



Nature



Abundant Coral Reef Seas and Evergreen Hills

Coral reefs fringing the Okinawan islands just like a necklace can be seen only in warm and very clear water. It is said that Okinawa is inhabited by over 200 kinds of coral reefs and the area is most abundant in the diversity of coral reefs. Coral reefs are also places where many sea creatures live.

On the other hand, mountains are covered by lush green subtropical broad-leaf trees all year round. In the forest of Yanbaru where hills and mountains are outstretched in the northern part of the Okinawa main island, many living things can only be found in this region. Among them are very rare creatures: Pryer's woodpecker (designated as a National Special Natural Treasure) and Yanbaru Water Rail (also designated as a National Natural Treasure).



History



The Okinawa Millennium

Through prehistoric times, groups by race or kinship were built in many parts of the island in around the 10th century. Soon, struggles for power were followed by three kingdoms in Okinawa: Hokuzan in the northern part of the island, Chuzan in the center, and Nanzan in the south. In 1429, these were brought under unified control. Afterwards the history of the Ryukyu Kingdom commenced. The Ryukyu Kingdom had a strong relationship with China. Envoys called 'Sappushi' were received from the Chinese emperor to certify royal succession. The Kingdom was a transit trading hub and enjoyed great prosperity from commerce with the Japanese mainland and Southeast Asia. Then, in the beginning of the 17th century, the Satsuma fiefdom in Southern Kyushu, invaded and conquered the Ryukyu Kingdom. From then on, although the Kingdom maintained the 'Sappu' relationship with China, control by Satsuma was tightened.

In 1879, the 450-year history of the Kingdom was ended by the Meiji government and Okinawa Prefecture was born. At the ending period of the Second World War, Okinawa was lead into the only land engagement of the war in Japan. After the war, Okinawa was placed under American military rule for 27 years. In 1972, reversion to Japanese sovereignty finally came. In recent years, riding the crest of an Okinawa boom, the number of tourists are continuously rising.

Feel the colors, rhythms and forms that variegate Okinawa



Entertainments

Industrial Arts



This island, sitting between the Pacific Ocean and the East China Sea, is blessed with a diverse, abundant nature and a distinctive history and culture.



Ryukyuan Dance, Kumiodori (Classical Music Drama) and Ryukyuan Music flourished in the Monarchical Age

The origin of most traditional performing arts in Okinawa can be traced back to the dance and music which started during the Ryukyu Dynasty era to entertain Chinese investiture envoys (sappushi). Kumiodori, designated as an important intangible cultural property, was created modeled after the performing arts forms of Japan and China by Tamagusuku Chokun, an official of the Royal Office of Dance at the Shuri court. Ryukyuan dances, distinctive with gorgeous costumes and graceful movements, were introduced at the banquet entertaining the leaders from the member nations of the Kyushu-Okinawa Summit in 2000. Okinawan Music is divided into two categories: classic and folk songs, but Sanshin is the base for both. Sanshin is an improved form of Sangen, a three-string plucked lute of Chinese origin.

Techniques transmitted from generation to generation

There are five traditional crafts in Okinawa: pottery, lacquer ware, dyed and woven textiles and glass ware. Since the 14th century, pottery called 'Yachimun' in Okinawa has been developed with influences from China, Korea, Southeast Asia and Japan. The various techniques of lacquer ware were held important and have been developed as an art crafts which represent Ryukyu to be used as an offerings to the Chinese emperor and the Shogunate family of the Edo feudal government during the Ryukyu Kingdom era. Bingata costume was only for royalty in the royal government in the Ryukyuan capital of Shuri and noble class women as well as costumes for court dances. Textiles remaining in various parts of Okinawa were weaved as one of the offerings to the royal government. Although Ryukyu glass was born from the recycling of waste bottles after the war, some of the works today have much artistic merit.



Festival

Traditional events,
festivals and sports events,
Uchinan-chu (Okinawans) love festivals!



The All- Okinawa Eisa Festival

Eisa is a Bon Dance, a custom prevalent among many parts of the Okinawa Main Island. During the 'Obon' season by the lunar calendar, groups of young people sing and dance from door to door or community to community praying for good health and for the well-being of families. The All-Okinawa Eisa Festival is when Eisa groups from each region assemble in one place and show off each other's performances. Young people's gallant dances roll out with the rhythm of drums which echoes the venue. The Orion Beer Festival is also held together with the Eisa Festival.



Naha Marathon Over 15,000 participants (The largest in Japan)

Participants exceed 15,000. It is the biggest citizens' full marathon in Japan. The course makes a round of southern areas starting from Naha City and run through the following cities and towns:

Naha City → Haeburu Town → Yaese Town → Nanjo City → Itoman City → Tomigusuku City



EVENT SCHEDULE



January

● A New Year's Party at Shuri Castle / Shuri Castle Park, Naha City ● Motobu Yae-dake Cherry Blossom Viewing Festival / Yae-dake, Motobu Town ● Nago Cherry Blossom Festival / Nago Castle Ruins, Nago City



February

● World Orchid Exhibition in Okinawa / Ocean Expo Park Tropical Dream Center, Motobu Town ● Okinawa Marathon / Okinawa Prefecture Comprehensive Sports Park, Okinawa City ● Whale Watching / Waters around Kerama Island From the beginning of the month to the latter part of March ● Yomitan Pottery Market / All the Studios in Yomitan Village



March

● Nago Chrysanthemum and Orchid Doll Exhibit / Neo Park Okinawa, Nago City ● Higashi-son Azalea Festival / Sonmin-nomori Azalea Garden, Higashi Village ● Whale Festival / The square in front of Tokashiki Port, Tokashiki Village The beginning of the month ● Uruzun-Yaeyama Umi-biraki (The opening of a beach to swimmers) / Kabira, Sokochi Beach, Ishigaki City The latter part of the month



April

● Yaebise Festival / Yaebise, Miyakojima City March 03 of lunar calendar ● The All Japan Triathlon Miyako Island Meet / Miyakojima City ● ITU Triathlon World Cup Ishigaki Island Meet / Ishigaki City ● Ie Island Lily Festival / Lily Field, Ie Village



May

● Naha Hari (Dragon Boat Race) / Shinko Pier, Naha City ● Oku-Yanbaru Carp-shaped Streamer Festival / Oku, Kunigami Village ● JTA-JAL Ocean Cup Ginowan-Kume Island Yacht Race / Ginowan Port Marina → Kume Island



June

● Itoman Hare / Itoman Fishing Port, Itoman City May 4 of lunar calendar ● The Great Ocean Festival Manta-pia Ishigaki City Dragon Boat Race Meet / Ishigaki Fishing Port, Ishigaki City ● Sanits Beach Carnival / Yonaha Bay, Miyakojima City

and Event

In every part of Okinawa, various events such as festivals from the olden days, traditional events, sports and music are held throughout the year. Many people gather in the places and many meetings and excitement are born.



Firework Display at Ocean Expo Park

The Main event of the Summer Festival at the Ocean Expo Park is the largest firework display in Okinawa Prefecture. In one hour, approximately 5000 fireworks go up in the sky. There are fireworks viewing tours from the sea on a Japanese-style roofed pleasure boat or on a ferry.



Peaceful Love Rock Festival

This is the biggest rock event in Okinawa. It is held for two consecutive days, from Saturday to Sunday. This music event is something Okinawans can be proud of to the entire nation. From new bands who won through auditions, popular Indies bands and veteran musicians are all assembled at one place for this very important music event.



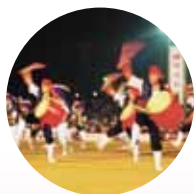
The Naha Great Tug of War

This is a traditional event which is said to have started in the 17th century. The entire length of approximately 200m rope is registered in the Guinness Book of World Records. Around 15,000 citizens and tourists are divided into East and West and compete pulling the giant rope. After it is over, you can take a section of the rope home as an amulet for good health.



July

●Peaceful Love-Rock Festival / Outdoor Stage, Okinawa City ●Ocean Expo Park Summer Festival & Ocean Expo Park Fireworks Display / Ocean Expo Park, Motobu Town ●Seinen Furusato Eisa Festival / Chatan Park, Chatan Town



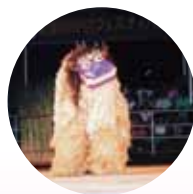
August

●Ginowan~Izena Yacht Race / Ginowan Port Marina~Offshore of Nakada Port, Izena Village ●The All Okinawa Eisa Festival / Koza Sports Park Track and Field Competition Field, Okinawa City ●Summer Festival in Naha/Ten Thousand Eisa Dancers Company / Kokusai Street, Naha City



September

●The All Japan Big-fishing in Kume Island / Kume Island waters ●Shuri Castle Park Moon-Viewing Party 'Mid-Autumn Banquet in Ryukyu Dynasty' / Shuri Castle Park, Naha City ●The Itoman Great Tug of War / Vicinity of Itoman Rotary, Itoman City



October

●Naha Festival / Ohnoyama Park, Naha City ●The Naha Great Tug of War & Procession / Kokusai Street, Naha City Kumoji Intersection on National Highway 58 ●The All Island Lion Dance Festival / Agena Bull Ring, Gushikawa, Uruma City ●Suntopia Okinawa Friendship Festa / Various Parts of Okinawa



November

●Shuri Castle Festival & Shuri Cultural Festival / Shuri Castle Park, Naha City Whole area of Shuri ●Okinawa International Carnival / Goya Crossroad Area, Okinawa City ●Tour de Okinawa / Northern Area in Okinawa Main Island



December

●Naha Marathon / Ohnoyama Athletic Park, Naha City ●Yomitan Pottery Market / Yachimun-no-sato, Yomitan Village ●The Fire and Bell Festival / Peace Prayer & Memorial Park, Itoman City