**Shiwaku Islands**

The Shiwaku archipelago is a chain of 28 small islands in the Bisan-Seto Strait between Okayama Prefecture on the main island of Honshu and Kagawa Prefecture on Shikoku. Though most of the islands are uninhabited, the larger ones including Honjima, Hiroshima, Yoshima, and Ushijima host a number of historical and cultural sites. The Shiwakus have been vital for trade and maritime traffic since ancient times. They provided protection from the often-perilous currents of the Bisan-Seto Strait, and supported a community of seafarers and shipbuilders who made a name for themselves throughout the Inland Sea region and beyond. The mariners came to be known as the Shiwaku Navy, while their artisan counterparts were called the Shiwaku Carpenters. Today, these professions have all but disappeared locally, and the decreasing population of the islands is aging. New hope, however, is provided by tourism: several of the islands now co-host the Setouchi Triennale international art festival, which attracts visitors from around the world to the region every three years.