

Japan 'Cove' town plans dolphin park

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Two dolphins are seen here near the village of Taiji in central Japan. The dolphin-hunting Japanese town of Taiji, made infamous by the Oscar-winning documentary "The Cove", plans to open a marine mammal park where visitors can swim with the creatures, according to a media report.

The dolphin-hunting Japanese town of Taiji, made infamous by the Oscar-winning documentary "The Cove", plans to open a marine mammal park where visitors can swim with the creatures, a media report said.

The town intends to section off part of the cove and turn it into a place where people can swim and kayak alongside small whales and [dolphins](#), Jiji Press news agency reported, calling it "a marine safari park."

The cove is the scene of an annual slaughter when the fishermen of Taiji corral dolphins, select a few dozen for sale to aquariums and marine parks, and stab the rest to death for meat, turning the sea red.

The 2009 film "The Cove" brought Taiji to worldwide attention, winning an Oscar the following year, after showing the bloody slaughter. Activists continue to visit the town to protest the hunt.

Taiji, in western Wakayama prefecture, aims to officially launch the project within five years after negotiating with the prefectural government, which manages the bay, and with pearl farmers operating there, Jiji reported.

The plan, compiled by a panel of residents, calls for the creation of "a whale park" stretching roughly 28 hectares (69 acres) by putting up a net at the entrance to Moriura Bay in northwestern Taiji, it said.

Black whales and [bottlenose dolphins](#) caught in waters near the town would be released into the pool, which would be developed as a nature park that also includes beaches and mudflats, it said.

"We want to send out the message that the town is living together with whales," Taiji Mayor Kazutaka Sangen, was quoted as saying.

The local government will also study whether it is possible to raise large whales there, the agency said, adding it intends to use the park for therapy and [ecological research](#).

The town caught 928 dolphins in 2011, according to Wakayama prefecture.

A town official, who declined to be named, told AFP by telephone that the town "is no way going to stop" its annual dolphin hunt, adding local residents see no contradiction in both watching and eating dolphins.

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