

Blue Impulse: Look to the Skies

While in Matsushima, visitors often see (and hear) the planes of the Blue Impulse team zooming overhead as they practice their maneuvers.

The elite members of the Japan Air Self-Defense Force's aerobatic demonstration team pilot six Kawasaki T-4 jets, nicknamed "dolphins" for their rounded shape and blue-and-white design. The team regularly performs daring stunts at airshows and events across Japan. They are best known for their skill at creating smoke designs, such as cherry blossoms, hearts pierced with arrows, and even Olympic rings.

Blue Impulse has regular practices on weekdays at 8:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m., and 1:30 p.m. Visitors are most likely to spot the jets flying over Matsushima Bay at these times. Those who wish to see the jets up close can request a private tour (at least two weeks in advance) from the staff at the Matsushima Air Base or attend the yearly airshow, usually held on the fourth weekend of August.