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Off the Beaten Path: A Different Side of Japan

2025 SUMMER GRAND OKINAWA, ISE GRAND SHRINE, TOBA, SHIRAHAMA, MT. KOYA, WAKAYAMA & OSAKA SHOPPING

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11 Nights / 13 Days • 23 Meals (11 Breakfasts, 4 Lunches, 8 Dinners)
Escorted from Honolulu • Includes English-Speaking Local Guide
June 02 – 14, 2025 • Tour Manager: Estrella Roznerski

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 • Nago • Onna • Manza • Motobu • Nakijin • Kitanakagusuku
Nanjo • Toba • Ise • Shirahama • Mt. Koya • Wakayama • Osaka

OKINAWA HIGHLIGHTS (6 NIGHTS): "Ryuzen Zome" Coral Dyeing Experience
Shuri Castle • Ryusou Ryukyu Kimono Dress-Up • San-A Naha Main Place
Himeyuri Peace Museum • Okinawa Peace Memorial Park • Mabuni Hill
Awamori (Rice Liquor) Factory • Michi-no-Eki • Ryukyu Mura Village • Churaumi Aquarium
Nakijin Castle Site • AEON MALL Okinawa Rycom • Okinawa World • Gyokusendo Stalactite Cave
Habu (Snake) Museum • Glass Factory • Shisa Painting Experience

HONSHU HIGHLIGHTS (5 NIGHTS): Ise Grand Shrine (Ise Jingu Shrine) • Okage Yokocho Street
Toba Aquarium • Mikimoto Pearl Island • Kadocho Soy Sauce Factory • Ota Kyusuke Miso Factory
Umeboshi (Salted Plum) Factory Shopping • Kuroshio Fish Market • Mt. Koya • Kongobuji
Wakayama Castle • Dotonbori Shopping • Kuromon Ichiba Market • AEON MALL Rinku Sennan

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES: Gusuku Sites and Related Properties of the Kingdom of Ryukyu

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Day 1: Mon, June 02 – HONOLULU. Depart Honolulu via Japan Airlines flt #73 at 12:45 pm.

Day 2: Tue, June 03 – TOKYO – NAHA. Arrive in the Haneda International Airport at 3:55 pm. After entry formalities, enjoy a bento box at the domestic departure gate. Depart Haneda Domestic Airport via Japan Airlines flt #925 at 8:05 pm and arrive in Naha at 10:35 pm. Transfer by coach to the hotel in Naha. HOTEL COLLECTIVE (2 Nights) (D)

Day 3: Wed, June 04 – NAHA – ITOMAN – NAHA. After a sumptuous buffet breakfast at your hotel, we embark on a full day of discovery! Coral is a fundamental part of the history and culture of the Okinawan Islands. Many areas of Okinawa's main island are made of Ryukyu limestone formed by ancient coral reefs several hundred thousand years ago. Today, coral fossils are often used to create various art pieces in Okinawa. Try your hand at bringing your own art to life when you learn how to **decorate a tote bag** using a **coral dyeing** technique done only in Okinawa, "**Ryuzen Zome**." Visit **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. **Dress-up in Ryusou Ryukyu kimonos** for a group photo! Spend some leisure time at **San-A Naha Main Place**, the largest shopping mall in Omoromachi, Naha City, for shopping and lunch (on your own). After lunch, we will visit two WWII memorial sites. Begin by exploring the **Himeyuri Peace Museum**, which details what the Okinawan people experienced – from the atrocities of war, to their struggles during American occupation, and the difficulties they faced with the switching of government powers in the post-war years. The museum also 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. Testimonials of the few survivors of the Battle of Okinawa are exhibited here – offering detailed recollections of their painful experiences. Next is the **Okinawa Peace Memorial Park**, situated on **Mabuni Hill**, the site where the Battle of Okinawa ended, was created to mourn the loss of close to a quarter of a million people. One of the key features of the park is the Cornerstone of Peace inscribed with the names of some 200,000 individuals, including civilians and Japanese and foreign soldiers, who lost their lives in the Battle of Okinawa. The concept of the stone monuments is to remember those who died and to pray for them, to share lessons learned from war and to provide a place for meditation and learning. Return to the hotel for a brief rest before walking to a nearby restaurant for dinner. (B, D)

*One Bag will be kept at the Hotel Collective until your return. Prepare an overnight bag for one night in Manza.

Day 4: Thur, June 05 – NAHA – NAGO – ONNA – MANZA. After breakfast, 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. Stop at the roadside **Michi-no-Eki** for a chance to stretch the legs and get a little shopping done as well. 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. After lunch (on your own), explore the **Ryukyu Mura Village**, a small theme park about Okinawan culture in the form of a recreated village from the times of the Ryukyu Kingdom. The highlight of the village is the Eisa show. Eisa, a form of folk dance originating in the Okinawa Islands, that is performed by the young people of each community during the Bon festival to honor the spirits of their ancestors. In the finale of the Eisa show, visitors can join in on the dance known as kachashi. The term "kachashi" is a word from the Okinawan dialect and means "to mix." It implies the idea of sharing happiness, which fosters a sense of unity that transcends borders and language barriers. Transfer to the hotel in Manza. Relax before dinner at the hotel tonight. ANA INTERCONTINENTAL MANZA BEACH RESORT (1 Night) (B, D)

Day 5: Fri, June 06 – MANZA – MOTOBU – NAKIJIN – 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 of marine life. Next, visit the ruins of **Nakijin Castle**. Learn about the history of Okinawa. The castle – a former residence of the Ryukyu Kingdom governor during the 14th century – is a designated UNESCO World

Heritage site. On the way back to Naha City, stop at **AEON MALL Okinawa Rycom**, the largest shopping center in the Okinawa Prefecture. With 220 specialty stores, 60 restaurants, a multiplex cinema, and the world's largest food court with nearly 7,700 seats – it's almost like a small city. Return to the hotel in Naha. The remainder of the evening is at your leisure. HOTEL COLLECTIVE (3 Nights) (B, L)

Day 6: Sat, June 07 – NAHA. Full day at leisure. This is the perfect opportunity to visit with family and friends. If you haven't gotten enough shopping done yet, don't worry. Your hotel is centrally located on Kokusai-dori, the main shopping street in Naha. Many of the shops and restaurants on the 1.6 kilometers street opens at 10:00 am and remain open until 11:00 pm (or longer). A "not to miss" on Kokusai-dori is the Don Quijote store that is open until 3:00 am every day! It's the perfect location to find souvenirs and omiyage. Shoppers will also enjoy Heiwa-dori, a covered arcade just off of Kokusai-dori. (B)

Day 7: Sun, June 08 – NAHA – NANJO – NAHA. Another full day of exploring is ahead! Start the day with a visit to **Okinawa World** a theme park about Okinawan culture. The park's main attractions are a massive natural cave, a craft village, and a **habu (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. Enjoy a buffet lunch while there. You'll then have your chance to **paint your own shisa** – a traditional Ryukyuan cultural artifact derived from Chinese guardian lions, often seen in similar pairs, resembling a cross between a lion and a dog, from Okinawan mythology. Shisas are believed to protect from some evils – with the left shisa traditionally having a closed mouth keeping good spirits in, while the open mouth shisa on the right traditionally wards off evil spirits. This evening enjoy dinner at the hotel. (B, L, D)

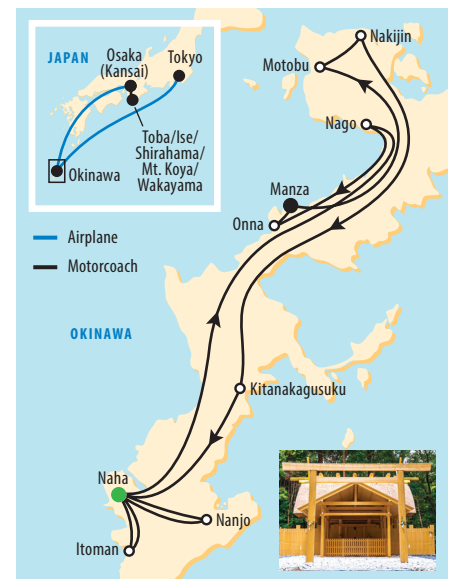
Day 8: Mon, June 09 – NAHA – KANSAI – TOBA. Depart Naha Airport via Japan Transocean Air flt #4 at 11:15 am and arrive at the Kansai Airport at 1:15 pm. Transfer by motor coach to your hotel in Toba. Enjoy dinner at the hotel. TODAYA (2 Nights) (B, D)

*Baggage will be sent from Toba to Wakayama, skipping Shirahama. Prepare an overnight bag for one night.

Day 9: Tue, June 10 – TOBA – ISE – TOBA. After breakfast, travel to Ise and visit the **Ise Grand Shrine** (Ise Jingu Shrine), the most important Shinto shrine in the country. Dedicated to the sun goddess Amaterasu, Ise Grand Shrine is the ancestral shrine of the emperors of Japan. Next, explore **Okage Yokochu Street**, a street reproducing the crowded Ise temple town during the end stage of the Edo Period (1603–1868). There are many shops for you to explore and enjoy lunch (on your own) there. Next, visit **Toba Aquarium**, which contains one of the largest number of species of fish and animals in Japan spread out over twelve zones. The Toba Aquarium is also the only aquarium in Japan to have a dugong in captivity. Learn about pearls and pearl cultivation at **Mikimoto Pearl Island**. While there, see the ama, the local women who free dive for shellfish, sea vegetables, and other marine products, put on a show demonstrating how they free dive. Return to the hotel for a buffet dinner. (B, D)

Day 10: Wed, June 11 – TOBA – WAKAYAMA – SHIRAHAMA. Depart Toba for Wakayama. After lunch, enjoy learning about, and shopping for, two ingredients essential to Japanese cuisine at the **Kadocho Soy Sauce Factory** and **Ota Kyusuke Miso Factory**. Transfer to the hotel in Shirahama. Enjoy dinner at the hotel. MARRIOTT NANKI SHIRAHAMA (1 Night) (B, L, D)

Day 11: Thur, June 12 – SHIRAHAMA – MT. KOYA – WAKAYAMA. After breakfast depart for Wakayama. Enjoy shopping at **Uneboshi (Salted Plum) Factory**, for this uniquely Japanese staple. Have lunch at **Kuroshio Fish Market**, a bustling seaside fish market offering freshly caught seafood. After lunch, explore **Mt. Koya** (Koya-san), the center of Shingon Buddhism; an important Buddhist sect which was introduced to Japan in 805 by Kobo Daishi (also known as Kukai), one of Japan's most significant religious figures. A small, secluded temple town has developed around the sect's headquarters that Kobo Daishi built on Koyasan's wooded mountaintop. It is also the site of Kobo Daishi's mausoleum and the



start and end point of the Shikoku 88 Temple Pilgrimage. Kobo Daishi began construction on the original Garan temple complex in 826 after wandering the country for years in search of a suitable place to center his religion. Since then over hundred temples have sprung up along the streets of Mt. Koya. We visit the most important among them, **Kongobuji**, the head temple of Shingon Buddhism. Dine at a local izakaya restaurant for dinner. HOTEL GRANVIA WAKAYAMA (1 Night) (B, L, D)

Day 12: Fri, June 13 – WAKAYAMA – OSAKA. Begin the day with a visit to **Wakayama Castle**. Built on the orders of warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi in 1585. Unfortunately the castle did not survive World War II, and most of the present buildings are a 1958 post-war reconstruction. Only the Okaguchi Gate and stone walls remain from the original castle. Next explore **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. Lastly, visit **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. Now we make way to our hotel in Osaka. An evening of leisure will allow you the chance to explore the area around the hotel on your own. Your Tour Guide will have suggestions for dinner and shopping. HOTEL ROYAL CLASSIC OSAKA (1 Night) (B)

Day 13: Sat, June 14 – OSAKA – HONOLULU. After a morning of leisure, depart the hotel for a final shopping stop at the **AEON MALL Rinku Sennan** before transferring to Itami Osaka International Airport for our return flight home. Depart Osaka via Japan Airlines flt #128 at 5:00 pm and arrive in the Haneda Domestic Airport at 6:20 pm. Depart Haneda International Airport via Japan Airlines flt #74 at 9:05 pm and arrive in Honolulu at 9:50 am the same day. Aloha and welcome home! (B)

UNESCO World Heritage Sites: Gusuku Sites and Related Properties of the Kingdom of Ryukyu (2000).

*Fares are per person, USD based on double occupancy and include all airline taxes and fees. Airline fuel supplements, taxes and fees are subject to change and tour member is responsible for any increases. Some airline-imposed personal charges, including but not limited to baggage, priority boarding and special seating, may apply. For details visit www.tripadvisor.com/AirlineFees. After initial deposit, a \$75 per person Non-Stop Travel (NST) cancellation fee will apply. Group departures may be cancelled, if there are less than 24 tour members. Final payment to NST for "non-cruise-line" air and land package must be made by money order or personal check. NST does not guarantee that all tour members will fly together with Tour Manager. Tour Manager assignments, number of meals offered on tour, tour price, discount, and the "final" tour itinerary are subject to change with/without notice. NST reserves the right to correct errors or omissions including but not limited to, fares, fees, and surcharges at any time. Deposit: \$500 per person. Final payment due: 01/23/25. NST at its discretion, may use group and individual photos on its website, print, television, and various social media. † Early booking discount is per person. Purchase of NST's complete Air and Land Package is required. ‡ Earn rewards every time you refer a friend. For each "new-to-NST" 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.** 091024