii Peninsula.

I bought a very small, partly folding bike in Wakayama which I found was very useful in Tannowa and wherever I went. You can take bikes on trains in Japan provided they are in a bag.

West from Osaka Bay

Tannowa lies on the south-eastern shore of Osaka Bay. Around the large bay are various harbors and marinas closer to Osaka and Kobe, including the marina at Shin Nishinomiya at the northern apex of Osaka Bay, half way between Osaka to the east and Kobe to the west: <https://sinnisi-yh.co.jp/> But other than access to the large cities, the Honshu shore of Osaka Bay itself does not have a lot to recommend it as a cruising ground since its north and north-eastern shores are heavily developed.

On the west side of Osaka Bay, separating the bay from the Seto Naikai proper, is the island of Awaji. You can go north-about or south-about, under bridges in both cases. The southern route, through Naruto-kaikyō, is closer to Tannowa and more attractive; it has fearsome tides and whirlpools but is fine if you time your passage for the turn of the tide. There is also an inside passage to the west of the narrows which avoids the main tidal stream altogether. Akashi-kaikyō, to the north, also has a tidal stream that needs to be respected, but it is significantly less strong. Awajishima itself has various marinas, sea stations and fishing harbors on both its eastern and western shores.

North-about Awajishima

[Akashi-kaikyō \(2021\)](#)

This narrows pales in comparison with Naruto-kaikyō, though its tides need to be timed all the same. But the bridge is still impressive. There are traffic separation lanes under the centre of the span. Yachts can go under the southernmost span closest to Awajishima, which keeps you out of the shipping lanes; I believe the same is true for the northern span closest to Honshu, though I have not done it.

Kiba (2022)

Entrance: 34° 46'.3N 134° 43'.4E

Himeji Kiba Sea Station: <https://www.umi-eki.jp/en/kansai.html#Himeji>

Kiba is a convenient stopping point on the Honshu shore after Akashi-kaikyō. There is a small marina on the east side of a narrow estuary. I have only visited on a local boat so do not know the mooring specifics, but the sea station has a reputation for being welcoming (absent a pandemic) and the shelter looked good. This is a good place from which to visit the pleasant town of Himeji, which has one of the few original medieval castles which has survived fire and time.

Another option is the Ie group of islands, an easy morning's sail from Kiba or a longer hop if you are coming direct from Akashi-kaikyō. The principal island in the group is Ieshima itself, which has a deep bay on its north-eastern corner, Maura port. This is a rather funky harbor which is home to many dredgers, working ships and shipyards, all squashed within metres of the houses around the shores. It has a sea station at the head of the bay which is very expensive (and it is not part of the Sea Station network); as a result, I was told, nobody goes there.

I visited Maura on a local yacht in 2022 for lunch at the inn (terrific) – see page 6 above – and do not have more detailed navigation information. In 2021, since the Maura sea station was so expensive (8,000 yen at that time, about USD 60), I went to Tangashima, just east of Ieshima.

Aoi no Hama, Tangashima (2021)

34° 40'.2N 134° 35'.1E

Tangashima must be the most disrespected island in the Seto Naikai: it is being quarried seemingly into oblivion. Aoi no Hama is one of those rather bizarre yet fascinating places: until 5pm it was all noise and dust from industrial earth moving equipment, interspersed with occasional dynamite booms from what remained of the hill behind; at 5pm it fell quiet and peaceful; and in the middle of this industrial crucible there is a guest house and restaurant on the beach. <https://aoi-sou.com/index.html>

It is easy to miss the entrance because from the sea the bay looks like a quarry worksite, which is what it is. But the entrance is easy despite quite a lot of fishing buoys. The E pontoon is the one for visitors. There is 20' or more at and around the pontoon except very close to the beach, which seems to shelve steeply. The pontoon has no cleats, bollards or rings, so you need to improvise your own attachments; but there are some short lengths of line tied to the pontoon which are helpful as you first come alongside. You don't need a board.

The hotel and restaurant were closed when I was there and I did not have to pay anything. But it would a nice place to go ashore for a meal. I believe that the pontoon is the hotel's (Kirk

negotiated it for me – I was not allowed to leave the pontoon, because of Covid), so it would be worth checking in advance; a meal might be the quid pro quo for using the pontoon.

South-about Awajishima

Nushima

34° 10'.2N 134° 49'.1E

Nushima is a small island half a day's sail from Tannowa out into Kii Suido past the Tomogashima islands and a convenient place to stop or overnight if waiting for the tide in Naruto-kaikyō. There is a fishing harbor and small village with a post office, a store and some fish processing sheds. It is very quiet at night – until the village's (electric) bell sounds and the fishing boats stream out of the harbor at 0430 (at least in June, when it is light at this time).

There is a new breakwater which is shown on new pec smart chart but not the older Small Port Guide and continuing new construction in the harbor. The visitor jetty is in the outer harbor.

- 2021: The west side of the visitor jetty had the less hazardous wall face and the yellow and black stripes that normally indicate a visitor space. At neaps there was a minimum of 10-12' at the jetty, though weed on the bottom (I think) gave occasional heart-stopping moments of 8'. Free; no paperwork
- 2023: Work in the outer harbor made it unavailable to visitors. When the work is finished, I assume that the outer harbor may be different from what I found in 2021. I went to the inner harbor instead and after initially being turned away by fishermen, was waved into an open spot on the sea wall by some younger fishermen. They needed to contact a harbor authority somewhere or other to get approval for us to stay there, but there hadn't been any reply by the time we left the next morning. An Australian yacht had not had our luck a week or so earlier and had had to go on from Nushima to somewhere else, having not been allowed to moor in the inner harbor

So if visiting Nushima (which I recommend), try the outer harbor first. If you have difficulty finding somewhere to moor, contact Go-san on 090 5042 8314 / onoyamasuisan@gmail.com (phone is more likely to be successful); he is a local guide and fisherman and speaks English. Or better still, call him in advance.

The tidal stream between Nushima and Awaji sets east on the flood, about one knot at neaps.

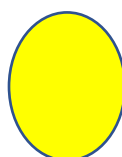
An alternative to Nushima before or after transiting the Naruto-kaikyō is Fukura, the town around a deep bay just east of Naruto-kaikyō. I do not have navigation information though I have been told that it has an interesting puppet museum; go figure.

Naruto-kaikyō

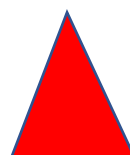
The main point is to time the tide, not least because slack water doesn't last for any appreciable period. The channel is under the longer, western span of the bridge, with north- and south-bound traffic lanes marked by signs (which aren't that easy to see until you are close) and lights on the bridge:



West/
Southbound



Centre/
Separation



East/
Northbound

Once north of the bridge, your main choices are to head towards the south shore of Shodoshima or the north shore of Shikoku. In both 2021 and 2023 I went to Shodoshima first, then to Shikoku later.

Central Seto Naikai – Shodoshima to Matsuyama

From Shodoshima west, there is a myriad of islands, as well as interesting places on the Honshu and Shikoku coasts to the north and south. One could spend many summers here and never get bored. What follows is only a tiny sampling of the possibilities, based on a mixture of local recommendations, weather considerations at the time, and whim.

Shodoshima

Shodoshima is a large, mountainous island in the middle of the fairway. It is worth a visit. There are good options on its north, south and west coasts; not sure about east.

Yoshida, north-east corner of Shodoshima (2021)

34° 33'.5N 134° 21'.1E

Yoshida is an attractive bay at the north-east corner of Shodoshima. The entrance is wide and there is a small yacht harbor in the NW corner of the bay, but visiting yachts don't seem to use it. Instead, visitors either use the pontoon in front of the hotel (which was closed when I was there; normally one would need a reservation) or anchor off, which is what I did. Depths are fairly shallow as you approach the pontoon so a deep-draught yacht wanting to use the pontoon would need to take care.

Anchoring would be possible in various places in the bay, according to weather and depth. I anchored in about 19' on the east side of the bay with the small apartment building bearing 313°M. The bottom was mud (judging by what came up on the anchor next day) and stones/rocks (judging by the noise the chain made during the night). The bay was a little swelly occasionally from ships' wash, but the bay is pleasant and quiet and I enjoyed it. It was nice to swing to an anchor.

Mae-Hana Point and Obe, north coast of Shodoshima (2021)

34° 32'.7N 134° 15'.4E and 34° 32'.9N 134° 17'.0E

Between Yoshida and Kitaura (further west, see below) are two other harbors which could provide alternatives if Kitaura or Yoshida, for whatever reason, were not possible. Mae-Hana Point (I could not find a more precise name than this) is a small, slightly scruffy harbor occupied only by yachts. It is fairly shallow (10-12') and the boats moor bow-to with stern anchors. There are aquaculture buoys/nets S of the entrance so I entered from NW and turned hard to port at the entrance.

Obe is a much larger but empty industrial harbor with plenty of depth, plenty of seawall and a large Yanmar service facility.

You would always choose Kitaura over these two places if possible, and you would most likely choose Yoshida for preference as well. But you can never have too many bolt holes.

Kitaura, north coast of Shodoshima (2021)

34° 32'.1N 134° 14'.5E

Kitaura was my favourite harbor on my 2021 mini-cruise. It is a picturesque, small and quiet harbor with a good pontoon (no board needed), right next to an interesting museum about the granite used to build Osaka Castle, which came from there. Good shelter, although it might be a bit open to the west in a blow. There are a lot of aquaculture buoys and nets on the approach both N and S of the entrance, but the entrance itself is easy enough: the NW breakwater has a green flashing light and the SE breakwater has a small, unlit micro-pagoda. A single streetlight at the E end of the harbor might provide a leading line bearing 063°M. The flashing yellow lights on the E shore are beached aquaculture marker buoys.

There is room on the pontoon for two or three boats in about 12'. You pay at the café if the lady has not already visited you. 2,370 yen for 35'.

Limited facilities but (like everywhere) there is a high-quality WC beyond the museum as well as a small café in the museum gift shop.



Kitaura is a (steep) bike ride or long walk away from an enormous statue and Daihonzan Shodoshima Daikannon Buddhist Temple up on the hill, with wonderful views out across the Shodoshima countryside and the Seto Naikai. <http://www.shiawasemeguri-shodoshima.jp/daikannon/>

Kusakabe, south coast of Shodoshima
34° 28'.8N 134° 17'.9E

Kusakabe is at the head of a large, pleasant bay which provides good shelter – though it is sufficiently large that a considerable chop could get up in the bay, I would imagine, particularly on a southerly. The approach is easy and there are various spots in the bay where one could probably anchor. There is new landfill to the east of the pontoon which is shown on new pec smart but not on the Small Port Guide.

Mooring is on the east side (only) of a pontoon at the head of the bay with about 18' of depth. You pay at a brown building behind a blue and orange building; knock on a glass sliding door (if the lady has not approached you). Kirk had made a reservation for me but the pontoon was empty in 2021 and one yacht arrived after us in 2023. It was 2,090 yen a night for a 35-footer.

As in many harbors of this sort, there is a large ferry dock nearby and the other side of the pontoon may be used by fast passenger ferries or other working boats as well. So there is ferry noise, but it is quiet other than this.

Shore facilities are quite good for a relatively small village, including a stylish WC beyond the ferry terminal; a drugstore-cum-grocery; two gas stations; Yanmar service; a restaurant, I think, though it was closed when I was there; a launderette; and the all-important ice cream shop conveniently close at the head of the pontoon. There was a hose for water on the pontoon though I couldn't quite figure out where it connected; but, worst case, there was a tap outside the ice cream shop.

Tonosho, west coast of Shodoshima (source: sailing friends and other boats I met along the way)

Tonosho is Shodoshima's largest town. I have not been there but it is popular with Japanese cruisers. JCFB shows a pontoon (NE side) at 34° 29'.42N 134° 10'.45E.

West from Shodoshima

Immediately west of Shodoshima are the art islands of Teshima and, especially, Naoshima; north of Teshima is the less-visited Inujima. These three islands have very interesting architecture and art museums; they are geared for tourism and are well worth a visit. There are also various ferries between the islands, either direct or via Uno on Honshu. There is a great deal about them online, including this short introduction: <https://passionpassport.com/japans-art-islands-naoshima-teshima-inujima/> Beyond them, the central portion of the Seto Naikai with the gorgeous Seto Naikai National Park at its western end.

Teshima

Teshima has two ferry ports, Karato on its east side and Ieura on its north side. Karato is closer to the art museum. It is a nice hike over the hill from one to the other. Outside Ieura there is a super-sleek Italian restaurant looking out over the sea: <https://il-grano.jp/umi/en/index.php>

FCFB shows mooring on the west side of the ferry pontoons in each of these harbors. NPS shows anchorage outside Ieura, avoiding aquaculture just outside the 5m line north and north-east of the outermost breakwater. From offshore, a spot further west than this looked better to me, not least because it would be further from the ferry and other traffic in and out of the harbor.

In 2023, I anchored for lunch in the northernmost bay mid-way between Karato and Ieura; this is between Abu Saki and Shirasaki (Navionics labels), north-east of Konpira Shrine (Google Maps).

34° 29'.95N 134° 04'.5E

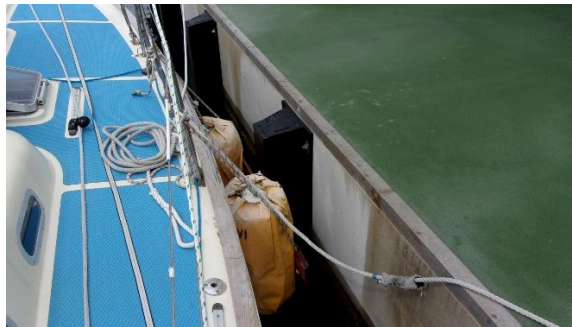
About 10m; mud; completely exposed to N.

Pleasant, but not convenient if you want to go ashore.

Naoshima

Miyanoura: 34° 27'.5N 133° 58'.4E

There are two harbors on Naoshima; yachts normally go to Miyanoura on the west side of the island, where the south side of a good pontoon is available (reservation advised, especially at weekends). The pontoon has deep rubber fendering, however, so it is more like lying alongside a wall: you need very big fenders and/or a board. The other side of the pontoon is busy with fast passenger ferry traffic; and the harbor has a very active car ferry terminal as well. Much as I loved Naoshima – see below – the harbor was not my favorite.



Naoshima has become famous for its architecture, art installations and museums, particularly the buildings and sites designed by the Japanese architect Tadao Ando. Although it is fairly hilly, the island is bikeable and (in addition to the museums, etc.) the small town – village, really – of Honmura on the east side of the island is worth a visit (and has its own art sites). The north end of the island, incongruously, is heavily industrial.

Takamatsu, Shikoku (2021)

Takamatsu Marina: 34° 21'.2N 134° 02'.5E

It is a pleasant sail amongst small islands and channels from Shodoshima to and along the north shore of Shikoku (albeit with a shipping lane to cross). All the more surprise, then (I hadn't done my homework), to round a point and find that Takamatsu is a sizeable city with a signature high-rise building on its shoreline. It is pretty much due south of Teshima.

There are several options for mooring in Takamatsu. I went to the visitors' pontoon at Takamatsu Marina in the heart of the downtown area, where I had a reservation: 68-17 Hamanocho, Takamatsu, Kagawa 760-0011; +81 87-821-8470. This marina has excellent facilities and an active fleet of 420s for kids; it was 2,880 yen a night for a 35-footer. The entrance is straightforward but the east side of the pool is shallow – 8-9' – if you are turning to face out alongside the pontoon.



Takamatsu Marina – open to the north

The marina itself is quite small and almost all the boats – generally up to about 30' or so – are lifted out for storage onshore. The visitors' pontoon faces north towards the open entrance of the marina. So it can be a little uncomfortable with chop if there is a lot of shipping outside or if the wind is in the wrong direction; and it would be untenable in a strong northerly. The marina's shower facilities are excellent; and it was convenient to be so central. There is a Volvo Penta service facility next to the Marina and right across the street there is a good supermarket.

The easternmost of two basins for fishing and small boats in the commercial port just east of Takamatsu Marina and Tamamo Park had been recommended to me, where yachts can also moor. These basins are better protected than the Marina and would be cheaper – probably free.

When I visited them from the shore there was a Japanese yacht moored alongside a fishing boat. But unless you find a friendly fishing boat it is an awkward bow-to moor; the bottom would probably pose risks for your stern anchor; the basins are not especially attractive; and they are not particularly convenient for anything other than the red light district between the two basins.

To the west of Takamatsu Marina are two other marinas which are in the Sea Station network. They appear to be good marinas (I didn't visit) but they are some distance from downtown (though convenient for a large Aeon shopping mall which has a supermarket):

<https://www.umi-eki.jp/en/sikoku.html#Tadotsu-Konpirakaido>

Takamatsu is a pleasant city of some 400,000 people which has a relaxed atmosphere and is famous for its udon noodles. The Ritsurin Garden is magnificent (one of the most famous in Japan) and the castle ruins in Tamamo Park are worth a visit as well. Takamatsu is also a good base for other sights and visits in northeast Shikoku.

All in all, having been disappointed to find such a large city, I enjoyed my visit.

Shiraishishima (New Port)

34° 24'.5N 133° 31'.5E

The New Port of Shiraishishima on the east side of the island, just west of the very small Tateshima. The harbor is very square, with its entrance at the SE corner. Approach from E to avoid a spit and underwater rock S of the entrance. There is at least 4m inside.

There are pontoons at the north end of the harbor; alongside the W pontoon is a good spot. No facilities at all at the harbor itself. Free. *An Australian boat is permanently moored here, whose owners, Amy and Paul, run the Moo Bar on the beach and, I was told, are very helpful to visiting yachts; they were away when I was there.*

It is a short walk through the woods to the village on the north-west coast of the island. *The ferry and fishing harbor at the village looked very tight and JCFB does not show anyone having gone there; NPS shows extensive aquaculture off the beach round the headland from the main village.* The beach is very beachy: guest houses, bars, izakayas, etc. and rather fun, even out of season.

There are 32m overhead power lines at the S end of the channel between Shiraishishima and Kitagishima.

Manabeshima (source: knowledgeable Japanese cruiser)

South of Kitagishima is Manabeshima. There is a ryokan (traditional inn) on the E coast of the island with a pier where boats can moor if they are using the ryokan, which is said to be a very good experience. But you would need calm weather – the pier is exposed to swell.

www.santora.biz

Yuge

35° 15'.5N 133° 12'.2E

Yuge is a charming place, nestled among channels and islands, with a tremendous sea station. It was one of my favourite places.

The south entrance is under a 21m bridge; the north entrance is through a deep, open channel. The sea station is in the NE corner of the harbor. There are three pontoons in a line, joined to the shore by a conspic red ramp. Each pontoon is about 10m in length and boats can moor either side.

There is water, electricity, WC, shower and laundry on the pontoon/in the sea station. 1500 yen for a 35-footer; 20 yen for trash disposal; 100 yen for water; don't know about electricity. Diesel is available from a gas station at the head of the pontoon. Supermarket to the left on the road. Izakayas, cafes and other dining options nearby.

The sea station is managed by Akiko, who speaks English. Reservations are advisable. 0897-72-9775. While you are there, try to meet Daniel Springett, a New Zealander who lives there. He was extremely helpful with suggestions for good stops down the line and could help with boat problems too. Akiko could connect you; Daniel's website is www.seajapan.com His wife works for Yuuko Marine.

Omishima

Miyaura: 34° 14'.9N 132° 59'.6E

This is another terrific island; not quite such artistic starpower as Naoshima, but almost as much interest and less of the glitz and the crowd. It is worth reading up on the history beforehand.

Easy approach via a buoyed channel. The long pontoon is in the SE corner of the harbor, with conspic red columns supporting its roof. Moor on the S side. Min depth ~5m and plenty of turning room; good horizontal fendering. Our first night was 22 yen (!) and our second was 11 yen (!!).

No facilities at the pontoon itself but there is a public WC ahead and slightly to the left from the head of the pontoon: it is a small white building with a pitched roof beyond a tall grey building on the corner, opposite a bus stop.

Good supermarket (follow the main road beyond the WC and keep right). The village's main street branches to the left under an arch off this road. It is quite charming, with small stores, izakayas, etc. The famous shrine and museums (particularly the museum of samurai armour) are at the end of this street, along with an art museum.

Bike hire on the way to the supermarket. Lawsons conbini (convenience store). Home Store (hardware). Onsen and salt museum 10 minutes walk to the south. Most things, including the onsen, are closed on Tuesday and Wednesday.

South of Miyaura, a hilly bike ride away, are the Tokora Museum (interesting architecture and modern art; great view), the Toyo Ito Museum of Architecture (great building, disappointing

museum, more great views) and the Ken Iwata Mother & Child Museum (sculpture; not quite my cup of tea, but why not complete the trifecta if you are already at the Toyo Ito museum?).

Mitarai (Osaki-Shimozima Shima)

Town pontoon 0.25nm N of the S breakwater light: 34° 10'.8N 132° 52'.0E

This is another very interesting town, with well-preserved Edo period buildings and an interesting history of trade and the pleasures of the floating world.

We just stopped for lunch. We moored alongside the town pontoon, which with a strong tidal stream (ebb to the south) can be tricky. I got the impression that trying to stay overnight could have been problematic, though the spot does have a pin on JCFB.

Kamagari (Kami-kamagarishima)

Mid-bay: 34° 10'.1N 132° 44'.4E

Kamagari is conveniently not far west from Mitarai. There is a sea station here, but from offshore it didn't seem to amount to much. JCFB shows mooring on the pontoon and a WC nearby. But the pontoon looked pretty rusty; we anchored off and could hear it creaking all night. The pier shown on NPS (but not on Navionics) inshore from the pontoon does not exist. The NW arm of the breakwater S of the pontoon is lit with two lights but submerges at high tide.

In the bay, the holding seemed to be good in thick mud. There was some rolling from the wake of distant ships. Exposed to the SW through W but sheltered from other directions. Pleasant place but not a must-see.

Kurahashi (Katsura, Kurahashijima)

34° 06'.2N 132° 30'.5E

Another interesting place, a centre for pre-Edo shipbuilding from the 7th and 8th centuries. Shipbuilding museum, beach, hotel and restaurants, onsen, pleasant atmosphere.

The approach is across a wide bay. The breakwater has a new extension at its W end, which was not shown on NPS or Navionics in 2023; lit with Fl Y at each end. Enter round the W end of the breakwater and turn sharply to starboard. The pontoon is at the E end of the harbor. First come, first served, either side; free. No facilities at the pontoon but there is a WC next to Slow Café and another (better) one in the wood behind the beach, both a short walk to the right from the harbor and past the hotel on the promontory. There is a fish processing facility close to the facility but it quietens down at night.

Fuel from a gas station behind the municipal buildings along the road to the right (beyond the WCs) and then on the left; very nice onsen with a restaurant in the same direction.

Can anchor in the outer bay as well (source: Daniel Springett).

Horie, Shikoku (for Matsuyama)

33° 54'.4N 132° 44'.9E

Horie might not be a destination in its own right (though it is a pleasant enough place), but it is a useful harbor for visiting the medium-size city of Matsuyama. Matsuyama's main claim to fame, from a visitor's point of view, is its magnificent castle; it also has a very ancient and famous onsen. The city has good transportation connections and all the facilities one would expect.

The harbor at Horie is quite well sheltered from most directions but not all: gaps in the breakwaters expose it to swell from NE and W. In a strong NE'ly, the harbor is very uncomfortable and the windward side of the pontoon is untenable. Fortunately, no ferries run from Horie any more and yachts can use either side of the pontoon.



Horie – showing its open NE side and choppy water that side of the pontoon

Entrance to the harbor is from the west; the entrance is lit. Water and electricity on the pontoon. Good WCs on the right-hand side of the bus station on the square at the head of the pontoon. Trash bins behind this. Coin-operated laundry on the left-hand side of the same building. Buses for Matsuyama leave from the square; the train station is a short walk away.

Pay for moorage in the restaurant across the square and get the code for the locked gate; 1,000 yen per night for 35'. Three-day maximum. Good food in the restaurant. Supermarket to the right along the main road out of the SE corner of the square. Conbini and fruit & veg store near the harbor, out of the NE corner.

There is a small boatyard up the coast to the north of Horie where or through which one might be able to get technical help if needed. <https://www.ichimiya.co.jp/anc/>

West of Horie is the island of Gogoshima. There is a pontoon at Funakoshi, 33° 53'.7N 132° 40'.2E (source: local sailor).

The channel between Gogoshima and Shikoku is easily navigable.

Western Seto Naikai

The big question after Horie/Matsuyama and Kurahashi is whether to go north into Hiroshima Bay. I did not, because I had already visited Hiroshima by land. But Hiroshima is a nice city and the Peace Memorial Park is very moving. To the SE of the city, the island of Itsukushima and its famous Miyajima shrine are absolutely stunning and well worth a visit. There is a good visitor pontoon on Miyajima within walking distance of the village, shrine and torii gate and good marinas and boatyards elsewhere in the Hiroshima area (see boatyard section above).

Yashiroshima/Suo-oshima

This is a lovely island, known as the Hawaii of Setouchi (Setouchi is the general region in which the Seto Naikai lies).

There is a private pontoon in the most north-easterly part of a nice harbor on the south side of the island at approximately 33° 54'N 132° 17'E. The pontoon belongs to Kirk Patterson, who can provide details. <https://www.konpira-consulting.com/index.html>

No facilities immediately near the pontoon itself, but there is a good WC, supermarket, PO, etc. in the village, about 15 minutes walk. There is an upscale onsen across the bay to the south.

JCFB shows that other boats have moored alongside the wall in the most westerly part of the harbor complex (which has several basins).

Murotsu, Honshu

33° 50'.1N 132° 07'.0E

This is a new harbor with an excellent pontoon just N of the 25m Kaminsoseki Bridge on the Honshu shore, east side of Kaminoseki Kaikyō.

The entrance is lit Fl R. Immediately ahead on entering is the very active ferry pontoon. The visitors' pontoon is to starboard in the S half of the harbor, with room for two or three boats. If this pontoon is full, boats can moor again the wall between the ferry and visitors' pontoons, or on the E-W wall facing the ferry pontoon in the N half of the harbor.



Murotsu – the boat on the left is against the wall; the others are on the pontoon; the ferry dock is just to the left of the photo

Good shelter, though there is some wash from the ferries and from ships in the channel outside. Excellent WCs behind the small store on the quay. The harbor office is in the building to the right of the store. Inexpensive. Diesel by truck to the pontoon from the Eneos station to the left from the harbor.

There is an excellent onsen and restaurant to the right under the bridge, then on the inland side of the road. Small izakaya on the left before you get to the onsen. There must be a supermarket somewhere because it is a reasonable-size village, though I did not see one.

Japanese yachts used to go to the Kaminoseki fishing harbor across the channel, but now prefer Murotsu (source: local sailors). I liked Murotsu too.

Ozushima (alternatively Otsu-, Ohzu-, Ooh- and probably some other -shimas)

This is an interesting island tucked up under the Honshu shore, opposite the large petrochemical and steel and industrial center of Shunan (whose nearest Sea Station advertises that 'Cruising tours are also offered. These allow visitors to see industrial areas and factories by night while afloat on Tokuyama Bay'). Ozushima's interest, on the other hand, lies in a museum and memorial to the sailors who lost their lives as part of Japan's suicide torpedo programme during the Second World War. The museum is very well done and intensely moving. The island – like so many – is rather sad too: it has a large abandoned school and evident signs of depopulation (but, of course, an excellent ferry service).

There are several harbors on the island; at least two are suitable for yachts.

Mashima

33° 59'.5N 131° 43'.2E

Mashima, towards the south of Ozushima's east coast, is the convenient one for the Kaiten Museum.

Easy entrance through breakwaters (FI R on N breakwater). The pontoon is right ahead on the W side of the harbor (the ferry uses both sides of the ferry pontoon on the S wall). A wall tie to the N of the visitor pontoon would probably also be possible if the pontoon was full (local fishing boats use it). However, the harbor is exposed SE and E and is not advisable if strong winds are expected from these directions. WC on the way to the ferry terminal. Nice restaurant. No other facilities.

Hon-ura/Motoura

34° 00'.5N 131° 42'.2E

The alternative is Hon-ura/Motoura on the west coast.

Excellent shelter from all directions. Enter leaving the breakwater (FI R) to starboard. Immediately ahead is a stone pier; the ferry uses its S side but the N side would probably be possible. The S perimeter wall of the harbor is equally good, however, a little deeper (~4-5m +/- at neaps), more spacious and close to the WC (beige shed). PO but no other facilities. Ferry to Mashima (but you may have to walk back: 75-90 minutes, pleasant).

Himeshima

33° 43'.3N 131° 38'.8E

This prosperous island close to the north-east corner of Kyushu on the south side of the Seto Naikai – on the strength of tiger prawns and tourism – is a striking contrast to Ozushima. It is about the same distance from Kanmon-kaikyō as Ozushima.

The harbor used by yachts is the ferry port on the south side of island, towards the west end. It can be approached from either E or W. The harbor is a complex of basins set between a detached external breakwater. Entrance is straightforward, leaving two substantial red light towers (FI R) to starboard.

Yachts generally use the main basin, straight ahead (~ due N), which also has the ferry terminal. There are several possible spots for yachts, all wall ties:

1. Red dot with red circle: From JCFB. There are two sets of steps. I went here and it was fine. But see 3. below
2. Blue line: Not as desirable, because closer to the ferry. The NW corner of this basin, immediately in front of two white fish processing buildings, is not available because fishing boats unload there. But the third set of steps to the NE from the corner is OK
3. Green line: W wall of the next basin to the W, under two large white JF tanks. At least two sets of steps and space for at least two boats. I would go here if I were coming again: good shelter, less ferry wash, more convenient wall height
4. Red dot with yellow circle: This is from JCFB; I didn't inspect it



Google Maps image from JCFB

Excellent WC facilities in the ferry terminal when it is open; or 24/7 just beyond at the N end of a little park. Good restaurants (shrimp is a must; recc: Hime No Ya). PO. Small shops. Onsen by bus or bike. Diesel from gas station on the way to the PO. Yanmar service beyond the PO near the fishing harbor. Very helpful tourist office. Bike and e-vehicle rental. Nice hikes, e.g. to a beautiful spot at the Sennindo temple NW from the harbor; and up the hill to a lookout point to the east.

Kanmon-kaikyō

Kanmon-kaikyō is the narrow strait between Honshu and Kyushu which leads from the western end of the Seto Naikai to the Sea of Japan. It is narrow, crowded, tidey – but quite short and not as intimidating as it looks (or, at any rate, as it looked on paper to me).

After pretty fancy-free cruising in most of the Seto Naikai, with harbors always close to hand and only a few tidal gates, Kanmon-kaikyō requires some planning ahead. The questions are:

1. Where can you stage your approach beforehand?
2. How to time your transit?
3. Where to go once you are through?
4. Oh, and, of course, how do you get through?

There are a few options for the night before a transit of the Kanmon-kaikyō. *The simplest, albeit the most expensive, is the Shinmoji Marina a little south of the entrance to the strait.* <http://www.interq.or.jp/blue/shinmoji/> Reservations are necessary and the marina does not always have space (source: Kirk Patterson). A second option is to anchor offshore between here and the entrance to Kanmon-kaikyō; exposed to a long fetch from the east (source: Daniel Springett).

On the Honshu shore, and somewhat further from the strait, there is a pontoon at Ube Marina (which is a sea station but not a real marina), which can be used by visitors if not being used by local boats.

33° 56'.7N 131° 14'.7E

<https://sasaki-corp.jp/offices/marine/ube/> (source: Kirk Patterson; see also Sunstone RCC notes).

JCFB implies that the pontoon in the W corner of the same basin may be possible (blue pin).



Ube – the pontoon is the white structure in front of Sasaki Corporation UBE marina; the blue pin is from JCFB; Google Maps image from JCFB

Finally, either Ozushima or Himeshima could be used the night before, provided the tides in Kanmon-kaikyō work for a transit later in the day.

Timing the transit is relatively straightforward. You want to arrive at or slightly before the turn of the tide to the west. In the next hour to two you will have a favorable but not very strong stream, which is all you need to get through.

After Kanmon-kaikyō, a convenient stopping point is Ainoshima, particularly if you come through later in the day, which is pretty much the first nearest place. Surprisingly, this is not marked on JCFB, but Futaoijima to the north is. After a morning transit, of course, there are other options further north or south in the Sea of Japan.

The east-west transit is quite straightforward and rather fun. As you approach, you will see an electronic signboard on the Kyushu shore with tidal information: direction of flow; rate of flow; and whether the rate is increasing or decreasing. There is a similar board on the Honshu shore further into the strait.



Kanmon-kaikyō – the electronic signboard on the Honshu shore showing W tidal stream; it rotates the information displayed

Although there is a separation scheme in the strait, with westbound vessels on the north side, small craft are allowed to go west between the southern, eastbound lane and the Kyushu shore. There is more room here and it is the preferred side for yachts, particularly if you are coming from Shinmoji. The north side is possible too, though; there is enough space to keep to the very edge of the northern, westbound lane or between it and the Honshu shore. Large vessels loom high above you as they overtake; but it is not unsafe. At the western exit from the strait, vessels will either turn north (leaving Masurejima to port), south or keep going straight. They fly flags indicating what direction they are going to turn.

Japan Coast Guard User Manual in English; mostly big-ship oriented, but with a very handy plan on page 16: https://www6.kaiho.mlit.go.jp/kanmon/info/tab/user_guide/en.pdf

HARBORS IN NORTH AND WEST KYUSHU

Although the north and west coasts of Kyushu and its off-lying islands are not as sheltered as the Seto Naikai, in the summer months the weather is pretty benign and harbors are plentiful. *In the winter, they are more exposed to the storms and swells in the Sea of Japan.* Being further south, there is probably somewhat more risk of typhoons, though of course this is very dependent on individual typhoon tracks. There is less shipping and more sea room here than in the Seto Naikai, which makes sailing somewhat more relaxed. On the central west coast, around the large island of Shimoshima, there is very sheltered cruising among the islands but also significant tidal streams in choke points (which are well documented). Like the Seto Naikai, the scenery is beautiful and the villages are attractive.

South-west to Fukuoka

Ainoshima

33° 59'.3N 130° 49'.1E

Ainoshima is a somewhat scruffy but useful stop right before or after Kanmon-kaikyō. Beware of an extensive 5m shallow patch W and S of the entrance. The entrance itself is straightforward and well lit (Fl R & Fl G). The normal spot for yachts is the E wall just SE of the ferry dock. In a strong SE'ly this would be exposed. There is an inner basin beyond the ferry dock; when we were there the E wall of this basin was unoccupied by fishing boats and, if available, would probably provide better shelter if needed. Good WC at ferry terminal.

Oshima

Wall in Munakata ferry terminal basin: 33° 53'.8N 130° 26'.2E

This is a pleasant island about halfway between Kanmon-kaikyō and Fukuoka. The harbor is a series of basins running N-S on the SE side of the island. The northernmost basins are full of fishing boats. There are two options for yachts:

1. The ferry terminal basin. N wall, E of the ferry terminal. Decent shelter but a bit exposed to S because the basin is big. Free. Facilities in the ferry terminal.
2. A sea station in the southernmost basin 5-10 minutes walk from the centre of the village. This offers better shelter, if needed, because the basin is smaller. Room for 3-4 boats on a pontoon against the N wall. Showers and WC. *Reputed to be expensive for what it is (source: local knowledge), though when we were there the visiting yachts were about equally distributed between the two locations.*

There is an interesting explanation of the long history of the island upstairs in the ferry terminal. Lovely shrine in Munakata and a temple on the W coast. Bike rental. Restaurants. Visitor-friendly.

Fukuoka

Odo Marina: 33° 35'.6N 130° 18'.7E

Fukuoka is Kyushu's biggest city and one of the few in Japan which is experiencing population growth. It has all the facilities of a big city and good rail and air transportation connections. There are two main options for yachts:

1. Fukuoka City Yacht Harbor – usually referred to as Odo Marina. <https://fyh.jp/> This is a nice marina west of downtown. The area around it is pleasant and there is a nice park right by the marina. The marina only takes sailboats and the maximum size is about 45'/3-4m draft. Entry is straightforward (FI R & FI G). The visitor docks are straight ahead immediately inside the entrance. These docks are subject to surge when the wind is anywhere close to N; it's uncomfortable in a blow and tough on lines. For a longer stay, the further away from the entrance in among the non-visitor slips the better, though even here there is significant surge in bad weather and it remains very tough on lines, fairleads and cleats. 3,800 yen per night for a 35-footer; much less for a long stay.
 - The marina team, led by Hiro-san (who speaks English), is very helpful. Water on the dock (400 yen per time to borrow hoses, etc.); no electricity. WCs, showers (small fee), trash (small fee), recycling. Small chandlery, but they can order from a catalog. Very good and reasonably-priced full-service boatyard for boats up to about 45-50'; it is small, so you would need to pre-arrange a haul-out. Hamada-san, who runs the yard, has quite limited English but the office staff speak English well. MarineTech, +81 90 3198 0321
 - Close by in the surrounding area there is an excellent supermarket, a big hardware store and a coin laundry. Fuel in cannisters from a gas station about 15 minutes' walk away, where they also accept used oil. Subway to downtown, station and airport about 25 minutes' walk. Restaurants, PO, 7/11 with ATM, etc., all close by

2. Nishi Fukuoka Marina Marinao – usually referred to simply as Marinao. <https://sasaki-corp.jp/offices/marine/nfmarinoa/> This is another well-run marina just east of Odo. It generally takes larger boats and powerboats. It has better shelter than Odo. It too has all facilities and a boatyard. The marina is right next to an outlet mall with restaurants, etc. and a good hotel. The Odo neighbourhood, supermarket, etc. is also accessible from Marinao, with a slightly longer walk.

There is also a fishing harbor just east of Marinao where it might be possible to moor (source: local sailor).

Fukuoka to Nagasaki

Gonoura, Ikishima

33° 44'.9N 129° 40'.7E

This is a well-sheltered harbor on an attractive island. There are three excellent pontoons managed by the very helpful Hayashida-san. WC across the park (under repair in 2023). 10-15 minutes' walk into town. Good bicycling, sights and beaches on the island.

Yobuko

33° 32'.9N 129° 53'.6E

It is possible to sail from Fukuoka to Hirado in a day, but it is quite a long way. Yobuko is a useful stopping point in between. It is famous for its squid and there is a good (but relatively expensive) restaurant, and also a sento, right on the harbor. WC opposite the sento.

Easy access from either direction (there is a 27m bridge from the W). The harbor is a square pool formed by breakwaters, with a wharf and fish processing plant on its S side. The mooring spot is alongside the E wall, which has two sets of steps. There was a least depth of only 8' alongside when we were there. In a strong westerly I think this pool is big enough that this wall could be uncomfortable.

Himeshima

33° 33'.9N 130° 03'.2E

A further option between Yobuko and Fukuoka is Himeshima, which has a fishing harbor on its S side. Beware of a reef that runs S from the harbor entrance, marked by a cardinal mark at its S-most end. (Source: local sailors)

Hirado

33° 22'.3N 129° 33'.3E

This lovely harbor is on most foreign yachts' must-see list. It offers good shelter on an excellent pontoon with a picturesque castle on the hill opposite and historic streets right behind. In the town of Hirado itself there are interesting museums reflecting Hirado's past as an early European trading port, particularly with the Dutch. The castle has been rebuilt so, although worth a visit, the inside is not authentic. More widely on Hiradoshima there are also interesting places to visit, including the UNESCO World Heritage sites of Hidden Christians at Kasuga.

The tides in the channel outside run strongly, so it is worth timing slack water or favourable tide. The main pontoon is just W of the ferry terminal with a conspic white roof. Either side is OK. The W side has huge fenders which offer great protection but a bit of an intimidating leap the first time (after that it is fine). The E side has vertical fendering. First-come, first-served; free, but register at the information counter at the W end of the ferry terminal. Electricity is 500 yen. Water on the pontoon from a hose. Trash by arrangement with the office, for a small fee. Good WCs in the ferry terminal and others to the W when these are closed. Hiroko in the tourist office is very helpful.

There is room for about two boats on either side on this pontoon. If it is full, there is another, private pontoon at the W end of the harbor. Any of its three sides is OK if it is available.



Hirado – the yacht pontoon is center left, with the ferry dock to its right; beyond that, the Dutch trading museum and an onsen/spa behind it. The fallback pontoon is just off the photo to the left

There is a ship's chandlers behind the ferry terminal; they can also order for delivery. Coin laundry. Small but good supermarket behind the private pontoon. Fuel ditto; will deliver to the boat by truck. Lots of small stores, fishmongers, restaurants, etc. Onsens around the coast beyond the Dutch trading post museum. Electric bike hire from the ferry terminal; at least one other bike rental store in town.

Across the bridge to Kyushu there is a large supermarket (ellena) and an upscale onsen resort in the Samson Hotel. There is a free shuttle bus across the bridge or taxis from the ferry terminal.

On the mainland south of Hirado there are many, many other places that I didn't visit. I include some of these in various places in the notes below. The sources are Kirk Patterson and other local sailors. Some of the harbors are on Kirk's konpira-consulting.com website; there are many other possibilities on JCFB and elsewhere.

Between Hirado and Nagasaki:

- *Pearl Sea Marina in Saikai National Park, south of Sasebo. Approximately 33° 09'.8N 129° 40'.8E. Visitor dock on the hammerhead pontoon on the north side of the basin. Reservation necessary. There are probably anchoring possibilities in the surrounding islands*
- *Huis Ten Bosch. Approx 33° 04'.9N 129° 47'.4E A marina embedded in a Dutch-themed theme park at the head of the huge Omura Bay. Suitable for long-term stay. Good connection to Nagasaki airport but quite a long way from everything else.*

Goto Retto

Goto Retto is a lovely chain of islands about 40nm west of Kyushu between Hirado and Nagasaki. They are quiet and remote, with beaches and lots of interesting history and culture. For various reasons I only went to one of the islands, but the archipelago would merit more exploration than I gave it.

Narao

Ferry port, ferry pontoon: 32° 50'.8N 129° 03'.7E

Fishing harbor: 32° 50'.3N 129° 03'.7E

Narao is on Nakadorishima in the central part of Goto Retto. It is a small town spread across hills and two harbors. There are mooring possibilities in both harbors. The more common option for yachts is to go to the ferry port, where once again there are various options.

The ferry port has a conspic white light on the outer breakwater; entry is straightforward. I was directed to the inside of the fast ferry pontoon, just W of the main ferry terminal building. This spot is on the E side of the pontoon, between the pontoon and the wall; the fast ferry docks on the W side of the pontoon. It looks as if it should provide good shelter, but the problem is that the ferry port is big and develops significant surge when there is strong wind from a generally easterly and perhaps southerly direction. The surge, besides being uncomfortable, pushes the bow forward towards the ramp which connects the pontoon to the land; a SE'ly wind reinforces the pushing moment. It would be a tight spot for a boat much bigger than 40'. To add insult to near-injury, the black surface of the pontoon has deteriorated and transfers a real mess from shoes to deck.

An alternative is the east wall on a large stone jetty next west from the ferry pontoon. But, again, in an E'ly this would be a windward wall and the not-inconsiderable waves in the port would push you against the vertical fendering of this wall. A gas station is a convenient distance from this jetty. JCFB also shows a pin on the next pontoon west. If available, this would probably be the best option in these conditions, though I did not explore it.



Narao ferry port – three mooring options; the onsen is the yellow dot in the red circle, bottom right; Google image from JCFB

There is a very nice onsen up the steep hill south of the main ferry pier – there is a sign to the steps up the hill; it closes at 1900, which is earlier than many. In the village round the ferry port to the north there is a small, rather expensive supermarket; coin laundry on the way, near the gas station. WC in the ferry terminal when open.

About 0.5nm south of the ferry port is a much smaller – and more attractive – fishing harbor, where there is a pontoon and a minimum depth of about 4m. There is aquaculture close inshore between the two harbors; to avoid it, stay E of a line between the ferry port breakwater light and the headland S of the fishing harbor.

When I was there, the east side was open; JCFB shows a pin on the west side. This harbor is pretty much open to the east so, expecting an E'ly blow, I moved from here to the ferry port for my second night; perhaps the fishing harbor would indeed have been rough but the ferry port, as just described, was no great solution. If I were coming to Narao again and there were no weather constraints, I would try the fishing harbor first.

There is a small charge for using this pontoon, payable in the City District Office (see Google Maps). Since not many boats use this harbor, the process of arriving at the right fee was more laborious than elsewhere, especially since the manager was away; but with the involvement of the whole office and two interpreters, and ample time, Plainsong's bill was finally arrived at: 187 yen per night, about 1.25 USD or 1.00 GBP. There was no charge in the ferry port.

There is a very small store in the village. WC across a small park just N of the pontoon. The village also has a very ancient and historic ako (ficus) tree in front of a shrine which is well worth a visit.

You can walk round the sea road from one of these harbors to the other, so you can easily get to the onsen from the fishing harbor or the tree from the ferry port.



Narao fishing harbor – the government building is in the red circle; Google image and blue dot from JCFB

Other Goto Retto options from N to S (Kirk Patterson):

- Ukushima – Fisharina – reservation necessary
- Nozakijima – anchoring possible
- Arikawa – two pontoons; moor on N side
- Fukue

Iojima, Nagasaki

32° 42'.3N 129° 46'.8E

Back on the mainland, close to Nagasaki, Iojima is a very handy harbor opposite the wide estuary mouth that leads to Nagasaki city. There is a free pontoon and a ferry to Nagasaki. Some local sailors use it rather than paying the relatively high costs of the Nagasaki marinas (see below); or if you don't need to go into the centre of Nagasaki, Iojima saves an hour each way up the river.

The entrance is straightforward (FI R & FI G). There are two pontoons on the NE wall. Only the inner one, though, is connected to the ramp; so there is no shore access from the other one without a dinghy. Good shelter, though it can be a big surge. **WC in the ferry terminal when it is**

open and another public WC just N of the ferry parking open 24/7. Posh but very nice onsen 10 minutes' walk to the NW (Ark Land Spa – my favorite of all, actually).

Good sushi restaurant behind the ferry building. Soba, udon restaurants. Most of these restaurants are closed on Wednesdays. Fancy but good restaurant in the hotel on the other side of the harbor. Trash collection from the gray bins on the street beyond the ferry terminal.



Iojima – showing the disconnected outer pontoon beyond *Plainsong*

Nagasaki

Nagasaki is a medium-size city, not as large as Fukuoka but, somehow, I liked it more. The atom bomb memorial is not as powerful as the one in Hiroshima but there are lots of other interesting things in the city, especially the Dutch trading post at Dejima and sites relating to Christianity in Nagasaki (for example, the 26 Martyrs Memorial and Museum). The airport is quite a long way out of the city but there is easy access by bus from a central bus station near the JR railway station.

There are two options for yachts in and around Nagasaki. One, Nagasaki Dejima Harbor, is in the centre of the city. The other, Nagasaki Sunset Marina, is out of town to the NW (in fact, it is NE of Iojima).

1. Nagasaki Dejima Harbor: 32° 44'.6N 129° 52'.2E

Dejima is about 4 or 5nm up the river that runs through the centre of Nagasaki. The river has shipyards on both banks right up into the heart of the city and a surprising set of Rapa Nui moai on the east shore. Pilotage is pretty straightforward up the river, with ferry traffic being the main hazard. The marina opens up to starboard near the large ferry terminal. The visitor dock is the outermost pontoon. But this is also the most subject to wash from the ferries during the daytime, so when making a reservation, it is worth requesting an inside berth if possible (or the marina may just give you one). I never saw the marina completely full, so I think you would probably be accommodated even without a reservation. If you were turned away, Iojima would be the fallback. The shelter in the marina is OK, though not the best. The marina and the city have good facilities, with a couple of exceptions:

- Water and 100V electricity on the dock
- Good WC upstairs in the centre of the wharf or at the left-hand end at ground level
- Excellent supermarket downstairs in YouMe (conspic from the marina)
- Good restaurant area in Dozamachi, straight on past Dejima trading station, leaving Chinatown to your right (as well as a row of restaurants along the wharf right at the marina)
- Coin laundry in this area too: turn left at Chinatown arch
- Trash disposal behind a wooden door right behind the toilets on the road side; you need the appropriate bags for different categories of trash, which can be bought in YouMe
- Good haircut at Dejima Hair Market, Kenji, 090 7444 6116 (m)
- Exceptions:
 - Carrying fuel onto the pontoons is not permitted (though I did see one Japanese boat doing so) and there is no fuel dock; so, no fuel
 - The marina does not have showers
- The marina staff are very helpful – manager, Kouichi Shihaku, 095 865 3000 (o) 080 5214 7299 (m)
- <https://dejima-h.com/> info@dejima-h.com
- 3,800 yen per night for a 35-footer; discounts on longer stays

2. Nagasaki Sunset Marina: 32° 44'.3N 129° 49'.0E

This is a pleasant, posh marina in quiet surroundings. It is on the open sea NW of the mouth of the main Nagasaki river; getting into the centre of Nagasaki would be time-consuming. On the other hand, the marina has a fuel dock (which can be used by boats even if they are not staying in or visiting the marina). So it is a useful place if you need fuel, especially in bulk; if you don't need to go into the city; and if you want more facilities than at Iojima.

- Turning circles in the basin are tight, so a big boat would need to take care; but the E wall has easy access from the entrance so you could simply go bow in and reverse out
- The marina has good facilities (water and power in the docks; showers; laundry; etc.) and an expensive restaurant

- Land services, on the other hand, are limited: it is a 30-minute walk to a conbini, for example, and more to a supermarket
- 3,850 yen per night for a 35-footer
- <https://n-sunsetmarina.com/>

South from Nagasaki

Kabashima

Pontoon: 32° 34'.2N 129° 47'.1E

Inner harbor: 32° 34'.1N 129° 47'.2E

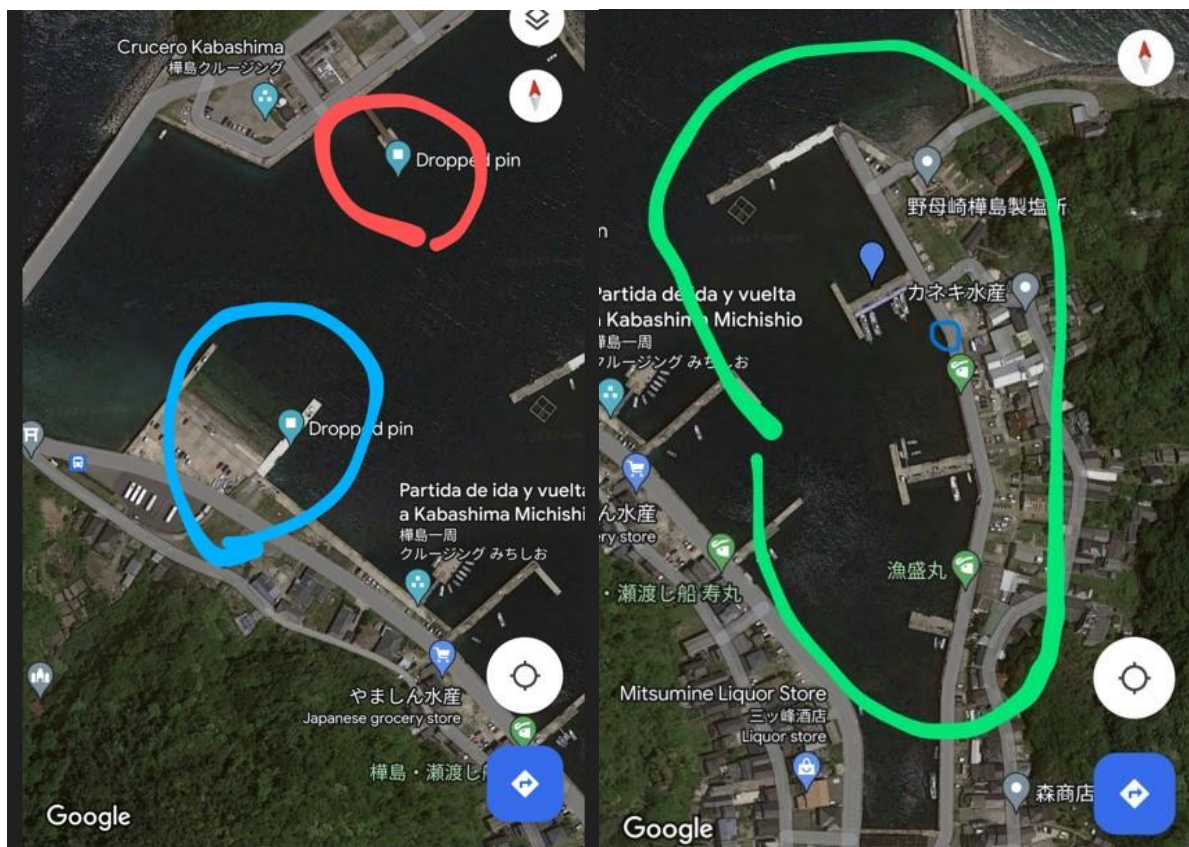
This is a serious fishing harbor on a pleasant island with nice hiking up the hill to a lookout point at the lighthouse. The island is a short distance south of Nagasaki, past the abandoned, intriguing and rather tragic Hashima (Battleship Island) and is a convenient staging point for continuing south, east, or north-east.

The inside approach to the harbor from the N is under an 18m bridge. The outside approach is from the E; beware of rocks NE of the entrance. Otherwise, entrance is straightforward.

Mooring options in the harbor are a little ambiguous. Kirk's principal recommendation is an excellent pontoon (though it squeaks like crazy) just W of the entrance on the N side of the outer harbor, in front of some warehouse buildings. Conspic red ramp. However, this is a fuel dock for fishing boats and there are two fuel lines down to the dock (but only one fuel counter screen; so I am not sure whether two fishing boats could take on fuel at once). On one visit, I used the W side of this pontoon, the fishing boats used the E side and all was well.

On a second visit in 2023, I was woken up at 0500 when two fishing boats were waiting for fuel; I was turfed off the pontoon sharpish and directed, instead, to the S side of the jetty S of the launching ramp W of the pontoon (got that?!). This has vertical fendering but is a clean wall. The minimum depth is around 9m. This is a pretty good option, and closer to the village and the WC, but it is uncomfortable or worse in an E wind; and at low tide, the wall is pretty high above the deck.

On a third visit in 2024, with a brisk easterly, I went into the inner harbor because I didn't want to futz with the pontoon and because the jetty wasn't comfortable in that wind. I moored at the inflection point of a wall in the second basin on the east side, where there are steps (see image below). This is just N of a mooring spot for a charter fishing boat where there are also steps. There was a minimum depth of about 10' at neaps and a mildly offensive but fortunately intermittent effluent pipe nearby. But the shelter was decent.



Kabasima - Red circle: pontoon; blue circle: wall on jetty; green circle: inner harbor with JCFB blue pin and small blue circle showing *Plainsong's* 2024 mooring spot

The village is a small place with limited facilities: a small store, a home cooking-type restaurant, a post office. WC is close to the jetty by a bus stop. Buses to Nagasaki. Across the bridge there is another village with a coffee shop, a tofu factory, a few other facilities and a sad air of decline.

Nomo Ko

Entrance: 32° 35.6'.4N 129° 45'.2E

A little N of Kabashima, on the N side of the Nagasaki peninsula, there is a deep, well-sheltered bay which has been popular with Japanese sailors in the past. There were two pontoons which, I was told in 2023, are no longer available to visiting yachts. But JCFB also shows wall ties on the wharf at the head of the bay and another, S-facing wall just N of these spots. NPS, on the other hand, shows a large shallow path before one can reach these walls. Bottom line: this bay would be worth exploring as an alternative to Kabeshima. (Source: local sailors)

Mogi

Wall N of the ferry pier: 32° 42'.4N 129° 54'.9E

Another serious fishing harbor. The main spot for yachts is a pontoon right in the SW corner of the outer breakwater, where the breakwater bends. You can use either side, apparently, and the end might fit a small boat as well. It was full when I was there and I was waved to another

spot. I am not sure whether I went to the place I was intended to go to, but ended up on the wall on the N side of the ferry terminal.



Mogi – green and white circle, bottom right, is the pontoon; red circle with line, top centre, is the wall

The wall was pretty gnarly, with deep vertical fendering which stops above the level of your fenders/board at low tide (and hence which could catch them on the way back up). So you need to tend to your lines carefully. The fendering at the ferry pontoon end is damaged and may be hidden under water at high tide, but jutting out. Up on top, it's a long way between bollards, so if you do have to go there, be ready with long lines.

No facilities at the wall (or the pontoon, I don't think), but there is a Lawson combini not far away and a PO and supermarket on the way into town. Gas station in town centre. Short bus ride to Nagasaki.

I didn't like Mogi (probably would have done if I had been on the pontoon; the setting of the town itself, in a ring of wooded hills, is attractive, and Mogi is famous for its puffer fish), but Japanese sailors use it as a cheap and convenient way to access Nagasaki.

Obama

32° 43'.7N 130° 12'.4E

If you have been traumatized by either Mogi or Kabashima (which you shouldn't be; Kabashima really very nice), then Obama is the place to go. Obama is a spa town with water bubbling out of the ground at 105°C (for some geological reason it is hotter than boiling) and steam emerging from many buildings and even from a concrete mushroom in the harbor itself. It is set up for relaxing and vacations; in fact, it's a bit of a pleasure dome and there is an ice cream shop conveniently close to the harbor.

In 2024 Kirk Patterson told me that the pontoon at Obama is no longer available to yachts. If this is permanently true, it is a shame, because Obama was one of my favorite spots. It would be worth calling the city office to find out. Try +81957742111 (from Google Maps), enlisting Japanese-speaking help if necessary (or ask Kirk to call if you are a client). In settled conditions it would probably be possible to anchor outside the harbor, in which case the steps at the S end of the harbor would make a convenient dinghy landing spot. Beware, however, of an area of aquaculture shown on NPS just S of the entrance to the harbor.



Obama – pontoon and steam; the steps are to the right of the pontoon

If the pontoon is available, then...

The entrance is a little hard to distinguish from seaward; a good landmark is a conspic white structure that looks a bit like a sail, which is about 100m S of the entrance. There is a good pontoon in the SE corner of the harbor, with room for about two boats on the outside and one on the inside. The harbor is open to the NW and would likely be untenable in these conditions. There are good depths in most of the approach to the pontoon and to the S wall/steps of the basin, except in the SW corner which is very shallow between the hot water geyser and the S wall. Pay at the large building behind the Tourist Office building on the N side of the harbor (open weekdays only); very cheap. WC beyond the sports ground S of the pontoon. Small trash can for burnable trash inside the bus station.

There are many private onsens in Obama, embedded in spa hotels. The public onsen is S on the coast road; see Boyoso on Google Maps; bring your own towel; very cheap. On the way to the onsen, there is a good supermarket, a DIY store, a coin laundry and a 7-11. PO and Lawsons near the pontoon. Pharmacy. Fuel seems to be to the N on the coast road – it would be a long carry if there no delivery truck. Buses to Nagasaki city and (change at Ishahaya) airport.

One street back from the hotels along the seafront there is a small traditional street with many restaurants, izakayas, etc., along with a small bakery selling excellent scones. Go figure.

South of Obama is Amakusa, a well-known area of great beauty consisting of two main islands, Amakusa-Shimoshima to the W and the smaller Amakusa-Kamishima E of it (variants of these names differ between sources; these variants are from NPS).

North coast of Amakusa-Shimoshima

Tomioka

32° 31'.9N 130° 02'.2E

A handy, if not the most attractive, stopping point on the N coast of Amakusa-Shimoshima if heading S or N. The Tomioka entrance has extensive aquaculture stretching across much of the S part of the entrance (which is shallow, in any case). So you need to enter to the W of the cardinal buoy and keep as close to the sand spit as depths will allow. Once past the spit, the fishing harbor to the W is tight and a tempting-looking pontoon is in fact a fuel dock for fishing boats. So for yachts, I think the options lie in the large pool NE of the fishing harbor. A Japanese sailor told me that you can moor on the side of the ferry pontoon (just N of the fishing harbor) not used by the ferry (I am not sure which side this would imply for yachts, but I believe it is the S side). However, I was waved away when trying to approach and anchored off in the pool instead. Beware of shallow depths between the ferry pontoon and the nearby breakwater if maneuvering around here.

There is plenty of room to anchor and you can find a spot according to the wind conditions. Mud, 20-30'.

Futae

32° 32'.8N 130° 07'.7E

East of Tomioka is a tidal choke point where the channel narrows between Kyushu to the north and Amakusa-Shimshima to the south. Futae lies on the Amakusa-Shimashima side of the channel. It is a centre for dolphin watching and, indeed, there were wonderful dolphins in the strong tides between Tsujishima and the deep-water channel markers both times I passed by.

Futae harbor is a complicated series of breakwaters and basins E of the low Tsujishima bridge. Entrance is from the north. There are two main basins running E-W along the seafront. The more E'ly has a conspic white dolphin watching visitor centre and a conspic fish loading facility next to it. In the far west end of this basin, in front of a wide launching ramp that forms the entire W end of the basin, there are two rickety pontoons in front of two fuel huts. The W-most fuel hut is not in use, however, so its pontoon is available; the W side was being used by a fishing boat when I was there (twice) but the E side was open. The wooden pontoon has no bollards or attachment points to you have to improvise between the larger frames of the structure (and you can run bow lines ashore); it was fine for 35'/10 tons but would probably not work for a larger boat. There is another, blue and better-looking pontoon running along the seawall itself immediately to the E, but it looked as if this was pretty full with local boats, even if there were spaces, and I could not understand what I was being told as I approached. The pontoons east of this are very active with fishing boats, dolphin tour boats, etc.



Futae – showing the relevant basin and the location of the rickety pontoon

Excellent WC in the Dolphin Center when it is open. Small but good grocery just W and inland from the pontoon ('Green Market'); coin laundry opposite it. Conbini on the main road. PO. Some restaurants and tourist facilities.



Futae – Plainsong is on the more W'ly of the two fuel pontoons

Neither Tomioka nor Futae feature on JCFB, which prefers Oniike and Hondo instead (see above).

North end of Amakusa-Shimoshima, alternatives to Tomioka and Futae more commonly used by Japanese sailors:

- *Oniike Port at NE corner of the peninsula. Pontoon on NE side of harbor*
- *Hondo. South from Oniike. Several pontoons.*

North-east and east coasts of Amakusa

Much of the east coasts of Amakusa-Shimoshima and Amakusa-Kamishima is sheltered by a string of islands, which form a very attractive cruising ground, with strong tidal streams through the narrower points. Despite the fairly extensive aquaculture shown (only) on NPS, there would likely be some anchoring possibilities, though JCFB has no current pins in this area.

At the NE tip of Amakusa-Kamishima there is a maze of islands and channels separating it from Oyanoshima and then Kyushu proper to the north-east. A 12m bridge makes full east-west or west-east passage impossible for most yachts. Instead, it is necessary to go slightly further north and cut through Misumi No Seto under the 39m Tenmon Bridge between Oyanoshima and Kyushu. This channel has strong tides, surprising twists and turns and some shallows; but it is relatively straightforward and rather fun. The town of Misumi, which has a marina I did not visit (see below), is mid-way through the passage. Coming from S, one can anchor off the E coast of Iwashima if waiting for the tide. Near the northern entrance is one of my favorite anchorages, Noboritate.

Noboritate

Anchorage: 32° 36'.6N 130° 25'.0E

Not all Japanese sailors recognize this name; other variants I have seen are Oyanomachi or, more generically, Oyanojima, but I am not sure what its most common name is.

In any case, it is a lovely, deep cut into the N shore of Oyanoshima, between the NE point of Amakusa-Kamishima and the Kumamoto shore of Kyushu. There is a narrow entrance with a minimum depth of about 6m (but care must be taken to follow the deepest track), which opens up into a pool. I came in on the last of the light and anchored in the pool outside fishing boat moorings and fish pens, and clear of the channel leading to the head of the inlet. The shelter was good, though there is a lot of fishing boat activity day and night, and especially (like many places) in the early morning.

Better still is the inner pool around the corner. There is a marina here and possibly room for anchoring too (for example, to the N of the long pontoon – but I did not verify this). The inner pool is surrounded by hills and very typhoon-safe. It would be a great place to leave a boat for a long time, provided you were willing to go elsewhere for a boatyard and did not mind the relatively isolated position of the island (it is about 15 minutes by car from the medium-size town of Misumi, which has a JR station, but the nearest big city and airport is Kumamoto, an hour away by car and two hours or so by train).

The marina is run as a cooperative and I was told that an introduction is necessary in order to get a slip (at least for a long stay). Contact me directly for more details.

Other possibilities near the N end of Amakusa-Kamishima and Oyanoshima:

- *Amakusa Fisharina. Approx 32° 32'.3N 130° 23'.9E Reservation necessary <https://f-amakusa.jp/>*
- *Misumi Port Hata Marina. Reservation. <https://www.hata-marina.net/>*

And NE from here:

- *Uto Marina, between Amakusa Fisharina and Kumamoto; reservation*
- *Kumamoto Sea Station; reservation; Kumamoto has good transportation connections*

Hi-No-Shima

32° 22'.5N 130° 25'.7E

A little further south, Hi-No-Shima is a pleasant, quiet anchorage in a bay off the south-eastern end of Amakusa-Kamishima, the island which projects east from the north-east of Amakusa-Shimoshima. Easy approach. Good shelter from SW to NE through N; OK in calm weather from other directions. Deep – around 15m or more. May swing to tide rather than wind.

West coast of Amakusa-Shimoshima

Sakitsu Wan

Entrance: 32° 18'.0N 130° 00'.3E

This is a deep bay on the west coast of Amakusa-Shimoshima between Tomioka and Ushibuka. I stuck my nose into the entrance but didn't go far in and didn't stop. It looked attractive and well-sheltered. Although there is extensive aquaculture (shown on NPS but not on Navionics or C-MAP), the chart would suggest various places to anchor and JCFB shows one current pin and two old pins in Sakitsu-Ura Harbor/Sakitsu Fishing Port. One of the old pins is most likely a fishing boat fuel dock, so may not be possible.

Ushibuka

Sea Station: 32° 11'.6N 130° 01'.5E

Ushibuka is an attractive town on the southern tip of Amakusa-Shimoshima, suffering, sadly, from rapid population decline. The approach from the west is tricky, involving, in addition to a narrow channel, a 19m powerline, 16m bridge (neither of these heights is shown on Navionics) and 17m bridge. The easier approach is from the east.

There are two main options for mooring in Ushibuka. The first is the fishing harbor on the N shore just east of the 18m Ushibuka Haiya bridge which leads to the inner harbor. The walls were crowded with fishing boats when I took a look and the wall did not look very easy. The better alternative, if you can clear the 18m bridge, is to go a little further west and moor on the Sea Station pontoon on the N side, just W of the bridge. This is in an attractive inner harbor in the village-y centre of Ushibuka, with fish shops, restaurants, etc. nearby.

Yachts can use either side of the pontoon. The tide swirls around the pontoon and there is not a lot of turning room on the E side; there is wash from passing fishing boats too. But other than these minor factors, it is a good pontoon: power at the dock; water from a tap at the Sea Station office where you pay (orange awning at the head of the pontoon). Inexpensive. The Eneos gas station on the E side of the inner harbor is convenient and very helpful. There is a Yanmar service station at the fishing harbor (a short walk) and a marine machine shop at the inner harbor. There is a large YouMe supermarket (conspic on the way in from the east) near the fishing harbor. PO. Good restaurants and izakayas. Lovely walk in the park above the town.

All the remaining notes are from 2024

From Ushibuka to the SW tip of Kyushu

Heading south from Ushibuka, one can either go down the Kyushu mainland shore or head out to the Koshikijima group of islands, where there are two principal harbors: *Sato, in the north-east, and Teuchi in the south. Teuchi and Shimokoshikijima were a high-point stop for an American friend of mine during his cruise in Japan. Kirk Patterson organizes a very unique island tour and experience with a fisherman here.*

Akune

Pontoon: 32° 01'.2N 130° 11'.5E

On the mainland, there is a pontoon at the Akune sea station. The entrance can be approached from either N or S. From the N, care must be taken between two shallow patches in between Oshima, to the SW, and tiny Koshima, to the NE, which create a short channel running SSE.

Although Akune is a sea station the facilities are rather basic. The basin is fairly large and although it looks well protected, it can get quite rough in strong winds and the movement of the pontoon becomes quite violent. N through E to SE are the best-protected wind directions; S through SW to W are the worst. The surrounding harbor area is a bit rundown.

The pontoon is short (about 10m), which is fine for smaller boats but would be tricky for larger ones. Yachts can moor on either side and a reservation is required (though I imagine that if the pontoon was empty, it would be fine without). Register at the Eneos gas station on the main road. There is Japanese-style WC on the way to the main road and a rather better one at the back of the Eneos station. 3,000 yen per night for 35', which I thought was expensive for the facilities, by Japanese standards.

On a brighter note, the Akune city council member and sea station organizer, Junichi Shiraishi, is extremely welcoming and helpful (and likes to dance the samba); +81 90 6520 3885 and pe4young@i.softbank.jp I needed to do a small repair at Akune and Jun put me in touch with a shipwright, Zosen Toya, who was also beyond helpful (+81 99 6721 1442).

Continuing the good news, there are two onsens nearby, one salt water only and the other salt and fresh (take your own soap and shampoo). There is a good supermarket nearby and a Family Mart conbini (whose ATM, unusually, does not accept foreign debit cards) as well as a drug store beyond the Eneos station. Coin laundry; lots of restaurants.

Kushikino Fisharina

31° 42'.3N 130° 16'.2E

This is a very well-protected marina, run by a fishing cooperative, that offers good shelter from typhoons and is very nice. The entrance is south of all the commercial ports and can be hard to make out from seaward, as can the pole on Mitsu Se, SW of the harbor entrance. The entrance is at the point where the high, plain concrete breakwater changes to a patchwork of small squares like giant abandoned Rubik's cubes. Once in between the huge outer breakwaters, turn hard to starboard around the red light and the marina is in the south-easternmost basin. The visitors' dock is the W side of the first finger pontoon. The fisharina itself does not offer a lot of facilities but the town behind it has many services, restaurants, etc. Good value at 1,240 yen per night for 35'. The office is upstairs in the harbor building. Reservation required.

Kasasa

Entrance: 31° 25'.3N 130° 08'.4E

This used to be a useful stopping point on the north side and nearly at the tip of the western Kagoshima peninsula. There was a pontoon here which is no longer available to yachts. There is a wall which appears to be an alternative but we were told by the harbor office that most yachts go to Kataura instead now (and Kataura doesn't offer much, so the Kasasa option must be unappealing indeed). Source: local sailors and harbor office.

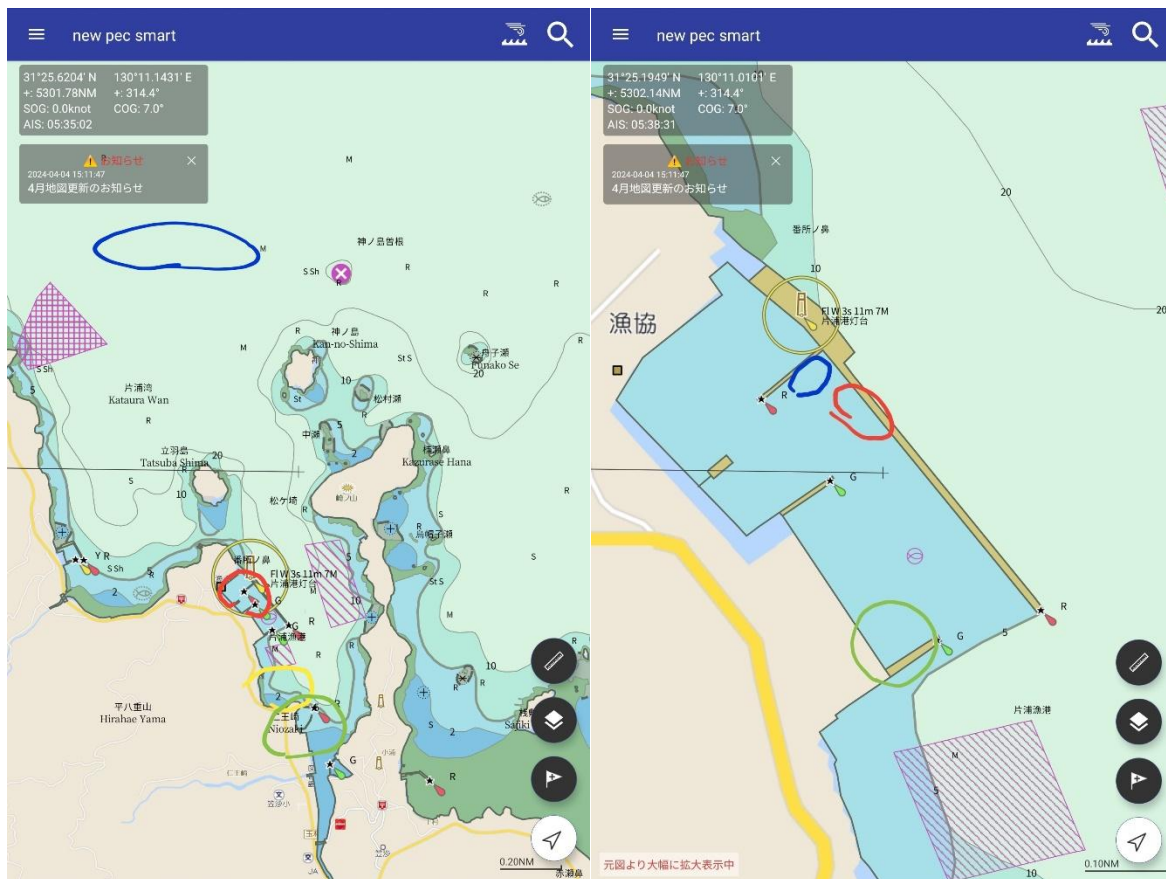
Kataura

31° 25'.2N 130° 11'.0E

A short distance further E from Kasasa is the fishing harbor of Kataura on the W side of a deep inlet. There is uncharted aquaculture N of Tatsubashima off the entrance to the bay, as well as more aquaculture in the bay shown on NPS. The approach is straightforward, though northerly winds blow right into the bay. Access to the harbor is from the S.

The basin offers adequate protection except from SE-S. We were told by the Kasasa harbor office to moor on a NE-SW wall on the E side of the harbor, behind a blue tugboat. This wall was very difficult to approach in a strong N'ly and the wall was very high at LW. Instead, we moored on the outer breakwater wall which runs SE-NW on the E side of the basin before you reach the tugboat's wall. We were not allowed to moor alongside the fishing boat pontoon. There is another wall in the S corner of the outer basin which might be better in a W'ly. No facilities of any sort.

The problem with our spot was that at high tide, the wall was slightly awash, so the boat rode up too high and it was difficult to keep her fendered off. Next time, particularly if the weather was bad, I would consider anchoring in a small bay just south of the aquaculture immediately S of the fishing harbor entrance; or, perhaps better still, investigate the small fishing harbor a short distance S of the main harbor (marked Niozaki on NPS; immediately N of Kasasa Park on Google Maps), which looked good on an inspection from land. There is a boatyard here.



Left: blue circle = approximate position of aquaculture; red circle = main fishing harbor; yellow circle = possible anchoring spot; green circle = Niozaki fishing harbor
Right: blue circle = tugboat spot; red circle = Plainsong's problematic spot; green circle = possible alternative in W'y wind
Images from new pec smart

Makurazaki

Wall: 31° 16'.1N 130° 17'.6E

Around the corner, on the S side of the western Kagoshima peninsula, is the medium-size town of Makurazaki. It is famous for making bonito flakes which give a slight scent to the town, but not in an unpleasant way.

From offshore, the Tagaomi Se pinnacle rock is a good landmark for the approach to the harbor. The approach is easy as you wind through enormous breakwaters past the commercial wharfs. The mooring spot is the long N wall of the inner basin which runs slightly NW-SE. There are convenient steps just SE of a long white-roofed fish processing plant. The basin is quite big and could be quite a fetch in strong winds.

There is a fishing boat chandlery on the wharf (white building, red sign, red and blue lettering). Fuel nearby. Two onsens, one alongside the Ocean Hotel, about 20 minutes walk. Coin laundry, combinis, all the services of a small town. Good izakaya up the incline just behind the wharf at the mooring spot.

South from Kyushu

Iojima, Kagoshima (not to be confused with Iojima, Nagasaki, above)

30° 46'.8N 130° 16'.8E

This is a lovely island with a steaming volcano close above the harbor. The harbor itself is a huge caldera with high cliffs on its W and N sides and the lower slopes of the volcano to the E. It is open to the S other than its breakwaters. The peninsula that runs S from the SW corner of the harbor should be given a wide berth to avoid awash rocks off its SE corner.

The harbor offers good shelter except, I imagine, from the S. There are a couple of mooring options. The first is the E wall of the outer harbor, in front of a row of low buildings. The best spot on this wall, at least for *Plainsong* (draft <2m), was in front of a café (blue lettering) where the wall is free of shells and the vertical fending does not extend out too far. But the minimum depth is only about 9' here and the wall is quite high at low tide. And besides this, there are a couple of other problems with this spot: there are hollows in the wall into which the fenders disappear at LW, bringing the topside close to the wall; and you have to move when the ferry comes in (once a day in the middle of the day when we were there in early February). It might be possible to move further forward into the east inner basin on the E wall, but NPS shows depths of less than 2m here.

The other option is the west inner harbor, where the minimum depth is 6m. This was crowded with fishing boats when I was there, but we met a gentleman-fisherman in the café during the evening who said that we could lie alongside his large fishing boat (since we were leaving early the next morning we didn't need to). If you want to pursue this option, it would be worth

starting with the town official who will come to visit and register you into the harbor (no charge). If this doesn't lead anywhere, it would be worth asking in the café (which serves as a pub during the evening).

Another very salient feature of this harbor is that the water is stained brown from the volcanic minerals that wash into it. The brown spreads from the wall onto your fenders and topsides and everywhere... Some sailors (Kirk) don't like it for this reason. But the brown washes off easily enough and I thought the island was quite fascinating. There is an open air onsen east of the harbor after a walk through the woods.

Bottom line: you have to work for it at this Iojima but I thought it was worth it.

South of Iojima there is the even more fantastic island of Yakushima, a high volcanic mountain with many microclimates, tumbling rivers, deep forests and 3,000 year-old cedar trees.

Miyanoura, Yakushima
Inner pool: 30° 25'.8N 130° 34'.2E

Miyanoura is the commercial hub and main port for Yakushima. It is very convenient for all facilities, rental cars for sightseeing, etc. For boats drawing less than about 2m, the place to go is a small pool in the SW corner of the harbor (green circle in the image below). The port manager told me that he normally directs deeper-draft boats to the long wall east of this (red line); but this is an industrial wharf and would not be nearly so pleasant or convenient.



Miyanoura, Yakushima

The inner pool is a wall tie on wall SW wall which is empty in the photo. The depth is less than 2m at LWS springs. With 1.8m draft, we went aground (as anticipated) for 30 minutes either side of a -0.3m LWS tide; the tides on either side of this were not as low and we didn't touch again.

The pool is well sheltered. There are concrete steps at the more southerly end of the wall. We were moved on from here because a commercial boat needed to use them; we went to the NW corner (similar depths) where there was a stainless steel ladder (which mysteriously disappeared one night during our stay – was it a message?!). No reservation needed and it is free, but you may be visited by the port manager who just comes to check you out and possibly take your boat details.

There is a supermarket, coin laundry and fuel very close to the inner pool. WC in the park next to the pool and posh ones in the cultural center nearby (large white building; wifi). Water by hose from the taps in the park WC. Small-scale trash disposal in the Cosmo Lines blue and white building just before the bright green jetfoil pier on the other side of the main harbor.

Good restaurants all over town, and particularly in the area in the blue circle on the photo (my faves: sushi at Wakadaisho, second street to the left before the bridge; and a modern izakaya called Panorama on the same street, owned by Toshihiro (Tosh) Fujimori, who owns one of the small boats moored permanently in the inner pool; Pasta Slow beyond the airport is also nice, but it's a car ride away). Good sento overlooking the river over the bridge and to the right.

The sightseeing and hiking on Yakushima are great, but much easier with a rental car. Yakasugi Museum and Land is a good starting point.

Isso, Yakushima

Entrance: 30° 27'.4N 130° 29'.5E

The other option (which I only visited by car) is Isso, at the northern tip of Yakushima. The harbor is on the W side of a very attractive bay with wooded hillsides and a beach. Kirk Patterson told me, however, that in strong northerlies the swell bounces back off the SW shore of the bay and into the fishing harbor, making the outer pool uncomfortable or worse; the middle pool would be better but not immune from the swell; the innermost pool is full of fishing boats.

The mooring spots are the N or W walls in the outer basin; or in the middle pool, the W wall or the S side of the N wall on the E side. The WC is at the NW corner of the harbor, nearest to the W wall of the outer basin (big gray building).

The pleasant village of Isso is small with (so far as I could tell) limited facilities: PO, bakery (smelled great), small grocery was all that I found on foot. It is about 15 minutes by car from Miyanoura.

So it's a toss-up: Isso is very nice if you don't need many services close to hand and there isn't a northerly swell; Miyanoura is very useful for services but not a great mooring spot if you draw more than 2m.

Amami Oshima

Amami Oshima is a large island south of Yakushima. Immediately S of Amami Oshima is Kakeromajima and a number of other smaller islands. The water between Amami Oshima and Kakeromajima is called Amami Seto. Collectively, they make a lovely mini-cruising ground, with lovely scenery, sheltered bays and many more anchoring possibilities than is typical in Japan. We worked our way from N to S but there are many places we didn't visit, especially on the S side of Kakeromajima. Here are the ones we did go to.

Tatsugo Wan

Anchorage: 28° 26'.1N 129° 37'.0E

At the NW corner of Amami Oshima there is a series of deep bays entered through Kasari Wan. I anchored at the entrance to Tatsugo Wan in an unnamed bay S of Imatoku Yama (NPS) and E of Tegra Sai (Navionics). It was a peaceful and picturesque bay with just a couple of houses and decent shelter from most directions but rather exposed to the N. The wind might accelerate over the hill and down over the anchorage in a strong S'y.

Entering, keep the NE point fairly close then steer for the pier at the head of the bay, approx 180°M. Anchor in 20-30'. There are various shallower patches on either side. Holding seemed to be fine. No facilities.

There are many other possibilities in this series of bays. I took a look at Akaogi Wan but the S'y wind was whistling over the low isthmus to the S. There is a fishing harbor on the E shore of Akakino Ko (28° 27'.7N 129° 40'.3E) but I didn't see a great deal to recommend it over an anchorage and did not moor there.

Naze

28° 23'.9N 129° 29'.8E

Naze is Amami Oshima's main town. It is pleasant enough, has all facilities and a very good museum of local history right by the boat harbor. The Tanaka Isson Museum a car ride away in the NE of the island is very good as well. We found people very friendly in Naze.

The Coast Guard has a reputation for being much more inquisitive here than elsewhere; this was true for us. We had to fill in General Declarations on arrival and departure and they wanted to keep in touch with us in each harbor after that until we sailed south for Okinawa. I think that if we had not had Japanese speakers on board they probably wouldn't have asked us to phone in the whole time. But they were friendly and only concerned for our safety.

Naze entrance is well lit and easy day or night. The normal mooring place is a boat harbor on the W side of the bay just inside the entrance (green circle in the image below). There are several basins within this boat harbor and the trick is finding an empty spot. Visitors often go to the W wall of the S-most basin, but this was largely filled by a powerboat when we were there. We found a spot in the next basin N instead, on the W wall just S of the whale-watching boats, though we were told that the spot was empty only because the boat that is normally there was

out of the water for maintenance. You basically have to take a look, keep your fingers crossed and hope for the best.

The alternative, if the boat harbor is full, is the next basin to the S, W of the Coast Guard pier (red circle). It was almost empty when we were there but perhaps for a reason: the wall has deep hollows into which one's fenders would disappear. This basin and the approach outside it show as unsurveyed on NPS but the basin is in fact deeper than the normal boat harbor.

Naze has all services, supermarket, restaurants, etc. Eneos will deliver fuel to the boat harbor by truck.



Naze; image from new pec smart

Uken

28° 16'.7N 129° 17'.7E

Uken (which I only visited by car) is at the head of a deep bay, Yakiuchi Wan, at the western point of Amami Oshima. The mooring spot is a rather exposed wall with a long fetch from the W. I wouldn't want to be on this wall unless the wind was off the land. Behind it is a pleasant small town, but with some industrial activity. Not a must-see, I felt, and there are probably nicer anchoring spots elsewhere in Yakiuchi Wan.

Amami Seto

This is a lovely stretch of sheltered water with many anchoring possibilities. There is a lot of aquaculture (including large pens for tuna), very little of which is shown on Navionics; you really need NPS here. One of the intriguing bays is a former World War II kamikaze motorboat base; only the tunnels where the boats were hidden remain today (28° 07'.4N 129° 15'.9E). The tide floods to the west (at least in the E half of the channel).

Atestu

28° 11'.3N 129° 17'.3E

An attractive and well-sheltered bay on the N side of Amami Seto, with one (not two as shown on the charts) huge Coast Guard typhoon mooring buoy in its center (lit Y). The anchoring depths are quite deep - >20m in many places. There are shallower depths in the NE corner in front of the houses, but beware of lines on the bottom. Mud.

There are private moorings in the SE corner of the bay which can be used with prior permission. Contact Yasuo Kasai, +81 90 4778 1867.

Koniya

28° 08'.7N 129° 18'.6E

Koniya is a very pleasant small town on the Amami Oshima shore towards the E end of Amami Seto. It has an Umi no Eki in a narrow basin which provides pretty good shelter but which gets almost dangerously rough if a swell comes in from the E or SE (but you can put lines across to the N side of the basin to keep yourself off the S wall, where the mooring spots are). No reservations and it is free, but register at the office upstairs in the Umi no Eki building (which is also the ferry terminal). 500 yen for unlimited water. WC but no showers.

From seaward, the entrance is hard to make out, because it runs E-W in a long stretch of E-W wharf. The identifier is the Koniya Coral Bridge, a semi-circular arch girder bridge with two spans. The entrance to the sea station is a sharp turn to port right in front of its left-hand arch. There is a small yellow sign at the entrance.

NPS and Navionics show very shallow depths at the entrance and the standard advice is to go in at HW or at least on a rising tide. However, the shallows do not extend as far as the charts suggest. If you hold the E face of the wharf very close to port as you approach the entrance and then turn very sharply to port to enter the basin, there is a least depth of about 5m at LWS.

The basin itself is long and narrow (about 20m across), with room for three or four boats on the S wall but ladders only at the E and W ends. It would be difficult to turn a large boat inside the basin, at least with my level of skill. Depths inside the basin are about the same as in the approach, but the N side shelves slightly close to the N wall. The S wall is clean and not too high.

Stores, restaurants, etc. in town. Nice but expensive sento at Sauna & Stay.

Doren

28° 06'.8N 129° 20'.3E

A sailor in Naze suggested various other places in Amami Seto to us but, having taken a look, I wasn't very impressed with a couple of them so am not including them in these notes. I did take a look at a pontoon at Doren in the most easterly bay on Kakeromajima, however, which looked viable. It is sheltered from NE through S or SW. The bay is pleasant and there are good walks.

The pontoon is not shown on Navionics. NPS shows the pontoon in depths of 2m but approaching we found 7m one boat-length from the pontoon (we didn't go closer). The longer NW side of the pontoon would be the easier.

Another, intriguing place suggested by the Naze sailor was an anchorage between two islands, Ukeshima and Kiyamashima, S of Kakeromajima at 28° 01'.5N 129° 16'.2E.

We had to skip the islands in between Amami Oshima and Okinawa, but there are mooring options here too.

Okinawa

There are two big marinas on Okinawa: Ginowan, a little bit N of downtown Naha, Okinawa's big city at the SW end of the island (26° 16'.7N 127° 43'.5E); and Yonabaru, on the E side. I only visited Ginowan Marina by car. It looked pretty crowded when I was there and the facilities were OK but not wow. It is more convenient for Naha than Yonabaru, for sure, but even so, it is quite a long way north of downtown in a rather un-cozy convention center area. It did not make me regret going to Yonabaru.

Yonabaru, Okinawa

Visitor dock: 26° 12'.4N 127° 46'.0E

Yonabaru Marina lies at the W end of Nakagusuku Wan, a deep bay at the SE corner of Okinawa, across the island from Naha. Coming from the N, the entrance to the outer bay, Tachii Kuchi, is wide and buoyed. There is a well-marked shallow patch between Tachii Kuchi and Yonabaru. Coming from or going to the S, the S entrance to the bay, Kudaka Kuchi, though much narrower, is fine, though beware of a shallow patch NW of the channel before turning W for Yonabaru.

The marina entrance is hard to see from seaward. The huge white structure of the boat lift is a good clue, but the actual entrance is S of this. Although not shown on the chart, the entrance is lit (fl R) and could be entered at night. There is plenty of room and turning space inside the marina, which is in a series of basins. The visitor dock is in the far N corner of the marina itself, to the right of the boat lift and in front of the low marina office building.

When I first arrived at this marina I thought it was a bit bleak. But after nearly three weeks, I really liked it. It is a full-service marina, so it is priced accordingly. Although it is a bit awkward

for getting into Naha, the surrounding town is pleasant and the whole place is pretty quiet. It is a very convenient place to clear in or clear out of Japan and all the officials are used to dealing with foreign yachts.

All stores, laundry, etc. are conveniently nearby, including a decent supermarket. There is a slightly better/larger supermarket 3.4km away at San-A-Nishihara, where there is also a taxi rank (calling a taxi to the marina, even using the Go app, can take a long time). The options for getting to Naha are: bicycle (doable but it's winding and there is a hill in the way); bus (though I never figured exactly how); bike or taxi to Shuri monorail station; or taxi all the way.

A few recommendations:

- Agarihama Brewery, a short walk from the marina
- The sushi store above it (reservations essential)
- Shuri Castle
- Shuri Oppa gelato and coffee on the other side of the main road not far from the Castle and Beans tofu restaurant next door to it!
- The Shuri Textile Museum a short distance up the road (E) from here
- Okinawa Prefectural Museum, which has very interesting history of the Ryukyu Islands
- Urasoe Museum north of downtown Naha, which has an interesting though not very extensive collection of lacquerware
- Apeman Spa (really), an expensive but very nice onsen 7km from Yonabaru
- *I was told that Zamamijima and its surrounding islands, a short distance W from Naha, are a lovely cruising ground (source: local sailors and foreign cruisers).*

Clearing in or out of Japan

Whether heading S from or N to southernmost Japan, the question is where to do the official clearance. **Yonabaru is certainly a viable option; it is very convenient. The marina at Naha, on the W side of the main island of Okinawa, is another. The other possible islands are Ishigaki or Miyakojima, SW of Okinawa. Of these, Ishigaki is the more commonly used, partly because it is the furthest S (and nearest to Taiwan), which is particularly useful on N-bound trips making the most of the Kuroshio Current (not so much on the southbound trip – see the next section).**

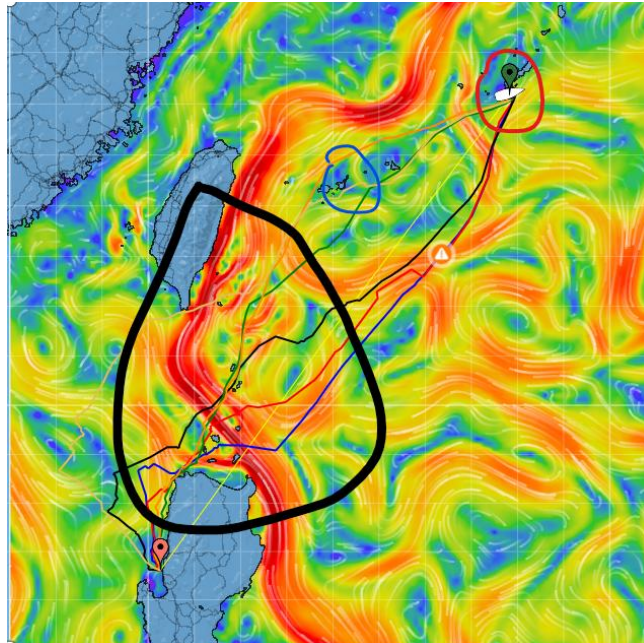
PASSAGE NOTES

JAPAN TO THE PHILIPPINES

Sailing south

Besides the weather, the big questions for this passage are where to clear out of, whether to stop in Taiwan and how to deal with the Kuroshio Current. I gave serious thought to clearing out from Ishigaki, which would have set me up for Taiwan or shortened the direct passage to the Philippines by a couple of days, but in the end decided to clear out from Yonabaru instead. My logic, which wouldn't necessarily apply under all weather scenarios, was this:

- If we had stopped in Taiwan, we would have got more entangled in the Kuroshio, having to cross it at least twice and perhaps three times. And off the E coast of Taiwan the current was more contrary (NNE-flowing) than where we crossed it more or less at right angles in the Bashi Channel
- I found the officialdom for Taiwan difficult to overcome (I tried to set up just-in-case entry permission, got bogged down in difficult websites and gave up once I had decided not to go there anyway; but a friend recommends Houbihu Marina at Kenting, as does Jo Winter (RCC) in *South China Sea*)
- Although there is a lot of sense in waiting for the right weather window in Ishigaki, we got a good forecast from Okinawa and did not feel that we needed to wait for a better one
- Kirk Patterson's Konpira colleague Akiko Honma in Yonabaru is fantastic and made the clearance process so easy it was hard (no, impossible) to resist. (*Kirk does have another colleague in Ishigaki.*)



Kuroshio considerations (black circle) from Okinawa (red circle, top right) or Ishigaki (blue circle) via Taiwan or not. Source: PredictWind's ocean data, May 15, 2024

The other question, given these decisions, was how to transit the Luzon Strait. Looking at weather forecasts over time in the spring, the NE and E'ly winds that prevail when we were making the passage (March) tended to accelerate through the Strait. What was usually a 'green' wind on Windy.com out in the Pacific generally became a 'yellow' or 'orange' wind in the Luzon Strait – i.e. it went from 10-20kts to 20-30 kts. So the weather window became especially important for this part of the passage.

As discussed above, the Kuroshio was another major factor here, along with shipping and the effect of current and tide among the various islands south of Taiwan and north of Luzon. The charts show all manner of tide rips and overfalls among the islands. Because of all this, I decided to take the central Bashi Channel, which worked out fine. There was shipping but it wasn't unduly heavy; the sea state was fine; we crossed the Kuroshio in pretty much the shortest way possible; and we always had the Batanes Islands nearby in case we needed a bolt hole (Basco in the Batanes is a possible port of refuge, though not an official port of entry).

Sailing north

Sailing north from the Philippines, the answer might be completely different, because (whether one stopped in Taiwan or not) one could take the favorable Kuroshio for longer by staying closer to Taiwan and then clearing in at Ishigaki. Depending on the season, this might also give a better wind angle on NE or E'ly winds for the longer passage than heading direct to Okinawa, leaving just an overnight or two from Ishigaki or Miyakojima to Okinawa.

HARBOR TEMPLATE

In many harbors in Japan you are asked to fill in a form or provide various bits of information about the boat and its crew when you arrive. Even though the information is simple, language is often quite a barrier in these places, especially the smaller ones. On the next page there is a sheet that covers all of the items I have been asked for. I have found that filling in this table in advance and giving a copy to the harbor official saves some language struggles, since it contains pretty much everything they are likely to need. Translation (possibly faulty) by Microsoft Translator.

Full name フルネーム	
Address 住所	
Phone number 電話番号	
Yacht name ヨット名	
Yacht length (m) ヨットの長さ(m)	
Tonnes トン	
National registration (country & number) 国名登録(国番号)	
Last port 最後のポート	
Next port 次のポート	
Date & time of arrival 到着日時	
Date & time of departure 出発日時	
Number of crew 乗組員数	