

## Guntu

Since its maiden voyage in 2017, Guntu has become a familiar sight on the Seto Inland Sea. Designed by architect Horibe Yasushi, the compact cruise ship is a floating hotel, an impressive fusion of architecture and shipbuilding that was designed and launched in just two years.

Horibe's early works were primarily residential buildings, and he has clearly applied this experience to the design of Guntu. The ship's 19 cabins, all with sea views, are unlike anything found on a typical cruise ship: with wooden floors, walls, ceilings, and furniture, Guntu's cabins look more like rooms in a *ryokan* (traditional Japanese inn) than on a cruiseliner. The cozy, welcoming atmosphere continues throughout the ship, with other traditional touches including a communal bath made of Japanese cypress, and an *engawa* (Japanese-style wooden veranda) on the top deck. To add to the feeling of staying in a floating Japanese resort, Horibe gave Guntu a gabled wooden roof, ensuring that the ship blends in with the coastal houses and environment along the shore.

Guntu's electric engine is so quiet, and the scenery passes by at such a relaxed pace, it is easy for guests to forget they are on a modern ship at all. Even the vessel's hull has been designed to blend in with its surroundings and is colored silver to best reflect the ambient colors of the sea and sky.

Based at the Bella Vista Marina, Guntu offers cruises lasting one, two, or three nights. The route varies depending on the cruise, but in addition to islands along the Shimanami Kaido, Guntu can travel as far as the waters near Miyajima in Hiroshima Prefecture, near Shodoshima in Kagawa Prefecture, and the Suo-nada Sea in Yamaguchi Prefecture. With a maximum of just 38 passengers, the experience is far more intimate than most cruises. Guntu itself doesn't stop at any ports, but guests can travel to nearby islands on its small tender boats.