

Shimoda aquarium opened in 1967. Here you can see the circular ship Aqua Dome "PERRY".



# Enjoy Interacting with Dolphins at Shimoda Aquarium

Mt. Fuji rises almost in the center of the Japanese archipelago, and to the south, jutting out into the Pacific Ocean, is the Izu Peninsula. The Shimoda aquarium, located in Shimoda City at the tip of the peninsula, offers a variety of ways to interact with dolphins, as well as many fun and educational facilities. At this aquarium, visitors can experience sea creatures up close.

(Text: MOROHASHI Kumiko)

Shimoda City is in Shizuoka Prefecture and is where Shimoda aquarium is located. This city is at the tip of the Izu Peninsula, a warm region surrounded by sea and mountains. Within 140 km of central Tokyo, it is possible to make a one-day trip by Shinkansen or limited express train.

Shimoda is a historic port town, having been the first port in Japan to open<sup>1</sup> in 1854. It is a popular tourist destination with a nostalgic atmosphere and rich natural surroundings.

YASUDA Kenta works at Shimoda aquarium in port town of Shimoda. He told us about the special features of the facility.

"The Aquarium is one of the few aquariums in Japan to utilize a natural cove (Waka-no-Ura) as part of its facilities. This cove has a surface area of 18,000 square meters, where dolphins and other creatures can be seen living freely. The main exhibition space is a circular ship tied up in the cove called Aqua Dome "PERRY". There are 10,000 organisms of 50 species, including



The world's only underwater sea lion show

Photo: ISHIZAWA Yoji

fish, invertebrates, and seaweed, on display in this reproduction of the undersea environment of the Izu Peninsula and its surroundings. At Umimeguri, a marine creature museum of Izu's marine life, creatures that live in the waters around Izu are also on display. Visitors can see the features of the shimmering water, fish, and coral up close here, made easier to see by the



Photo: SHIZAWA Yoji

You can feed and interact with the dolphins in the cove.



Photo: SHIZAWA Yoji

Visitors can interact with dolphins when they come to the shallows at Dolphin Beach

use of lighting.”

Major features of Shimoda aquarium include its extensive shows and programs for interacting with animals. In particular, the aquarium offers the world’s only underwater sea lion show, as well as a variety of programs that allow visitors to enjoy direct contact with dolphins.

“This is the first aquarium in Japan to offer direct contact with dolphins. In addition to the Dolphin Feeding program, where visitors can feed and interact with dolphins, and the Dolphin School program, where visitors can learn about dolphin ecology, the dolphins’ big jumps are also very popular.”

Aquarium staff pay special attention to the breeding of popular dolphins and other animals.

“We thoroughly manage the

health of the living creatures we keep, including regularly taking their temperatures and conducting blood tests. We also conduct daily inspections of the facilities where the animals are kept. We pay the utmost attention to the physical condition of the animals, as the purpose of our hands-on programs is to exhibit to the public the various outstanding abilities that the animals possess.”

There is an English website for visitors from overseas, and as more and more overseas visitors are participating in the dolphin hands-on program, aquarium staff use a small interpreting device to communicate with visitors in English.

“In our hands-on programs, you are very close to the creatures so that you can see their minute expressions and movements up close. This aquarium is interactive. If you visit, I hope you can interact with creatures that you aren’t normally able to come into contact with,” Yasuda emphasized. **7**

1. In 1853, a fleet of American ships led by Commodore Matthew Perry arrived in Shimoda, and with the signing of the Japan-US Treaty of Peace and Amity (in 1854), the port became the first in Japan to be opened to the world.



Photo: SHIZAWA Yoji

The ocean stage makes use of a cove, and here, visitors can see jumping dolphins.