



**Off the Beaten Path: A Different Side of Japan**

# 2023 CHERRY BLOSSOMS GRAND OKINAWA PLUS KYOTO, NARA & OSAKA

*Very unique tour itinerary! Let's explore two diverse climates and cultures in one exciting trip!*

11 Nights / 13 Days • 20 Meals (11 Breakfasts, 4 Lunches, 5 Dinners)  
Escorted from Honolulu • Includes English-Speaking Local Guide  
**March 22 – April 03, 2023 • Tour Manager: Gene Miyake**

## OVERVIEW:

Okinawa is home to a unique culture that differs considerably from that of mainland Japan. Until the islands were invaded by the Satsuma domain (present day Kagoshima Prefecture) in 1609, Okinawa existed as an entirely separate country from Japan, known as the Ryukyu Kingdom. After the invasion, the Ryukyu Kingdom served as a tributary state to Japan, but continued to be governed by the royal family from Shuri Castle. It was not until 1879, a few years after the Meiji Restoration, that the kingdom was abolished and incorporated into Japan as Okinawa Prefecture. The castles of Okinawa, known as "gusuku" in the Okinawan language, are among the most vivid monuments that testify to the unique cultural and historical heritage of the Ryukyu Kingdom. In the year 2000, five castles and four related sites were designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites under the collective title of "Gusuku Sites and Related Properties of the Kingdom of Ryukyu."

## VISIT:

Naha • Itoman • Onna • Nago • Motobu • Nakijin • Kitanakagusuku • Maaji  
Omoromachi • Nanjo • Kyoto • Kameoka • Arashiyama • Nara • Osaka

## OKINAWA HIGHLIGHTS (7 NIGHTS):

Himeyuri Peace Memorial Park • Peace Memorial Museum • Mabuni Hill • Ryukyu Glass Village  
Iias Okinawa Toyosaki • Ryukyu Mura Village • Michi-no-Eki • Awamori Factory Tour • Orion Beer Factory  
Churaumi Aquarium • Nakijin Castle Site • Okinawa Fruits Land • AEON Mall – RYCOM • Shikina-en Garden  
Naha Main Place • Okinawa Prefectural Museum and Art Museum • Naha Pottery Museum  
Shisa Decorating Experience • Shuri Castle • Okinawa World • Gyokusendo Stalactite Cave  
Habu (Snake) Museum • Glass Factory • Masahiro Sake Brewery • Ryukyu Dance Performance

## KYOTO, NARA & OSAKA HIGHLIGHTS (4 NIGHTS):

Kiyomizu Temple • Nijo Castle • Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion) • Yuzen Table Mat Dyeing Experience  
Sagano Torokko Train • Hozu River Cruise • Arashiyama Bamboo Forest • AEON Mall • Fushimi Inari Shrine  
Traditional Japanese Tea Ceremony • Todaiji Temple • Nara Park • Kuromon Ichiba Market  
Dotonbori Shopping • Shinsaibashi Shopping • AEON Mall

## UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES:

Gusuku Sites and Related Properties of the Kingdom of Ryukyu • Kiyomizu Temple  
Nijo Castle • Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion) • Todaiji Temple

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**DON'T MISS A THING!!  
WHISPER — Wireless Tour Guide System!  
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**Day 1: Wed, Mar 22** — HONOLULU. Depart Honolulu.

**Day 2: Thur, Mar 23** — NAHA. Arrive in Naha. After entry formalities, transfer by coach to the hotel. HOTEL JAL CITY NAHA (2 Nights)

**Day 3: Fri, Mar 24** — NAHA — ITOMAN — NAHA. After a sumptuous buffet breakfast at your hotel, we embark on a full day of discovery! Begin the day visiting three World War II memorial sites. We will start with **Himeyuri Peace Memorial Park**, which commemorates the fate of the female high school students that had worked in the army field hospitals under horrendous conditions — many of which did not survive the war. Next, visit the **Peace Memorial Museum** and **Mabuni Hill**, which is an open space in the Okinawa SENSEI Quasi-National Park. It is the place where U.S. forces and Japanese forces battled against each other during World War II and has a tragic history. It has been established as an open space of peace, which includes a monument entitled “Heiwa no Oka (Hill of Peace).” After lunch, stop at **Ryukyu Glass Village**. Before returning to the hotel, a stop will be made at **Iias Okinawa Toyosaki**, a four floor mall with a wide selection of specialty and brand stores selling local and international products. After returning to the hotel, walk to a nearby restaurant for dinner. (B, L, D)

\*1 Bag per person will be kept at the Hotel JAL City Naha, skipping the hotel in Motobu. Prepare overnight bag for 1 night.

**Day 4: Sat, Mar 25** — NAHA — ONNA — NAGO — ONNA. After breakfast, we head north to Onna Village and spend the morning at **Ryukyu Mura Village**. It's basically a traditional Okinawan village with exhibits showcasing various festivals, crafts, and foods. Enjoy the Parade that condenses a year's worth of festivals into one parade: Usudeku, Karate, Miruku, Kajimayah, Lion Dance, Juri, Mamidoma, and Eisa. Don't miss the Habu (Snake) Show. Watch the snake handler play with the Habu which was in a glass box next to its nemesis — the mongoose. Stop at a road side “**Michi-no Eki**” stand for lunch (on own). Not only do they provide a clean and convenient rest stop, but you will find an array of farmer-direct merchandise along with other “omiyage” items. Next we visit a **Awamori (Rice Liquor) Factory**. Awamori is the signature alcoholic beverage of Okinawa and most of the Ryukyu Islands. Learn the unique process involved in making Awamori. Then visit the **Orion Beer Factory** for a tour. Return to the hotel for dinner. ANA INTERCONTINENTAL MANZA BEACH RESORT (1 Night) (B, D)

**Day 5: Sun, Mar 26** — ONNA — MOTOBU — NAKIJIN — NAGO — KITANAKAGUSUKU — NAHA. After an incredible breakfast buffet, enjoy a visit to the **Churaumi Aquarium**, widely considered Japan's best aquarium. It is the main attraction of the Ocean Expo Park on the former grounds of the 1975 International Ocean Expo. The aquarium was completely redesigned and reopened in 2002. The highlight of a visit to the Churaumi Aquarium is the massive **Kuroshio Tank**, one of the largest in the world. The tank takes its name from the warm Kuroshio current which plays a large part in the variety of Okinawa's marine life. Next, visit the **Nakijin Castle** ruins in the city of Nago. Learn about the history of Okinawa. The castle — a former residence of the Ryukyu Kingdom governor during the 14<sup>th</sup> century — is a designated UNESCO World Heritage site. Then stop at **Okinawa Fruits Land** for lunch and shopping. Enjoy some free time **AEON Mall** — **RYCOM** on the way back to Naha City. The remainder of the day is at your leisure. The local guide will have recommendations for dinner. HOTEL JAL CITY NAHA (4 Nights) (B, L)

**Day 6: Mon, Mar 27** — NAHA. Full Day at Leisure. Opportunity to visit with family and friends or enjoy shopping. Your local guide will be available to assist as needed. (B)

**Day 7: Tue, Mar 28** — NAHA — MAAJI — OMORO MACHI — NAHA. Start the day at the **Shikina-en Garden**, which was constructed in the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century as the second residence of the Ryukyu kings. It features beautiful, relatively simple, wooden palace buildings with Okinawan-style, red tile roofs with spacious Japanese-style landscaped gardens with a central pond. While Shikina-en was completely destroyed in the Battle of Okinawa in 1945, it has been neatly restored in the postwar

years. Stop at **Naha Main Place**, the largest shopping mall in Naha, for lunch (on your own). Explore the **Okinawa Prefectural Museum and Art Museum** before returning to Naha. Let your creative side loose at the **Naha Pottery Museum**, where you will get a chance to **decorate your own Shisa**, a traditional Ryukyuan cultural artifact and decoration. Often seen in pairs and resemble a cross between a lion and a dog, shisa are from Okinawan mythology, and are believed to protect from some evils. People place pairs of shisa on their rooftops or flanking gates to their houses, with the left shisa traditionally has a closed mouth, the right one an open mouth. The open mouth shisa traditionally wards off evil spirits, while the closed mouth shisa keeps good spirits in. A great souvenir of your trip to Okinawa. Return to the hotel for dinner. (B, D)

**Day 8: Wed, Mar 29** — NAHA — NANJO — NAHA. Another full day of exploring is ahead! Start with a visit to **Shuri Castle** (Shurijo), the most important castle of the Ryukyu Kingdom, serving both as the central government office and royal residence. Although the main buildings of Shuri Castle were destroyed in a fire in October 2019, reconstruction to bring back the castle to its former glory is expected to be completed in 2026. Shurijo is the only castle in Okinawa that has been reconstructed. Only ruins remain of all the other castles. Then visit **Okinawa World**, a theme park about Okinawan culture. The park's main attractions are a massive natural cave, a craft village, and a snake museum. With a total length of five kilometers, **Gyokusendo Cave** is the longest of the many caves in the south of Okinawa Island and the second longest cave in the entire country. 850 meters of the cave are open to the public and feature spectacular stalactites and stalagmites. The **Kingdom Village** is a nice replica of a traditional Ryukyu village with workshops introducing the various traditional Okinawan crafts, such as weaving, dyeing, paper making, pottery, sugar cane processing, the making of music instruments, and the more recently introduced glass blowing. Colorful **Ryukyu glass** is one of those **must have souvenirs** when visiting Okinawa. Taking a tour of the work shop allows visitors to see how the craftsmen create their art. Hands-on experiences are offered at many of the workshops. After a stop at **Masahiro Sake Brewery**, return to hotel. This evening enjoy dinner and a **Ryukyu Dance Performance** at a local restaurant. (B, D)

**Day 9: Thur, Mar 30** — NAHA — OSAKA — KYOTO. This morning we depart Naha and fly to Osaka. Transfer to by coach to the hotel in Kyoto. The remainder of your day is at your leisure. Your hotel is surrounded by department stores, specialty stores, and restaurants. A perfect opportunity to fulfill your shopping list. Your local guide will be available to assist as needed. KYOTO TOKYU HOTEL (3 Nights) (B)

**Day 10: Fri, Mar 31** — KYOTO. After a delicious Japanese/Western buffet breakfast at the hotel, embark on a full day of sightseeing beginning with a visit to **Kiyomizu Temple** (literally “Pure Water Temple”). Next we visit **Nijo Castle**. After the Tokugawa Shogunate fell in 1867, Nijo Castle was used as an imperial palace for a while before being donated to the city and opened up to the public as a historic site. Its palace buildings are arguably the best surviving examples of castle palace architecture of Japan's feudal era. Then, we visit **Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion)**, a Zen Temple whose top two floors are completely covered in gold leaf. Today's hands-on experience is “**Surikomi Yuzen (brush dyed Yuzen)**.” Since the patterns are dyed by placing a paper stencil over a table mat you can make an authentic piece, even if this is your first time. Return to the hotel for dinner. (B, L, D)

**Day 11: Sat, Apr 01** — KYOTO — ARASHIYAMA — KAMEOKA — ARASHIYAMA — KYOTO. After breakfast, travel to Arashiyama. Board the **Sagano Torokko Ressha (Sagano Romantic Train)** to Kameoka. Relax on a cruise on an **old fashioned wooden boat down the Hozu River**. The boats are manually rowed by experienced boatmen, who will tell you about local history as you travel down river, seeing beautiful natural scenery and wildlife along the way! Enjoy a very special lunch, a local Arashiyama specialty — **Yudofu (Boiled Tofu) Set Menu**. After lunch, you have the choice of several activities. Relax in the “gender segregated” **open-air hot springs/onsen bath** with 100% natural hot spring water, the only one in Arashiyama with a great view of Togetsukyo



Bridge, the Oi River, and Mount Atago (fees apply). Explore the famous **Arashiyama Bamboo Forests**. Or shop for world-famous Arashiyama bamboo products. Return to Kyoto, stop at an **AEON Mall** for dinner and shopping (on own). Return to the hotel. (B, L)

**Day 12: Sun, Apr 02** — KYOTO — NARA — OSAKA. After breakfast, check out from hotel. A full day of sightseeing is ahead. On our way to Osaka, view the stunning vermilion colored **Fushimi Inari Shrine**, whose 4km long tunnel of scarlet torii gates was featured on the film *Memoirs of a Geisha*. Before lunch (on your own), experience a **traditional Japanese Tea Ceremony**. Next visit **Todoiji Temple** in Nara. Todoiji, the largest wooden building in Japan, houses the largest bronze statue of Buddha at 16.3 meters high. The surrounding **Nara Park** is inhabited by **over 1,000 deer**. Arrive in Osaka for an evening at your leisure. HOTEL GRANVIA OSAKA (1 Night) (B)

**Day 13 Mon, Apr 03** — OSAKA — HONOLULU. After hotel checkout, start the day with a visit to **Kuromon Ichiba Market**, a lively covered market which stretches for 580 meters in Osaka's Chuo Ward. The market is famous for its fresh seafood, fruits and vegetables, meats, dried fish, pickles and confectionery. Many stalls will prepare, cook and serve their food to you right on the spot! An excellent place to stroll, sample, and snack on a delicious variety of fresh market foods. Next, visit **Dotonbori**, one of Osaka's most popular tourist destinations, this street runs parallel to the Dotonbori canal. It is a popular shopping and entertainment district and is also known as a food destination. **Shinsaibashi Shopping Arcade** and the surrounding area is Osaka's premier shopping center. Approximately 600 meters long, this area is unique as it combines chain retail stores and trendy boutiques with expensive department stores and top designer fashion labels. A final shopping stop will be made at an **AEON Mall** before transferring to Kansai International Airport for our return flight home. Depart Osaka and arrive Honolulu the same day. Aloha and Welcome Home! (B)

**UNESCO World Heritage Sites:** Gusuku Sites and Related Properties of the Kingdom of Ryukyu (2000), Kiyomizu Temple (1994), Nijo Castle (1994), Kinkakuji Temple (1994), Todoiji Temple (1998).

† Early Booking Discount is per person. Purchase of Non-Stop Travel's complete Air and Land Package is required. †† Earn Rewards Every Time You Refer a Friend. For each “New-to-NonStop Travel” customer you refer, both you and your referral can receive a \$25 discount off your next NST escorted group. **Special Assistance:** You must notify NST, at time of reservation, of any disability requiring special attention. NST reserves the right to cancel your booking or terminate your vacation if your special needs or disabilities are not suitable for the vacation or if you are not traveling with a companion who will provide all the assistance you require. **Wheelchair and Electric Scooter access outside of the USA is severely restricted.** 090222

