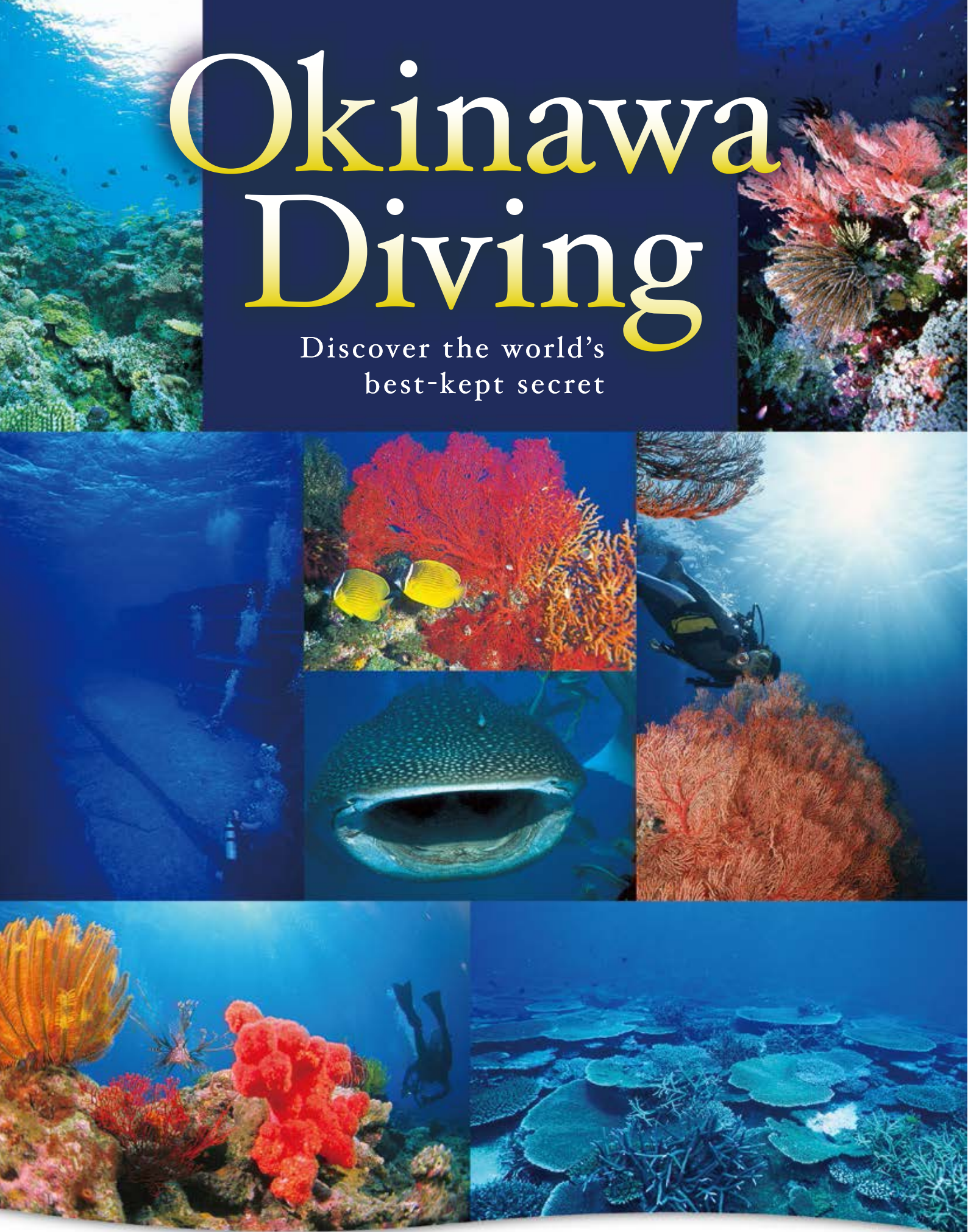


Okinawa Diving

Discover the world's
best-kept secret





To all adventurous divers

An invitation from the island of Okinawa

Often compared to such world-renowned diving destinations as the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, the Bahamas, Palau and Yap Island, Okinawa is a hidden paradise for divers, with an endless list of enchanting underwater beauties and wonders.

Located in the southernmost part of Japan, Okinawa's surrounding waters are fed by the warm Kuroshio Current running north from the Philippines, bringing a huge variety of marine life to the islands. The genial subtropical climate, with an average water temperature of 22 degrees Celsius in winter and 30 degrees Celsius in summer, facilitates year-round diving. Species of reef fish, marine mammals and sea turtles that inhabit Okinawan waters total more than 1,000, while reef-building corals exceed 200, making Okinawa one of the largest coral habitats in the world. It is where divers can anticipate fascinating encounters with such creatures as giant mantas, strikingly patterned butterfly fish, color-splashed groupers and magnificent whale sharks.

Talk about the extent of diving site variety: In the Ryukyu Archipelago there are approximately 160 islands of varying size, 48 of which are inhabited, stretching for 1,000 kilometers from east to west and 400 kilometers from north to south in between the Pacific Ocean and the East China Sea, and the variations of underwater landscape that exist there are as numerous as the islands

themselves. The coral reefs flourishing around the Kerama Islands, for instance, are renowned for their beauty, which matches, if not surpasses, that of the Great Barrier Reef. "The most beautiful and diverse coral reefs that I have ever seen anywhere in the whole world were in Kerama," once said French marine biologist Jacques-Yves Cousteau, author of "The Silent World." In the early spring the waters off the Kerama Islands become a breeding ground for humpback whales, offering divers the rare opportunity to hear their songs. Yonaguni Island, with its mysterious underwater ruins site, featured in National Geographic and on the Discovery Channel, is also a known spot to encounter giant trevally, Napoleon fish, barracuda and giant cuttlefish as well as schools of over 100 hammerhead sharks that gather there to spawn during the winter. The World War II shipwreck USS Emmons is located on the seabed off the main island's Motobu Peninsula. Numerous natural tunnels and caves, an expansive reef with a width of over 180 meters, an arch-filled landscape formed during the Ice Age... the list is endless.

Now, all you adventurous divers, what are you waiting for? It's your turn to discover the world's best-kept secret with your own eyes. The opportunity awaits you down in Okinawa.

Kerama Islands

With a depth ranging from 5-35 meters, the Keramas are suitable for all diving levels. Caves and caverns as well as a white sand bottom with many pinnacles can be seen. Sightings of sea turtles, skates, large schools of fish, white tip reef sharks, eels and countless others can be expected.

Yaeyama Islands

Numerous points include the Ishigaki Manta Scramble for the sighting of mantas and Yonahara Reef for a relaxing dive with a view of small fish schooling over flourishing coral, as well as Nakanooogan Island for dynamic geological features and Yonaguni with its mysterious underwater ruins site.

Miyako Island

Known as a "cave island," Miyako spots include Toriike, a pair of ponds on land that join each other underground, with one of them connected to the adjacent sea, and the Devil's Palace with its dynamic structure featuring multiple tunnels and arches.

Kume Island

Located in the island's east is a 7-kilometer-long sandbar named Hatenohama with a steep drop on its north side and a flat sand bottom on the south, where Tonbara Rock, known for sightings of large migratory fish as well as hammerheads in winter, is found.

Major diving locations

Main Island

Zampa Point

Large wall dive about 50 meters deep on the northern side. Many caves, swim-throughs and large fan corals on the southern side.

Manza Dream Hole

The hole begins at a depth of 6 meters, leading to a larger chamber that hosts a school of a couple thousand fish.

Horseshoe

A popular local site known for a variety of hard coral species and the sighting of turtles. Swim-throughs and crevasse at a depth of 7.5 meters.

Ginowan Gardens

The area (depth 10-35 meters) is lined with coral-covered pinnacles, home to a large variety of reef fish, great for photography.

USS Emmons Shipwreck

Destroyed in an attack by Japanese kamikaze aircraft during World War II, the USS Emmons (90 meters in length) was reportedly sunk by the US to avoid the danger of it drifting towards Japanese territory.

* Those listed are only a few of the numerous sites found around Okinawa.

沖縄

The owners of diving shops in Okinawa gathered for a round-table discussion on an evening in October to share what they know about the excitement of diving around Okinawa. They offer services in English at their shops to accommodate customers from overseas. They all first came to the island as visitors from mainland Japan or abroad, and their encounter with Okinawa's captivating underwater world caused them to stay here forever. Now find out for yourself what they had to say about Okinawa diving, the world's best-kept secret.

David: I started diving around the age of 10 and have been fortunate enough to travel the world extensively. When I first came to Okinawa in 1996, I thought it would be no different than any other place that I had been, but to my surprise I was very wrong! I had never been to any one destination that offered so much diversity. In one day you can dive on a WWII wreck and then go swim with the whale sharks. The visibility and water

temperature in Okinawa allow you to dive year round, and the diversity of coral and fish is unsurpassed. No other place in the world offers the quality or variety that Okinawa does.

Everybody: Yes, the diversity of coral and other marine species certainly is the attraction of the waters around Okinawa, and the entire marine ecosystem is of biological significance. It is not so widely known, however, that Japan has a superior diving site with a climate that enables year-round diving.

Hoshihara: One can easily spend a few days here touring points with different geological features and observing species of sea life, including gobies, shrimps, crabs and countless other small creatures that can be first-class subject matter for macro photographers, as well as whale sharks, mantas and spectacular caves and walls as subjects for wide-angle photography. Aside from the ocean itself, I think it is also good to realize that coral has traditionally been used in the lives of the people and has been a part of the local culture of the island.

Why Okinawa?

Tips from the experts on Okinawa diving



Located in Chatan in Central Okinawa, the Sunabe coast is a mecca for divers on the island and is frequently used by local diving shops as a place for their discovery diving programs and beginners' classes, while the beach also attracts surfers on days with certain wind conditions. Near Sunabe is an area called Mihama, the shopping and entertainment center of Chatan and popular with tourists. It was designed after Seaport Village in San Diego on America's West Coast.



Doug: I stayed in Okinawa because the diving here is awesome. The Great Barrier Reef, Hawaii, China, Cebu Island... My diving career has taken me all over the world, but I always returned to Okinawa.

Megara: Each point has its own characteristics, and you often run into landscapes with a surprising structure: You start from a reef with developed coral, progress through the landscape for a while, and then there comes a flat sandy bottom stretching off as far as you can see, as if you suddenly had found yourself somewhere totally different. Something like this also makes the diving here interesting. It is for this reason that many experienced divers request tours to the Manza Dream Hole, Horseshoe and Seragaki. These spots are conveniently located less than a 15-minute boat ride from shore and perfect for day trips.

Anno: I currently do my diving guide work in the Central Okinawa area, mainly around Yomitan and Onna, but there was a time when I was involved in a project to promote the Kerama Islands as a diving site. The discovery of new diving points was part of the task, and the experience was really phenomenal. No other seas around Okinawa have coral and marine species as numerous as those in the waters off Kerama. The bottom was literally packed with marine life, some of which was unknown to me, including some that hadn't even been officially identified back then.

David: It is more often than not that when I take divers to the Kerama Islands for two dives, the next day they request three to four dives at some of the same locations.

Doug: Along with the amazing reefs of the Keramas, Okinawa also has the underwater ruins of Yonaguni to explore, schooling

hammerhead sharks and humpback whales migrating through. There is always something new and interesting to experience in Okinawa.

Megara: I have never dived at [the underwater ruins site off] Yonaguni, but I know this, as well as the USS Emmons, is a key reason that some experienced divers venture to Okinawa.

David: The Sunabe seawall offers diving for all levels of divers; it is an easy beach entry with depths ranging from five to 25 meters. You can expect to see vast fields of soft coral dotted with anemones and a countless variety of reef fish.

Megara: The great thing about Okinawa is that you don't need to travel far to get to any of the spots. I think the diving around Okinawa can best be enjoyed through boat diving. All these first-class spots are within easy reach, unlike in most other places.

Hoshihara: As for accommodations, more hotels in Okinawa offer services in English these days. Many lodging facilities in the past couldn't even provide room service for foreign guests, but I can see it's improving.

Doug: There are lots of cafés and bars open along the seawall in Sunabe. It's nice to hang out at these places after diving there.

Megara: Snorkeling is highly recommended here in addition to diving. What Okinawa offers is not only its waters. There are opportunities available for various cultural experiences for visitors. I want them to get the most out of their stay here, especially if they take all the trouble to travel here.

Anno: I'll continue diving with ecology in mind. It's my desire to protect Okinawa's beautiful marine environment for future generations, and I would like to meet and dive with the people who think the same.

David: It's one of my hopes and wishes for the Western and English-speaking divers of the world to see just how beautiful Okinawa is, both above and below the ocean!




Doug Bennett [Reef Encounters]

Pennsylvania, USA / 20 years in Okinawa
15 years as a shop owner
NAUI course director




David Megara [Oki Diving]

New Jersey, USA / 22 years in Okinawa
2 years as a shop owner / boat captain




Akinori Anno [Viamare]

Mainland Japan / 22 years in Okinawa
26 years as a shop owner
Representative of JULIA / course director of HSA Japan Branch / underwater photographer



David Richmond [Asian Dive Tours]

Washington, USA / 13 years in Okinawa
6 years as a shop owner
PADI master instructor / boat captain



Takayasu Hoshihara [Natural Blue]

Tokyo / 8 years in Okinawa
2 years as a shop owner
Diving instructor (PADI) / HSA

Diving Shops for English speakers

Shop	URL	E-mail	Address	Tel
Okinawa Main Island				
Asian Dive Tours	http://www.asiandivetours.com	asian_dive_tours@hotmail.com	4-4-1 Mashiki, Ginowan City, Okinawa	+81-98-958-7183
Benthos Divers	http://www.benthos.info	divers@benthos.info	475 Seragaki, Onna Village, Kunigami-gun, Okinawa	+81-98-966-1730
Blue Ocean Scuba	http://www.oceanscuba.com	sales@blueoceanscuba.com	F-6, 3-317-2 Miyagi, Chatan Town, Okinawa	+81-90-3123-7903
Blue Zone	http://www.bluezone.jp/	okinawa@bluezone.jp	1-8-24 Asato, Naha City, Okinawa	+81-98-864-1414
Chinen Marine Leisure Center	http://www.chinenmarine.co.jp/	chinen47@m1.cosmos.ne.jp	676 Kudaken, Chinen Naniyo City, Okinawa	+81-98-948-3355
Dunk Diving School & Services	http://dunk.gr.jp	info@dunk.gr.jp	1-17-4F Yamashita, Naha City, Okinawa	+81-98-859-3456
Dive gallery Seaworks	http://www.dg-seaworks.com	info@dg-seaworks.com	6349-8 Onna, Onna Village, Okinawa	+81-98-966-1110
Diving House Yan★Yan	www.yanyan-dive.jp	yanyan@cosmos.ne.jp	2-32-2 Makiminato, Urasoe City, Okinawa	+81-98-874-0090
Diving Shop Nimo	http://www.web-okinawa.net/nimo/	info@nimo.co.jp	8-8 Minato, Chatan Town, Okinawa	+81-98-936-0688
Diving Shop Suimy	http://www.suimy.jp/	staff@suimy.jp	3-5-7 Wakasa, Naha City, Okinawa	+81-98-861-7271
Dive Pro Shop Lequios	http://www.lequios.jp	info@lequios.jp	3-22-102 Nishizaki, Itoman City, Okinawa	+81-98-987-0062
Dive Team Murata	http://homepage1.nifty.com/Y-MURATA/	dzb06342@nifty.ne.jp	87-102 Maeganeku, Onna Village, Okinawa	+81-98-965-7327
Ginowan Marine Sports Center	http://maririne.jp	info@maririne.jp	7-10-27 Oyama, Ginowan City, Okinawa	+81-98-942-2200
Island Breeze	http://www.ibreeze.info	dive-busena@ibreeze.info	1797-2 Kise, Nago City, Okinawa	+81-980-54-1520
Kaifu Divers	http://www.kaifu-divers.com	info@kaifu-divers.com	3-6-3 Gushi, Naha City, Okinawa	+81-98-857-1761
Marine House Seasir	http://www.seasir.com	english@seasir.com	2-2-9-205 Minato-machi, Naha City, Okinawa	+81-98-860-8941
Marine Product	www.marine-p.com/	okinawa@marine-p.com	2-2-8 Aja, Naha City, Okinawa	+81-98-860-8678
Marine Shop Marururoa	http://www.marururoa.jp	jamespliska@gmail.com	2-16-5 Chatan, Chatan Town, Okinawa	+81-98-936-8822
Marine Tourism Development, Inc	http://www.marinenetwork.co.jp/	mt@marinenetwork.co.jp	3-14-1 Tomari, Naha City, Okinawa	+81-98-869-2241
Natural Blue	http://www.natural-blue.net	info@natural-blue.net	2753-53 Zakimi, Yomitan Village, Okinawa	+81-90-9497-7374
Ok! Diving	http://www.okidiving.com/	okidiving@gmail.com	120 Seragaki, Onna Village, Okinawa	+81-90-5290-9232
Okinawa Tropico	http://www.okinawa-tropico.com	letter@okinawa-tropico.com	2-23-8 Makishi, Naha City, Okinawa	+81-98-867-5032
Pink Marlin Club	http://www.pinkmarlinclub.jp	lets@pinkmarlinclub.jp	167 Maeganeku, Onna Village, Kunigami-gun, Okinawa	+81-98-965-6060
Reef Encounters	http://www.reefencounters.org	info@reefencounters.org	1-273 Miyagi, Chatan Town, Okinawa	+81-98-995-9414
Southern Reef Okinawa	http://www.southern-reef.com/	chura@southern-reef.com	1-24 Miyagi, Chatan Town, Nakagami-gun, Okinawa	+81-98-983-7777
Spitz Dive Center	http://www.cosmos.ne.jp/~spitz/	spitz@m1.cosmos.ne.jp	2-4-7-101 Motomachi, Agariyama, Ishikawa, Uruma City, Okinawa	+81-98-965-0012
South to South	http://www.south4445.com	south4445@nirai.ne.jp	3-8-17 Akebono, Naha City, Okinawa	+81-98-867-4445
Umiusagi	http://umiusagi.com	ryukyu@umiusagi.com	6-5-12 Mizugama, Kadena Town, Okinawa	+81-98-956-1009
Viamare	http://viamare.jp/	photo@viamare.jp	1909-2 Sobe, Yomitan Village, Okinawa	+81-98-956-8108
Kerama Islands				
Water Kids	http://www.kerama.jp	kerama@mco.ne.jp	178 Aharen, Tokashiki Village, Okinawa	+81-98-987-2206
Yaeyama Islands				
Anemone Fish Club	http://www.anemone-f.com	anemone@mco.ne.jp	545-5-302 Matsubara, Hirara, Miyakojima City, Okinawa	+81-980-75-0766
Enysea	http://www.enysea.com	info@enysea.com	870-124 Uehara, Taketomi Town, Yaeyama-gun, Okinawa	+81-980-85-6568
Ishigakijima Diving School	http://www.ishigaki-diving-school.com/	ids@bb.cosmos.ne.jp	2-3-8 Hamasaki Town, Ishigaki City, Okinawa	+81-980-82-1353
Seamen's Club	http://www.seamensclub.co.jp/	info-front@seamensclub.co.jp	185 Kabira, Ishigaki City, Okinawa	+81-980-88-2131
Sea Technico	http://www.kayamania.com	zen1285@hotmail.com	3401 Taketomi Town, Yaeyama-gun, Okinawa	+81-980-87-8010
Soues Yonaguni (Sawes Yonaguni)	http://www.yonaguni.jp	sawes@yonaguni.jp	3401 Kohama Taketomichou, Okinawa	+81-9808-87-8010
Umicoza	http://www.umicoza.com/english/	manta@umicoza.com	827-15 Kabira, Ishigaki City, Okinawa	+81-980-88-2434
Waterman	http://www.i-waterman.com	resa@i-waterman.com	538-1 Uehara, Taketomi Town, Yaeyama-gun, Okinawa	+81-980-85-6005

Diving Travel Arrangements for Okinawa / Travel Agents

Company	URL	E-mail	Address	Tel	Remarks
Open Coast Travel	http://www.opencoastravel.com	info@opencoastravel.com	Los Angeles, CA	1-866-OCT-DIAL/310-433-6653	Specializing in dive packages for western travelers
Air Okinawa Co., Ltd.		a.nagamine@air-okinawa.co.jp	1-1-1-3F Kumoji, Naha City, Okinawa	+81-98-867-8001	
Hirata Tourism Inc.	http://www.hirata-group.co.jp/english/	info@hirata-group.co.jp	1 Misaki-cho Ishigaki City, Okinawa	+81-980-82-6711	Specializing in Yaeyama (Ishigaki and surrounding islands) tours
JTB Okinawa Corp.	http://www.jtbgmt.com/sunrisetour/index.aspx	j06-23@okw.jtb.co.jp	4-19-30-3F Omoromachi, Naha City, Okinawa	+81-98-941-0496	
Jumbo Tours Co., Ltd.	http://www.jumbotours.co.jp/en	contact@jumbotours.co.jp	2-15-10 Kumoji, Naha City, Okinawa	+81-50-5530-2820 (IP)	
Okinawa Tourist Service / Foreign Visitors Section		dennis@otsinfo.co.jp	1-12-17-2F Kinjo, Naha City, Okinawa	+81-98-859-8887	

Unforgettable dive experiences in Okinawa

John Chandler, an underwater photographer and the author of an English guide for diving points around Okinawa, was stationed with the US Marine Corps on Okinawa for 15 years in five tours between 1972 and 2002. His dive logs during those years reflect over 5,000 dives. “I would have to say [the most memorable was] the first time that I dove the wall at Onna Point. That was back in 1972. I had done a lot of shore dives on reefs in South Florida where I grew up, so I was an experienced diver, but when I went over the edge of that wall at Onna Point it was the most exciting dive in my life. Just floating downward, it was almost like parachuting underwater. I will never forget that.”

Watch for decompression sickness

Decompression sickness is a health hazard that can occur to scuba divers and is caused by staying underwater over a long period of time or ascending rapidly from the depths. For its prevention, make sure to take a minimum of 12 hours for post-dive recovery before you board a flight. Call 119 for an ambulance to reach the nearest medical institution for treatment when it occurs.

Outside the water Glimpses of the island’s cultural wealth

The colorful and unique culture and history of Okinawa as well as the philosophy of life shared by its neighborly people have become objects of interest not only in mainland Japan but well beyond its borders. Okinawan culture can be described as “champuru” which means “to mix together,” referring to the island’s rich historical background developed through its cultural interactions with East Asian countries as well as with America, from the days of the US administration after the war -- an aspect that adds to the experience of Okinawa for visitors.

With Okinawa’s highly admired natural beauty, particularly that of its surrounding waters, and its prestigious place in history as the birthplace of karate, as well as its fame as an island of longevity, Okinawa hosts countless unique activities and experiences just waiting for visitors: Drive along the scenic coastline, participate in eco tours, traditional handicraft workshops and local festivals, learn and experience the longevity diet, and more. Add to this the wealth of diving opportunities it offers, and Okinawa stands out as a destination with an abundance of visitor attractions.



Food

“Your health is what you eat” is an idea that has been part of Okinawan food culture since the olden days. Okinawan home cooking is combined with wisdom gained through this philosophy and has lately been receiving much global attention. A large number of Okinawan meals utilize pork as an essential ingredient. At the public markets, you can find various parts of the pig for sale, including the face, along with other local delicacies such as vegetables, herbs, sweets and awamori, Japan’s oldest distilled liquor, which is growing popular in the international market.



Performing arts and festivals

The tradition of Okinawan performing arts has developed uniquely in each region of the main island, as well as on the archipelago’s 47 other inhabited islands. Local festivals are often occasions where performing arts can be observed. Okinawa, the “festival island,” has myriad festivals and events taking place throughout the year, the highest in number of all prefectures in Japan. The most popular and energetic of all are haarii (dragon boat races), eisa drum dance and tugs-of-war.



Visitor attractions

Churaumi Aquarium, featuring a world class acrylic glass-paneled tank, and Shurijo Castle Park are the most popular destinations among visitors. A visit to an awamori distillery or a local winery and numerous workshops offering cultural experiences such as the crafting of Ryukyu glass and bingata (a dyed textile) are also favorites. Northern Okinawa is where various eco tours and mangrove canoe rides top the list of visitor attractions. The Okinawa Peace Memorial Park with exhibitions on war topics, located in the south, attracts a large number of visitors each year. Naha and Chatan, the main island’s commercial centers, are good for shopping and entertainment. The countless outer islands, each with its own unique aspects, make an island-hopping tour a perfect plan during a holiday stay.



Arts and crafts

Okinawa is a treasure trove of handicrafts. Ryukyu glass, colorful and crisp in appearance, is popular with visitors and locals alike. Sturdy construction and distinctive, hand-created designs characterize Okinawan pottery. Ryukyu lacquerware, possessing a timeless beauty and a proud history, exhibits a Chinese influence. An abundance of shellfish, used for the mother-of-pearl inlay found in Ryukyu lacquerware, and Okinawa’s humid climate were key to the dramatic development of this art form.



Flight information

Domestic

Airlines shuttle daily between Naha Airport and the mainland's major cities including Tokyo (Haneda, Narita), Osaka (Itami, Kansai), Kobe, Nagoya and Fukuoka. Flight times from major mainland cities to Naha Airport are indicated below. Transportation to remote islands is by either airplane or boat.

Flight times from major mainland cities to Okinawa

Tokyo (Haneda, Narita) to Naha	2 hours, 10-15 minutes
Osaka (Itami, Kansai) to Naha	1 hours, 50 minutes
Kobe to Naha	1 hours, 50 minutes
Nagoya to Naha	2 hours
Fukuoka to Naha	1 hour, 35 minutes

Travel times to the outer islands

Yaeyama Islands	
1 Ishigaki Is.	1 hour from Naha by plane
2 Taketomi Is.	10-20 min. from Ishigaki Port, speed craft/ferry
3 Iriomote Is.	35-50 min. from Ishigaki Port, speed craft/ferry
4 Kohama Is.	25-45 min. from Ishigaki Port, speed craft/ferry
5 Kuro Is.	30-40 min. from Ishigaki Port, speed craft/ferry
6 Hateruma Is.	60-120 min. from Ishigaki Port, speed craft/ferry
7 Yonaguni Is.	30 min. from Ishigaki Island, plane / 4 hrs. ferry

Miyako Islands	
8 Miyako Is.	50 min. from Naha, plane
9 Ikema Is.	30 min. from Miyako Island, car
10 Irapu Is.	15-25 min. from Taira Port, speed craft/ferry
11 Tarama Is.	25 min. from Miyako Island, plane/120 min., ferry

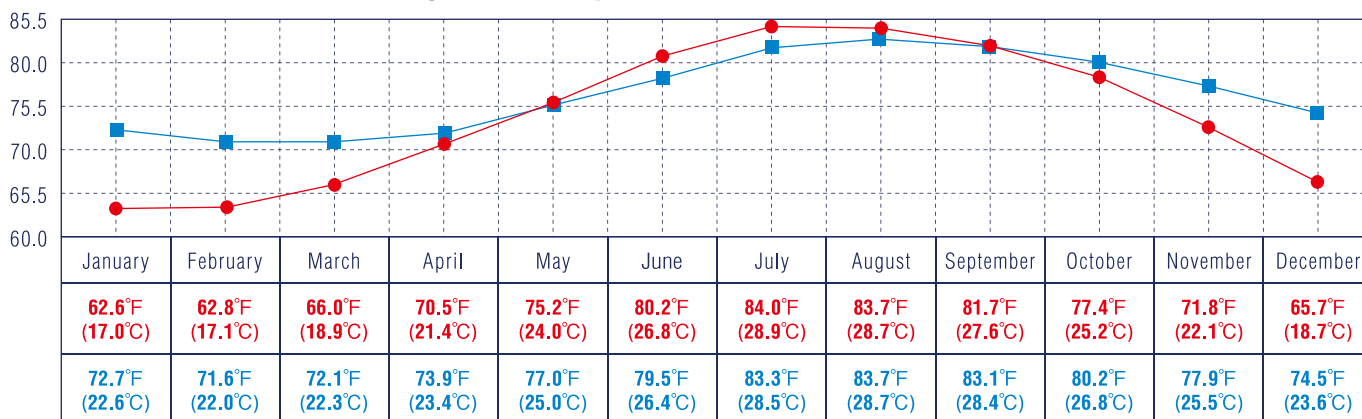


Ryukyu Islands

Kerama Islands	
12 Tokashiki Is.	35-70 min. from Tomari Port, speed craft/ferry
13 Zamami Is.	50-120 min. from Tomari Port, speed craft/ferry
14 Aka Is.	50-90 min. from Tomari Port, speed craft/ferry
15 Kume Is.	35 min. from Naha, plane/180 min. from Tomari Port, ferry

● Main island of Okinawa average temperatures [73.6°F (23.1°C)]

■ Main island of Okinawa average water temperatures [78.1°F (25.6°C)]



● As of December 2011 ■ As of December 2009

* Conversion °F=°C×1.8+32, °C=(°F-32)÷1.8

* Addendum: Miyako Islands: average temperature 64.4°F (18.0°C) / average water temperature 78.8°F (26.0°C)
Ishigaki Island: average temperature 65.5°F (18.6°C) / average water temperature 79.0°F (26.1°C)