

Reading and Talking

Let's stay at an "oshiro" castle!

Ozu Castle (大洲城) is in Ehime Prefecture, about 60 kilometers from Matsuyama. This summer, it became the first castle in Japan that is also a hotel. A one-night stay for two people costs one million yen (¥1,000,000). When you arrive, you are welcomed with flags and music. You can wear kimonos or "kacchuu" samurai armor. You also watch traditional "kagura" dance, and you hear the noise of old guns. Ozu Castle was built in 1331 (Genkou 1). It was knocked down in 1888 (Meiji 21), but the "tenshukaku" castle tower was rebuilt 16 years ago.

(103 words)

What do you think about a million-yen stay at a castle hotel?

↳ I think it's great. / I think it's OK. / I think it's terrible. (--How come you think so? / Do you think it's going to be popular? / Do you want to stay at Ozu castle? / Have you ever traveled to Ehime Prefecture?)

Have you traveled somewhere recently?

↳ Yes, I have. (--When and where did you go? / How long did you go for? / Who did you go with? / How was the trip? / Do you want to go somewhere this autumn?)

↳ No, I haven't. (--Did you go on a day trip last year or the year before last? / What is the best place that you have ever visited in Japan? / Do you like going for a drive?)

Which do you like better, staying at a modern hotel or staying at a traditional "ryokan" inn?

↳ I like both. (--What is the best hotel or ryokan that you have ever stayed at?)

↳ I like [XXX] better. / It depends. (--Have you ever stayed at a capsule hotel?)

↳ I don't like either. (--If you travel, what kind of place do you stay at?)

(August 21, 2020)

More information

Let's stay at a castle!

Castles, large and small, original and reconstructed, are popular tourist destinations in Japan. All are picturesque, most are open to the public, but none offered overnight stays. Until now.

When Ozu Castle (大洲城) in Ehime Prefecture opened its doors as an exclusive hotel this summer, it became the first castle in Japan to do so. A one-night stay for two people sets you back a million yen (¥1,000,000), and ¥100,000 per additional person for up to four extra guests per party. Just one party of guests is accepted each night. When you arrive, you are welcomed by celebratory banners and the sound of a “horagai” shell trumpet. You have the option of dressing in kimonos or “kacchuu” samurai armor. As well as a bath and dinner, there is entertainment that includes a performance of traditional “kagura” dance, and a demonstration firing of historic rifles.

Ozu Castle was built in 1331 (Genkou 1). It was demolished in 1888 (Meiji 21), but a wooden reconstruction of the four-tiered “tenshukaku” castle tower was completed 16 years ago. The historic town of Ozu is about 60 kilometers from Matsuyama, the capital of Ehime.

(200 words)

(August 21, 2020)

Reading and Talking

“Ayu” and eyesight

Gifu Prefecture is famous for “ayu” sweetfish. Now a study group at Gifu Pharmaceutical University has found that the skin of sweetfish from the Nagaragawa River in Gifu has a lot of zeaxanthin. Zeaxanthin is a chemical that helps your eyes. The plants that grow in the Nagaragawa River are full of zeaxanthin. Sweetfish may eat these plants to protect their eyes from the blue light from the sun. Blue light also comes from computer screens, smartphone screens and TVs, so eating sweetfish can protect human eyesight, too.

(94 words)

Have you ever eaten a grilled “ayu” sweetfish?

↳Yes, I have. (--Did you eat the head of the fish? / Did you like it? / Have you ever eaten “ayumeshi” rice cooked with sweetfish?)

↳No, I haven't. (--Have you ever eaten a grilled “masu” trout? / Do you like “nizakana” simmered fish? / Do you like “yakizakana” grilled fish?)

Have you ever been to the Nagaragawa River to see “ukai” cormorant fishing?

↳Yes, I have. (--When did you go? / Who did you go with? / How was it? / Did you have an “ayu” sweetfish dinner there?)

↳No, I haven't. (--Do you want to see it? / Have you ever been to the Hida-Takayama area? / Do you know Gifu's “tsukemono” pickled vegetable steak?)

Can you “sakana o sanmai ni orosu” clean and fillet a fish?

↳Yes, I can. / Kind of. (--Where did you learn to do it? / Do you have a “deba” knife? / Have you ever cleaned and filleted a salmon or a “buri” yellowtail?)

↳No, I can't. (--Do you want to learn how to clean and fillet a fish? / Do you like cooking? / Are you good at fine-chopping cabbage?)

(August 21, 2020)

More information

“Ayu” and eyesight

Certain fish are associated with certain seasons. Summer in Japan means “anago” conger eel, “hamo” daggertooth pike conger, “kisu” whiting, and “tachiuo” largehead hairtail. The most iconic of these is “ayu” sweetfish. Now new research suggests that eating sweetfish is good for your eyesight.

Gifu Prefecture is famous for sweetfish, and a research group at Gifu Pharmaceutical University found that sweetfish from the Nagaragawa River are rich in zeaxanthin. Zeaxanthin is a chemical that maintains and improves eyesight. The algae that grow in the river contain a lot of zeaxanthin, and these algae are an important part of the diet of the sweetfish. Zeaxanthin protects the eyes from blue light, which is the kind of light that is projected from computer screens, smartphone screens and TVs. Because blue light from the sun penetrates water and reaches where sweetfish live, the researchers think that the fish absorb the chemical to protect their eyesight.

The greatest concentration of zeaxanthin is found in the skin of sweetfish, especially the parts with yellow pigment. If you don't like salt-grilled sweetfish because of their bitter intestines, some vegetables such as bell peppers, corn, and spinach also contain the chemical.

(199 words)

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