



Off the Beaten Path: A Different Side of Japan

2026 FALL OKINAWA NAHA ROPE FESTIVAL

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9 Nights / 11 Days • 17 Meals (9 Breakfasts, 3 Lunches, 5 Dinners)
Escorted from Honolulu • Includes an English-Speaking Local Guide
October 04 – 14, 2026 • Tour Manager: Lisa McKee

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."

NAHA ROPE FESTIVAL: Long ago, tugs-of-war were held throughout the island to give thanks for a bountiful harvest and to pray for rain. The tug-of-war was a community ritual in which people of all ages took part, symbolizing Okinawa's spirit of yuimaaru (cooperation). The Naha Great Tug-of-War is the highlight of the Naha Rope Festival, the largest cultural festival in the prefecture, which lasts for three days over a long weekend in mid-October. Its roots can be traced back to the 17th century, when the two rulers of Naha battled one another. Their battle is represented in the tug-of-war between the two factions from the East and West. In 1997 it was officially recognized in the *Guinness Book of Records* as the largest tug-of-war with the largest straw rope in the world. About 280,000 people visit the event every year, of which about 15,000 can actually take part in the pulling.

VISIT: Kansai, Naha, Onna, Manza, Motobu, Nakijin, Kitanakagusuku, Itoman & Nanjo

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS: Shuri Castle, Ryukyu Mura, Okinawa Churaumi Aquarium, Nakijin Castle, Okashigoten Onna Store, AEON MALL Okinawa Rycom, Naha Rope Festival, Himeyuri Peace Museum, Mabuni Hill, Okinawa Peace Memorial Park, Okinawa World, Gyokusendo Cave, Habu (Snake) Museum & Ryukyu Dance Performance

HANDS-ON EXPERIENCES: Shisa Painting, Ryusou Ryukyu Kimono Dress-Up, Ryuzen Zome (Coral Dyeing), Okinawan Sweets Making Class

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

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Day 1: Sun, Oct 04 – HONOLULU. Depart Honolulu via Japan Airlines flt #799 at 11:35 pm.

Day 2: Mon, Oct 05 – KANSAI. Arrive at Kansai International Airport at 3:40 pm. After entry formalities, walk to the hotel located within the airport. Dinner will be served at the hotel. HOTEL NIKKO KANSAI AIRPORT (1 Night) (D)

Day 3: Tue, Oct 06 – KANSAI – NAHA. Due to the early flight, enjoy a boxed breakfast provided by the hotel. Walk back to the Kansai airport terminal. Depart Kansai Domestic Airport via Japan Transocean Air flt #1 at 8:20 am and arrive at the Naha Domestic Airport at 10:30 am. After lunch, you'll have the chance to let your creative side loose when you **paint a 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. Transfer to the hotel. Enjoy some free time to relax or explore the hotel surroundings before it's time to walk to a nearby restaurant for dinner. HOTEL COLLECTIVE (2 Nights) (B, L, D)

Day 4: Wed, Oct 07 – NAHA. Begin your half day of exploration 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. **Dress up in Ryusou Ryukyu kimonos** for a group photo! 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 **ryuzen zome**, a **coral dyeing** technique done only in Okinawa. Return to the hotel, where the remainder of the day is at your leisure. The Local Guide will have suggestions for nearby dining and shopping opportunities. (B, L)

*Baggage will be held at the hotel in Naha. Prepare an overnight bag for two nights.

Day 5: Thur, Oct 08 – NAHA – ONNA – MANZA. After breakfast, we head north to Onna and spend the morning at **Ryukyu Mura**, 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, is performed during the obon festival to honor the spirits of one's ancestors. In the finale of the eisa show, visitors can join in on the dance known as kachashi. The word "kachashi" in the Okinawan dialect means "to mix" – it implies the idea of sharing happiness, which fosters a sense of unity that transcends borders and language barriers. Enjoy lunch (on your own) here. After lunch, take an **Okinawan sweets making class**. Transfer to the hotel in Manza. View the beautiful coral reefs, cobalt blue ocean views and pristine white beaches of Manza Beach from your hotel. Enjoy dinner at the hotel. ANA INTERCONTINENTAL MANZA BEACH RESORT (2 Nights) (B, D)

Day 6: Fri, Oct 09 – MANZA – MOTOBU – NAKIJIN – MANZA. After an incredible breakfast buffet, enjoy a visit to the **Okinawa Churaumi**

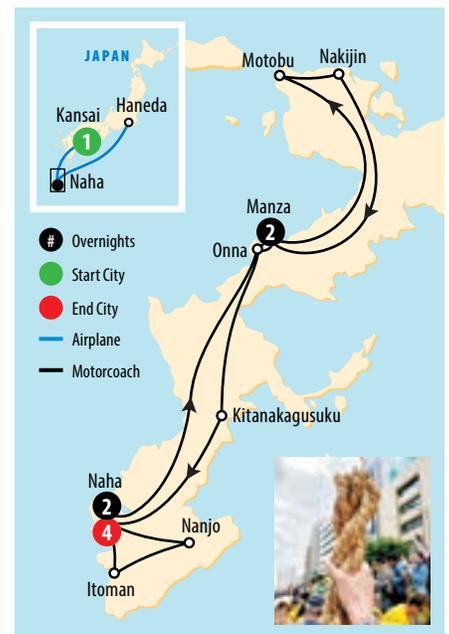
Aquarium, one of the largest and most renowned aquariums in the world. Located within the Ocean Expo Park, a large, multi-attraction recreational complex, it is widely considered Japan's best aquarium. A highlight of the aquarium is the massive Kuroshio Sea Tank, one of the largest in the world. The tank takes its name from the warm Kuroshio current which plays a large part in the variety of Okinawa's marine life. Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant. Next, visit the ruins of **Nakijin Castle** and learn about the history of Okinawa. The castle is a former residence of the Ryukyu Kingdom governor during the 14th century and is a designated UNESCO World Heritage site. Return to the hotel for dinner. (B, L, D)

Day 7: Sat, Oct 10 – MANZA – ONNA – KITANAKAGUSUKU – NAHA. After breakfast, depart the hotel in Manza for Naha. Start the day with a visit to **Okashigoten Onna Store**, the perfect spot to shop for sweets and omiyage from all over Okinawa! Then, stop at **AEON MALL Okinawa Rycom** for shopping and lunch (on own). After lunch, transfer to your hotel in Naha. The remainder of the day is at your leisure. HOTEL COLLECTIVE (4 Nights) (B)

Note: The bus cannot access the front of the hotel during the Naha Rope Festival event. The bus will stop at the nearest road to the hotel.

Day 8: Sun, Oct 11 – NAHA. Today is the day for the **Naha Rope Festival!** Highway 58, at the Kumoji intersection in downtown Naha, will be closed to vehicular traffic as more than 280,000 people gather to observe the world's largest tug-of-war. 15,000 participants will join in for the 30 minute contest of strength, determination, and cooperation. After the contest, participants and observers cut away pieces of the rope as lucky charms or souvenirs. The remainder of the day is at your leisure. (B)

Day 9: Mon, Oct 12 – NAHA – ITOMAN – NANJO – NAHA. After breakfast, we 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. Spend the afternoon exploring **Okinawa World**, a theme park about Okinawan culture. The park's main attractions are a **massive natural cave**, **craft village**, and a **habu (snake) museum**. With a total length of 5km, **Gyokusendo Cave** is the longest of the many caves in southern Okinawa, and the second longest cave in the entire country. 850m 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 free time here for lunch (on your own). This evening, enjoy dinner at a local restaurant with a **Ryuku dance performance** included. (B, D)

Day 10: Tue, Oct 13 – NAHA. Full day at leisure. The perfect day to relax and/or visit with family and friends in Okinawa. Don't miss the out on the numerous shopping opportunities on Kokusai-dori, the main shopping street in Naha, including the Heiwa-dori shopping arcade or the Don Quijote that is open until 3:00 am every day! Your Local Guide will be available to assist as needed. (B)

Day 11: Wed, Oct 14 – NAHA – HANEDA – HONOLULU. After breakfast, the morning is free at your leisure until it is time to head to the airport. Depart the Naha Domestic Airport via Japan Transocean Air flt #914 at 3:50 pm and arrive at the Haneda Domestic Airport at 6:15 pm. Depart the Haneda International Airport via Japan Airlines flt #74 at 9:05 pm and arrive in Honolulu at 9:30 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" cruise or 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: 05/27/26. 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.** J16633 013026