

A Photogenic Roadside Station on Japan's Olive Island



A Greek windmill on a hill overlooking the sea, the symbol of Roadside Station.

Shodoshima Island in Kagawa Prefecture is the birthplace of olive cultivation in Japan. There is a roadside station on this island that attracts many visitors because of its wonderful photo opportunities. We interviewed a staff person there. (Text: Tanaka Nozomi)



This monument to a book on the history of olive cultivation is another popular photo spot.

Shodoshima, an island with an area of about 153km² located in the Seto Inland Sea in Kagawa Prefecture, is known as the birthplace of olive cultivation in Japan. The roadside station Shodoshima Olive Park is here, too. We asked staff person Yamamoto about the appeal of this roadside station. “The symbol of the roadside station is a Greek windmill on a hill overlooking the sea. It was built as a sign of friendship with the Greek island of Milos, which has a sister island relationship with Shodoshima. It’s a popular photo spot because the view resembles one of the Mediterranean Sea.” A lot of movie fans



Many people pose for photos of themselves dressed like the movie's main character.



Left: Several varieties of olives are grown at Shodoshima Olive Park. You can enjoy olive oil-infused dishes at the cafe in the roadside station.



Above right: This oil mill had been in use during the olive harvest season. The Mediterranean-style building is also photo-worthy.

Below right: This stone monument to the birthplace of olives in Japan stands on a small hill facing the Seto Inland Sea.



Above: Here, the scenery overlooking the sea is one of the attractions, along with the local Shodoshima cuisine that you can enjoy at the restaurant.

Below: Olive Ramen, with noodles kneaded in olive oil and topped with sliced lemon, is served at the Restaurant Sun Olive in the roadside station.



The set of the main character's shop from the movie *Majo no Takkyūbin* ("Kiki's Delivery Service") is in use as a variety shop.

also come here because the set from the live-action movie *Majo no Takkyūbin* ("Kiki's Delivery Service")¹ was placed here. "In line with the movie theme, we lend out brooms for free. If you mount a broom and jump while taking a picture, it'll look like you're flying on the magic broom. There is also a set of the shop where the main character of the movie worked, so it's a very photo-worthy roadside station."

Olive cultivation began in Japan in 1908 when the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce of the Japanese government at that time imported olive seedlings from the United States. Shodoshima Island was chosen as the site for cultivation because of its warm, and little amount of rainfall climate. Today, the olive is even designated as Kagawa's prefectural flower and tree, and has become a symbol of the prefecture. However, starting in 1965, olive groves began to decline due to various causes. "There were calls to revitalize the island and protect the olives, and the area as the center, which was originally a test olive grove, was developed into Shodoshima Olive Park. In 1996, it was registered as a roadside station, and it has become a tourist highlight that brings in visitors from off the island," says Yamamoto.

The roadside station also includes the Olive

Museum, where you can learn about the history of olive cultivation. It also has an herb garden and a lodging facility, so it has seen an increase in the number of visitors from outside Japan. Olive-related workshops are hosted during the Olive Harvest Festival held each year from October to December, including one where you can experience olive fruits picking and another making soap that uses olive oil. We asked Ms. Yamamoto about the souvenirs available at the local commodity store in the Olive Museum. "Of course, we have Shodoshima olive oil, as well as hand cream with olive oil and other beauty care products that use olives, which are especially popular with women. We also have things like olive soft ice cream and olive cider." She adds, "I also recommend products that you can only find on this island, such as Olive Ramen, as well as a new seasoning Olive Soy Sauce which blend Shodoshima special soy sauce and spices. We have English-speaking staff, so our overseas visitors can shop with ease. We also have Sun Olive, a facility that includes a hot-spring facility and restaurant that overlook the sea. We love welcoming all our visitors from around the world." 

1. A 1989 anime film by Miyazaki Hayao that became a worldwide hit. It's a coming of age story about a witch's apprentice named Kiki. The live-action adaptation was produced in 2014.