

Affordable Luxury — Small Group Tours



Off the Beaten Path: A Different Side of Japan

2026 CHERRY BLOSSOMS — RYUKYU OKINAWA ISLANDS TOUR #2

Discover Ishigaki, Iriomote & Yubu Islands
Plus Okinawa Main Island

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9 Nights / 11 Days • 21 Meals (9 Breakfasts, 6 Lunches, 6 Dinners)
Escorted from Honolulu • Includes an English-Speaking Local Guide
January 15 – 25, 2026 • Tour Managers: Erik & Lianne Wong

VISIT: Haneda, Naha, Nanjo, Itoman, Ishigaki, Kabira Bay, Iriomote, Yubu Island & Nago

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 (Shurijo). 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."

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2026 Cherry Blossoms – Ryukyu Okinawa Islands



Day 1: Thur, Jan 15 – HONOLULU. Depart Honolulu via Japan Airlines flt #73 at 11:30 am.

Day 2: Fri, Jan 16 – HANEDA. Arrive at the Haneda International Airport at 3:55 pm. After entry formalities, walk to your hotel connected to the airport terminal. Enjoy a buffet dinner at the hotel. HOTEL VILLA FONTAINE GRAND HANEDA AIRPORT (1 Night) (D)

Day 3: Sat, Jan 17 – HANEDA – NAHA. After a breakfast buffet at your hotel, transfer back to the Haneda airport terminal. Enjoy a bento box at the domestic departure gate. Depart Haneda Domestic Airport via Japan Airlines flt #915 at 11:55 am and arrive at the Naha International Airport at 2:50 pm. Begin your introduction to Okinawa with a hands-on experience – when you **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. Transfer to the hotel. Enjoy dinner at the hotel. HOTEL COLLECTIVE (2 Nights) (B, L, D)

Day 4: Sun, Jan 18 – NAHA – NANJO – ITOMAN – 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, craft village, and **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. 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, L, D)

Day 5: Mon, Jan 19 – NAHA – ISHIGAKI – KABIRA BAY – ISHIGAKI. After breakfast, transfer to the Naha Airport. Depart the Naha Domestic Airport via TransOcean Air flt #607 at 10:35 am and arrive at the Painushima Ishigaki Airport at 11:35 am. Travel to Kabira Bay, which is renowned for its white sands, turquoise waters and dense vegetation, the bay forms part of the Iriomote-Ishigaki National Park. Alongside Mt. Omoto, it has been designated a Place of Scenic Beauty. Enjoy a relaxing **glass-bottom boat ride** and lunch here. Enjoy dinner at the hotel. ANA INTERCONTINENTAL ISHIGAKI RESORT (3 Nights) (B, L, D)

Day 6: Tue, Jan 20 – ISHIGAKI – IRIOMOTE – YUBU ISLAND – ISHIGAKI. Transfer to the Ishigaki Port after breakfast. **Travel to Iriomote by boat**. Iriomote is the second largest of the Ryukyu Islands, behind Okinawa itself. Much of the island remains uninhabited and untouched. Explore the **mangrove on a boat tour**. Then travel to nearby **Yubu Island by buffalo cart**. With water usually reaching only up to knee height, the buffalo cart ride will last only 20 minutes. Transportation via water buffalo ensures that transport can occur even during low tide. Enjoy lunch and free time on Yubu Island. After lunch, return to Iriomote. Then **back to Ishigaki by boat**. Return to the hotel for dinner. (B, L, D)

Day 7: Wed, Jan 21 – ISHIGAKI. Ishigaki is known for its sugar cane industry, with sugarcane being the largest agricultural product in the region. Sugarcane is grown and harvested on the island, with the harvest season typically occurring from December to April. Sugarcane is processed locally, and the resulting products, including brown sugar, are a specialty of the region. Okinawan brown sugar, or kokoto, is a unique product made from sugarcane, processed without separating the molasses. Visit a **sugarcane factory** and see how this product is grown, harvested, and processed locally. After lunch, **learn how weaving is done** in Ishigaki. Your finished product will be a great souvenir of this trip! Spend free time at **San-A Mart**, which include retailers selling cosmetics, clothing, souvenirs and every day goods at reasonable prices. You'll have time to get dinner (on your own) at the restaurants or supermarket within the mart. Return back to the hotel for an evening of leisure. (B, L)

Day 8: Thur, Jan 22 – ISHIGAKI – NAHA – NAGO – NAHA. After a breakfast buffet at your hotel, transfer to the Ishigaki Airport Terminal. Depart Ishigaki via Japan Transocean Air flt #608 at 11:20 am

Discover Ishigaki, Iriomote & Yubu Islands Plus Okinawa Main Island



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RYUKYU ISLANDS



and arrive at the Naha International Airport at 12:25 pm. After lunch, 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 Ryukyuu 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 a **coral dyeing** technique done only in Okinawa, **"Ryuzen Zome."** This evening enjoy a special **Ryukyu music and dance show** during dinner. HOTEL COLLECTIVE (3 Nights) (B, L, D)

Day 9: Fri, Jan 23 – 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 kilometer 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 10: Sat, Jan 24 – NAHA. After a morning of leisure, transfer to the Convention Center for the **Mori no Nigiwai**. Mori no Nigiwai initially began with the concept of unearthing and rediscovering various festivals and performing arts that were slowly being lost, forgotten or left behind as Okinawa moved into the 20th century. Meticulously devoted Okinawans dedicated themselves to gathering all of the pieces from various times and places, then displaying them in a single location for people to enjoy as a trip down memory lane. Over the years, the event has increasingly taken on a regional revitalization necessity, and has expanded across Japan, protecting and nurturing traditional cultures of various regions and contributing to the support of artistic activities of young people engaging in original and creative performing arts. Enjoy lunch (on your own) from the food stalls set up next to the venue. The food service is available before the show, allowing visitors to savor the Okinawa soba noodles in soup, and Okinawan style deep-fried tempura. Return to the hotel after the performances for an evening of leisure. (B)

Day 11: Sun, Jan 25 – NAHA – HANEDA – HONOLULU. After breakfast, the morning is free at your leisure until it is time to head to the airport. Before arriving at the airport, take a tour of an **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. Depart Naha via Japan Airlines flt #914 at 3:55 pm and arrive at the Haneda Domestic Airport at 6:05 pm. Depart Haneda International Airport via Japan Airlines flt #72 at 9:55 pm and arrive in Honolulu at 9:40 am the same day. Aloha and welcome home! (B)

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

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TOUR HIGHLIGHTS: Okinawa World, Gyokusendo Cave, Habu (Snake) Museum, Glass Factory, Himeyuri Peace Museum, Okinawa Peace Memorial Park, Mabuni Hill, Glass-bottom Boat Ride, Boat Ride to Iriomote Island, Mangrove Tour by Boat, Buffalo Cart Ride to Yubu Island, Boat Ride to Ishigaki, Sugarcane Factory, San-A Mart, Shuri Castle (Shurijo), Mori no Nigiwai & Awamori (Rice Liquor) Factory

HANDS-ON EXPERIENCES: Shisa Painting, Weaving Lesson, Ryusou Ryukyu Dress-Up & Coral Dyeing

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

HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS:



HANEDA AIRPORT — HOTEL VILLA FONTAINE GRAND HANEDA AIRPORT (1 NIGHT):

The hotel is conveniently located just a one-minute walk from Terminal 3. Japan is one of the world's leading onsen hot spring countries, and have long been loved by the Japanese for their ability to prevent disease, promote health, bestow beauty and anti-aging benefits, and soothe the body and mind. Shake the weariness of the 9½ hour flight as you relax in the onsen (for the nominal fee of 2,000 yen). Or get an introduction to Japanese convenience stores at Lawson (open 24 hours) on the 2nd floor.



NAHA — HOTEL COLLECTIVE (2 NIGHTS + 3 NIGHTS = 5 NIGHTS TOTAL):

Conveniently located on Kokusai-Dori, home to famous department stores and shopping malls, such as Mitsukoshi, large-scale discount retailer Don Quijote, numerous souvenir stores, steakhouses, and Okinawan eateries. With many stores open until 11:00 pm at night, the hotel's centralized location makes shopping for souvenirs after a day of touring. The premium twin rooms are located on the top floor – with beautiful ocean views awaiting those staying on the east side and intoxicating sunsets welcome those staying in rooms on the west. The Executive Lounge is available for those staying in the premium twin rooms — offering refined relaxation with breakfast, tea time (7:00 – 8:00 pm) and cocktail hour (5:00 – 7:00 pm).



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ISHIGAKI — ANA INTERCONTINENTAL ISHIGAKI RESORT (3 NIGHTS):

Nestled at the southernmost point of Japan's Okinawa region, ANA InterContinental Ishigaki Resort is a haven of natural beauty. Boasting endless horizons of azure water, our luxury resort offers direct access to Maesato Beach, while indoor and outdoor pools mean you can swim all year round. Located on the 2nd to 5th floors of the Club InterContinental, these deluxe rooms offer a spacious private space with a resort feel that is a perfect fusion of the traditional beauty of Ishigaki Island and the InterContinental brand. From the balcony, you can enjoy an unobstructed view of the blue ocean. You can enjoy the ultimate luxury moment while feeling the pleasant sea breeze. The Club InterContinental Lounge is



a luxurious and tranquil space only available to Club InterContinental room and suite guests. Enjoy stunning views of the emerald green ocean, a luxurious environment with light meals, drinks and 24-hour butler services. The lounge offers a variety of complimentary food and beverage services including daily breakfast, afternoon tea, evening cocktails and canapés and refreshments. All meals are prepared by an expert chef in a private kitchen using seasonal local Okinawan ingredients. Enjoy a glass of wine, sake, shochu, or a cocktail prepared by an expert mixologist, as you watch the sunset over Ishigaki Island. The secluded Club InterContinental Pool and Garden, is dedicated to guests staying in Club InterContinental rooms or suites. Relax in your own private sanctuary time with tranquil gardens that reach out from the main area of the resort to the ocean. Guests have the option of enjoying refreshments or breakfast by the Club InterContinental pool or in the lounge.

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