

# Promotion Of A New Cycling Culture

## Ehime Prefecture



## Background

When Tokihiro Nakamura took up his post of prefectural governor in November 2010, the first tourist attraction that caught his attention was the picturesque scenery of the many beautiful islands of Setouchi and the web of bridges connecting them. In particular, he focused on the Shimanami Kaido, one of the three bridges between Honshu and Shikoku but the only one on which cyclists can cross.

After a meeting with the founder of the biggest bicycle manufacturer in the world, Giant (Taiwan), he realised that bicycles were not just a means of transport for shopping and commuting to work or school, but could be a part of a new cycling culture that promotes health and friendship and gives purpose to life. This led him to focus on cycling as a core of the efforts to revitalise the region.

Since then, cycling has been used as an opening to increase the number of visitors and generate actual demand. The promotion of policies concerning cycling has been recognised as vital to the prefecture, including policies to prevent traffic accidents through the promotion of safe cycling, and policies regarding the health of residents. In addition, the ideal goal has been divided up into three stages as follows, and this initiative is being implemented in a staged and strategic fashion.

- ◆ Stage 1: Make the Shimanami Kaido a cycling Mecca
- ◆ Stage 2: Make Ehime a cycling paradise
- ◆ Stage 3: Make Shikoku a cycling island

## Project Aims

- ◆ Foster friendships, purpose, and health by increasing prefectural citizens' use of bicycles
- ◆ Increase the number of visitors and revitalise the region by attracting cyclists from both home and abroad

## Project Outline

The prefecture has been making progress in each of the aforementioned stages

- ◆ Stage 1: Make the Shimanami Kaido a sacred place for cyclists
  - Hold international cycling events on the Shimanami Kaido once every two years, restricting traffic on the highway for cycling use (a practice unique within Japan)
  - Create a welcoming environment with rental cycles that can be dropped off at opposite ends of the trip, cycle oases, free Wi-Fi, etc.
  - Training people to be cycle guides, etc.
- ◆ Stage 2: Make Ehime a cycling paradise
  - Create a cycling course within the prefecture, the Ehime Marugoto Cycle Route (28 courses), designated by blue lines painted on the roads
  - Make the second Sunday of November Ehime Cycling Day, and hold cycling events simultaneously throughout the prefecture
  - Hold outreach activities aimed at children, women, seniors, and families such as cycling trial sessions, bicycle safety workshops, etc.
  - Improve user-friendliness for cyclists in coordination

with public transport (cycle trains, buses that allow bicycles, etc.)

- Spread a “share the road” spirit, with the 1.5m Campaign (ensuring a safe distance between cars and bicycles) etc.
- Distribute free helmets to all prefectural high school students, and mandate their use (first initiative of this kind in Japan)
- ◆ Stage 3: Make Shikoku a cycling island
- Set up a 1,000 km circuit route of Shikoku and create road surface pictogram signs in coordination with the national government and the other prefectures of Shikoku (scheduled for completion by the end of FY 2019)
- Register cyclists from home and abroad who hope to do a circuit of Shikoku, and distribute official cycling jerseys and finishing certificates, as part of the year-round Shikoku 1,000 km Circuit Challenge Project
- Get young people to cycle around Shikoku as a commemorative coming of age event and get them to convey the appeal of Shikoku from a young person’s point of view, by carrying out Cycle Shikoku Youth Project
- Recruit hospitality supporters who offer discounts on things like food and lodging to cyclists doing a circuit of Shikoku

## Strengths and Innovations

- ◆ Shimanami Kaido garners overseas and domestic attention among a wealth of tourist attractions as a one-of-a-kind initiative for its use of bicycles
- ◆ A public-private partnership to promote the new cycling culture, called the Association for the Promotion of a New Ehime Cycling Culture was established in 2016. Along with this, the Foundation for the Promotion of a New Ehime Cycling Culture was set up in 2016 to solicit donations from domestic and overseas businesses, to help spread the new cycling culture and to fund international cycling tournaments. As the names suggest, the policies are developed in a system for all of Ehime.

- ◆ As well as promoting regional development, it is also simultaneously promoting safe cycling with the establishment of rules to promote bicycle safety (2013).

## Results of the Project

- ◆ Shimanami Kaido
- It was introduced on America’s CNN as one of the seven best cycling roads in the world. (2014)
- It was selected in the Lonely Planet guidebook’s Top 50 Most Attractive Cycling Routes in the World. (2016)
- The number of total participants in Cycling Shimanami 2018 was 7,215, and there were 701 overseas participants from 26 countries, which was a new record. This was one of the biggest international events in the country.
- The number of bicycle rentals in FY 2017 was about 150,000, which is approximately three times as many as in FY 2010, showing rapid increase.

## Problems, and Responses

- Shimanami Kaido has been recognised globally and the number of domestic and overseas visitors continues to increase, but there is a need for a mechanism to spread this effect throughout Ehime, and the whole of Shikoku.
- Enhance cooperation not just in Shikoku, but also with Kyushu and the Chugoku region

## Future Developments

- Currently, efforts to implement Stage 3, Cycling Island Shikoku are being increased. It is hoped this will positively affect the revitalisation of the region by conveying the attractiveness of Shikoku as a cycling area, continuing to create a welcoming environment, drawing in even more cyclists from home and abroad and increasing the number of visitors, while strengthening cooperation with the

national government, the other prefectures in Shikoku, and private businesses in the region.

## **Reference URL**

Notteru!

Ehime: <https://www.notteru-ehime.jp/>

Ehime Marugoto Cycling Route (multilingual):

<https://ehime-cycling.jp/>

Shikoku cycling circuit (multilingual):

<https://cycling-island-shikoku.com/>

## **Contact**

Administrative office: Ehime Prefecture Cycling

Lifestyle Promotion Division

Telephone number: +81-89-912-2234

Email: [jitenshashinbunka@pref.ehime.lg.jp](mailto:jitenshashinbunka@pref.ehime.lg.jp)