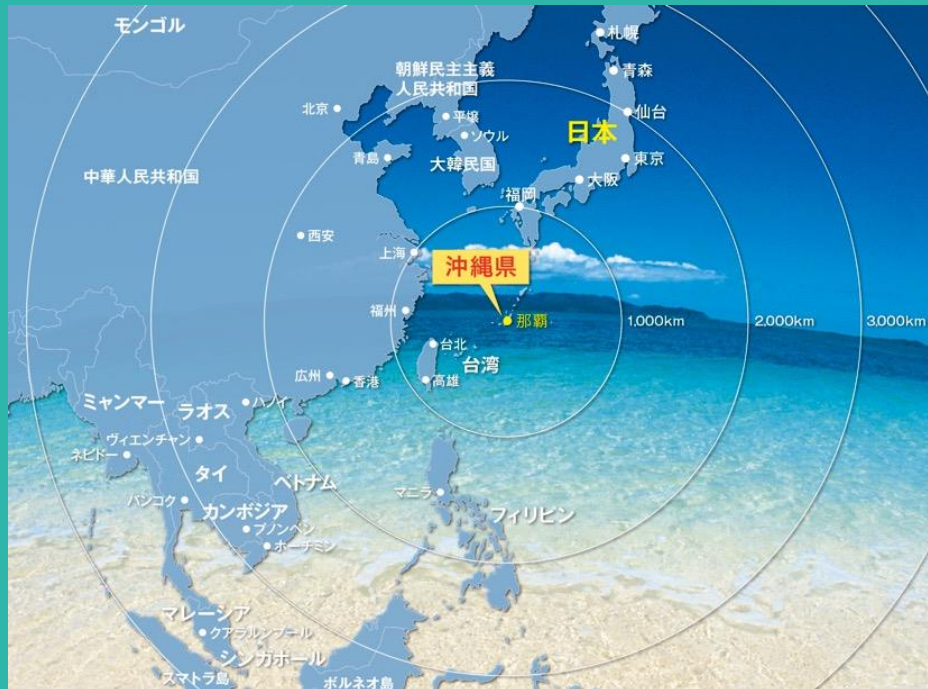


# Introduction of Okinawa



# Profile of Okinawa

## ◆Geographical features



Okinawa, the southern gateway to Japan, developed as a trading hub for Asian countries

Situated at the southwestern most tip of the Japanese archipelago, Okinawa, the island prefecture, consists of 160 islands, including 48 that are inhabited. Within a 2,000-kilometer radius of Naha, the Okinawan capital, are major Asian cities such as Shanghai, Taipei, Hong Kong, Seoul and Manila. Actively trading with China and other East Asian and Southeast Asian countries from early times, Okinawa developed a unique culture representing a fusion of various foreign influences. Nestled between the Pacific Ocean and the East China Sea, the prefecture is blessed with a wealth of nature, exemplified by its beautiful coral reefs.

### DATA

Population: 1,454,184

Area: 2,281.05 square kilometers

Mean annual temperature: 23.1°C

(Okinawa no Sugata Kensei Gaiyo [Profile of Okinawa Prefecture] published in May 2020)



Bougainvillea



# Nature

Okinawa is Japan's only prefecture located in the subtropical maritime climate zone. The climate is mild and comfortable throughout the year and, to the delight of vacationers, colorful flowers bloom in every season. Extensive coral reefs lying beneath the clear blue waters teem with diverse marine life, attracting divers from around the world. The deep mountains and forests in the northern part of Okinawa Island (the main island) and the Yaeyama Islands are known for their abundance of endemic species.



Bountiful subtropical forests nurture diverse flora and fauna



Coral reefs provide a perfect home for tropical fish





# World Heritage Sites

Formerly, Okinawa prospered as an independent nation—the Kingdom of Ryukyu. There remain many ruins of castles (Gusuku) and monuments built a long time ago. In 2000, these historic structures were inscribed on the World Heritage List as “Gusuku Sites and Related Properties of the Kingdom of Ryukyu.” The heritage properties include the ruins of five castles—Shurijo, Nakagusukujo, Zakimijo, Katsurenjo and Nakijinjo—and four historic remains—Sonohyan-Utaki-Ishimon stone gate, Tamaudun royal mausoleum, Shikinaen garden and Seifa-Utaki, a sacred place for worship. These sites are popular tourist destinations in the prefecture.



Shurijo castle site: The castle was a royal residence for kings of the Kingdom of Ryukyu, and the center of politics, economy and culture during those times.



Shikinaen: A royal villa and garden where envoys from China were entertained.



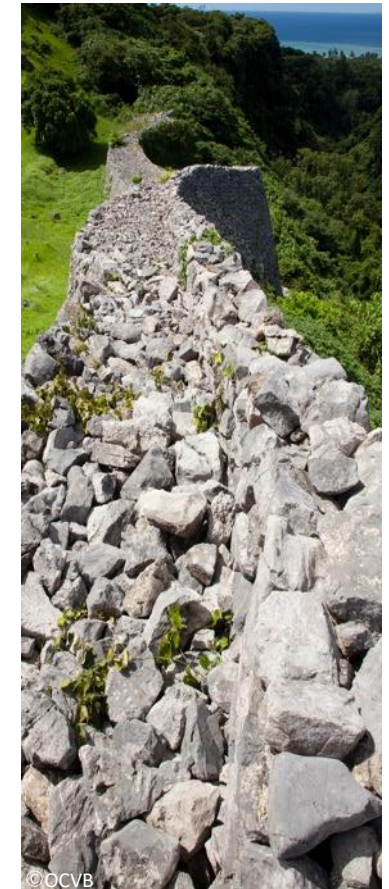
Nakagusukujo castle site: The castle ruins stand on the hill that rises up alongside Nakagusuku Bay, commanding panoramic view of the Pacific.



©OCVB

Nakijinjo castle site: The castle is characterized by exquisitely curved stone walls, which were built to take advantage of the natural terrain and constructed using a skillful stone piling technique.

Katsurenjo castle site: The oldest castle in Okinawa, situated on four flat areas of terrain laid out in a staircase pattern.





# Festivals

People in Okinawa practice ancestor worship and place great value on close bonds between residents in local communities. Thus, many festivals and events take place throughout the year, such as memorial services for ancestors and festivals to pray for a bountiful harvest or prosperity for the area. Most of these kinds of indigenous annual events rooted in their respective communities are held based on the old Japanese calendar. Recently, some events, while upholding tradition, have incorporated entertainment aspects, thereby sharing the history and culture of Okinawa with the wider world.



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## ①Eisa dancing parade:

A big summer event performed to send off the souls of ancestors visiting their descendants during the Bon Festival. Dancing to the beat of drums and jaunty tunes and songs, groups of young performers parade through the community and pray for the health, well-being and prosperity of each resident.

## ②Hari (Hare) boat racing:

A traditional sports event in which teams compete in a small Sabani fishing boat or larger dragon boat to thank the sea for its blessings and pray for a safe voyage and good catch. The highlights of the event are exciting competitions as well as colorfully decorated boats.

2



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## ③Naha Giant Tug-of-war Festival:

A traditional event in which participants pull on a gigantic rope to give thanks for the year's good harvest and wish for a better one next year. The 200-meter-long rope used for the tug-of-war was listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the largest rope made of rice straw.

## ④Koshiki Gyoretsu:

A fascinating traditional procession that takes place during the Ryukyu Dynasty Festival. This event revives the old royal ritual of the king's visits to three temples to pray for peace and order in his kingdom as well as bountiful harvests.

# Performing arts and craft arts

Okinawa features traditional performing arts and a variety of folk crafts passed down from the era of the Ryukyu Kingdom to today. In 2010, Kumiodori musical theater was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Audiences from in and outside Japan enjoy diverse Okinawan entertainment, including Kumiodori and other folk performing arts and local folk songs. Okinawa's pottery, textiles and other craft arts have been influenced by the cultures of Japan, China and other neighboring countries since the dynastic period. Accordingly, they developed unique and original qualities, and continue to evolve today while maintaining traditional styles.



## Nido Tekiuchi:

This photograph shows a scene from Nido Tekiuchi, one of the best-known dramas composed of Kumiodori, dialogue, music and dance. It is a story of two brothers who vow to avenge of their father's wrongful death.



## Textiles:

The splashed weaving patterns consisting of four and five small rectangles as shown in the photograph symbolize "everlasting love." In former times, a woman would weave and send this textile to the man she loved.



## Yachimun

"Yachimun" refers to pottery in the Okinawan dialect. Its traditional motif of plants and fish as well as rustic appearance and bright illustrations are loved by many people. Yachimun has also become popular among tourists as a souvenir.



## Lion dance:

One of the folk performing arts handed down in local communities in the belief that lions purge evil spirits and bring a good harvest and prosperity to the community. Okinawa's lions are adorable with their uniquely shaggy appearance.



## Shisa:

Shisa is traditional craftwork and decoration resembling a cross between a lion and a dog. It sits at the entrance of hamlets, on the roofs of houses or in other places as a guardian against evil spirits. Yachimun Shisa and plaster Shisa are very popular souvenirs of Okinawa.



# Longevity and diets

Okinawa Prefecture is known for the long life expectancy of its people. One of the secrets to their long and healthy lifespans is their traditional eating habits. “A balanced diet helps prevent and cure disease”—this “Eat well to be well” belief has been firmly rooted in Okinawan culture since old times. As such, local people prefer nutritionally balanced meals. In addition to nutritious vegetables grown amid the abundant nature, herbs are also occasionally used for cooking. Tasty and healthy Okinawan cuisine is offered at affordable prices in local restaurants.



## Tundabun:

An appetizer sampler called Tundabun is typical court cuisine that was served to extend the best hospitality to important guests in the dynastic era. Foods artfully arranged on a lacquerware tray are a delight both to the palate and the eye.



## Nitsuke:

Nitsuke is a home-cooked Okinawan dish loved by locals. It is made by simmering fried tofu, vegetables, kelp and meat, such as soft and glutinous tebichi (boiled pig's feet), in an umami-rich broth for several hours.



## Food market:

A wide array of foods are sold at local food markets, including colorful subtropical fish and fresh pork. Such markets are not only essential to the everyday life of locals but also popular with tourists.



## Fresh foods:

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# Business

## Characteristics of Okinawa Island

### Northern area

The northern part of the island is blessed with a richness of nature and has a host of resort hotels. The deep mountains and forests are home to many and various endemic species, such as the Yanbaruina (Okinawa rail). The Okinawa Churaumi Aquarium located in Motobu Town is one of the major tourist spots in the prefecture. Pineapples, citrus fruits and other agricultural products are widely grown in this region.

### Central area

A fusion of American and Okinawan cultures gives this area an international flavor full of diversity. A broad range of marine activities and other tourism attractions are offered, mainly on the west coast area. On the east coast side, an international logistics hub constructed in the Nakagusuku Bay Port district has developed as a special economic zone with tax incentives.

### Naha area

Naha, the capital city of Okinawa, is the center of the prefecture's politics, economy and culture. With Naha Airport handling both domestic and international flights as well as Naha Port consisting of Naha Wharf, Naha Shinko Wharf and other two wharves, it flourishes as a gateway into the prefecture. The city also boasts a wealth of historic and cultural assets, such as the Shuri castle site, making it one of the prefecture's major tourist cities.

### Southern area

The southern part is endowed with a rich natural environment and a thriving agricultural industry. The fishing industry has flourished in Itoman City since the old days. A large number of people visit the Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Park and other war memorials for peace education as well as other historic sites located in the same city. Access to Naha, northern and central parts of the island has been greatly improved due to the extended Okinawa Expressway and newly constructed bypasses.





# Okinawan economy

The economy of Okinawa is primarily driven by tourism, which accounts for more than 80% of the prefecture's economy. Located in the heart of Eastern Asia, with an immense market of two billion people accessible within four hours, Okinawa also makes use of its geographical advantage to serve as a global logistics hub. Here, we will describe tourism and logistics, two main pillars of the prefecture's economy.

## ◆ Tourism

The number of tourists to Okinawa has grown year-after-year, hitting a record high in 2018 at 9,842,000. This trend is expected to continue into the future, with increases in international flights and port calls by cruise ships. To meet the needs of long-stay resorts, Okinawa Prefecture is making efforts to establish an "Okinawa brand" and improve the environment to accept more tourists.



## ◆ Logistics

Okinawa is positioned in between Tokyo, the capital of Japan, and other countries of Asia.

Naha Airport operates 24 hours a day. Because of its convenient location, the airport is capable of accommodating the requirements of various businesses. Aiming to enhance its function as a logistics hub, the Okinawa prefectural government is proceeding with various plans including the improvement of Naha Port, the International Container Terminal and the International Logistics Center, as well as the expansion of international routes for container ships.

### Air Freight



### Sea Routes

