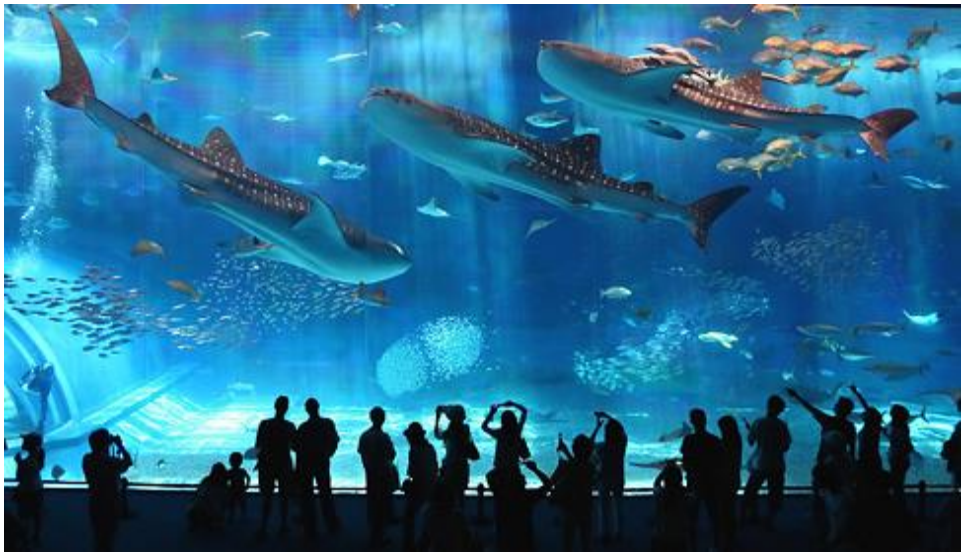
Motobu Guide

Welcome to Motobu Town! This is an extremely beautiful part of the main island. Here you can get away from the concrete and busy life in the cities. You can see many beaches just by driving along the road. Motobu, specifically Izumi, is well known for the many unique coffee shops/restaurants. This area is also famous for *mikan* (juicy little oranges) and *mikan* picking in the winter months. It's a popular destination for tourists because it is home to Churaumi Aquarium and Ocean Expo Park. Be prepared for some heavy traffic over the weekends and look forward to enjoying a full day of a little bit of everything—snorkeling or swimming at the beach, coffee in the hills, lunch at a café, a walk around the aquarium, dinner at Motobu Pizza Place, or sunsets on Sesoko Beach. Happy adventures!

PLACES TO GO



Churaumi Aquarium

Churaumi Aquarium

This is one of Okinawa's top tourist spots! It's a large aquarium famous for its giant tank with whale sharks (pictured above). There are a ton of different marine animals you can see here, and they have a variety of shows and events throughout the day. You can also learn about marine life that is specific and unique to Okinawa! In the summer, the aquarium is open for longer hours. Check out the hours and admission price on their website.

For more information, visit Okinawa Churaumi Aquarium's homepage.

Ocean Expo Park

Churaumi Aquarium is part of the Ocean Expo Park. The park is about three kilometers long along the coast and offers small shuttle buses that go between the park's attractions for a small fee. The various park sites and facilities are also connected by walking paths. You can visit a beautiful arboretum and walk through tropical flowers and trees, or you can visit the Oceanic Cultural Museum, which has a planetarium where you can learn about the stars in the Okinawan sky. There's also a recreation of a 17th–19th century Okinawan village. Even if you spend a whole day here you can't possibly see everything. Though you'll be a local walking among tourists, it's worth checking this park out. It's also a great place to bring family or friends who are visiting.

For more information, visit the Ocean Expo Park website.

Tropical Dream Center

This Center is also a part of the Expo Park. If you are really into flora, then you could take all morning here. There is a huge orchid house with orchids from all over the world. There are also other displays of vegetation from different parts of the world. Entrance into the park area is free, but the Dream Center is ¥1000.



Nakijin Castle Ruins

Nakijin Castle Ruins & Museum

Nakijin Castle Ruins is a UNESCO World Heritage site and an important castle from the ancient Ryukyu Kingdom. Here, you can enjoy a small glimpse of Okinawa's past—the large stones and sprawling remains of a wall. There are many historic and sacred sites throughout the park. You can enjoy walking through nature and learning more about Okinawa's history. Between mid-January to early February, you can enjoy walking through the cherry blossoms, which are the first cherry blossoms to bloom in all of Japan.

Kouri Island

This island is accessible from a scenic bridge and is a popular tourist destination. At Kouri Island Station: Sorahashi (古宇利島の駅ソラハシ), you can go to the beach, enjoy food from a number of restaurants, and sometimes enjoy live performances.

PLACES TO EAT

This area has many unique coffee shops and restaurants dotted around the hills. They are ideal places to enjoy the natural beauty of Northern Okinawa.

Cafes

1. Yachimun Kisa Ten
This is a very well-known coffee shop tucked away in the Izumi Hills. (BBC did a documentary here!) The surroundings are stunning, and it is a must-visit if you're in the North! Iced tea, coffee, hot cocoa, orange juice, and acerola are on sale for around 400 (pricey!). You can also order *hirayachi*, a local Okinawan dish, as a light meal or their unique crepes. Closed on Mondays.

2. Artist's coffee shop – Kaze no Miwa
The man who runs this coffee shop is a well-known artist who paints pictures of Okinawa in watercolors. Closed on Mondays.

3. Coffee shop
This is yet another coffee shop with a good view over the Motobu valley. There are a few gifts you can buy in the attached shop. Closed on Mondays.

4. Aizome Indigo Dyeing
This little teahouse and studio offers herbal teas, iced drinks, light vegetarian meals, and a beautiful view. There is also a little shop inside which sells locally made indigo tie-dyed clothes and fabric. Alongside the coffee shop is the small factory/studio where you can

watch the dyeing take place. If you want to learn how to dye, you can call in advance to book an appointment.

5. Utopia Farm
This ranch has animals to look at, horses to ride, and cows to milk. At the top of a hill, there are great views and ice cream made from the milk of their Jersey cows. The ice cream is really good!

Restaurants

1. Seseragi Kisa (Curry Shop)
This place serves authentic Indian curry with naan bread and yogurt on the side. It is good curry! The interior is quaint, and it is situated next to a little river. For an extra ¥100, you can take a little walk over a bridge and find a picturesque rock garden. It is quite beautiful! Closed on Mondays and Tuesdays.

2. Chie Shokudo
This little restaurant has three items on the menu: miso soup, tofu soup, and Okinawa soba. The miso soup is one of the best I have tasted and is a meal on its own, as there is a lot in it! Closed on Mondays.

3. Arakaki Zen Zai Shop
This place serves only one thing: zenzai. In Okinawa, zenzai usually refers to a dessert with similar ingredients to mainland Japan’s hot zenzai but is served cold on shaved ice. This dessert is a local favorite and a must-try for tourists. On the weekends, this shop invariably has queues and is usually sold out by early afternoon. If you want the real thing, then this is the place to get it!

4. Kishimoto SOBA
The soba noodles at this shop are handmade, making it very famous. It is VERY small and busy on the weekends.

5. Kajinho (aka Pizza in the Sky)
This is the well-known place in Motobu. Only one type of pizza is served, as well as a big salad that can easily be shared in a group of four. Besides the pizza being good, it is located at the top of the hill, offering an excellent place to view the sunset over Motobu Bay. You can clearly see Mina and Ie Islands as well as the town of Motobu. The building itself is also pretty special. You can sit inside on the floor around little wooden tables or out on the lawn in the sunshine. On the weekends, there is a long queue, but it is worth the wait. It opens at noon and closes at 7 pm, but in summer you can hang around after close to watch the sunset.

6. Herb (Vegetarian Restaurant)
This place is located off the beaten track. It is very tranquil, and you can sit on an outdoor deck or inside the air-conditioned room. It serves light vegetarian meals as well as non-alcoholic beverages. It is a nice place to stop in when visiting the Naklijin Castle Ruins.

7. Haru Natural Café
This is a beautiful, artistic café with big windows and a beautiful view over the ocean. This café serves curry, sandwiches, cakes, and drinks, as well as other artsy goods.

8. Green Park Hotel and Golf Course
You can play golf here, and there is a restaurant inside the hotel.

9. Chinese Restaurant

This Chinese restaurant in Nakijin serves very delicious food.

Shopping and Entertainment

10. Antique shop and cheap Kimonos

The owner built this whole castle-like building himself. His wife goes to Kyoto regularly and picks up old kimonos to sell very cheaply here. With a little digging and cleaning up, you can have a very cheap (as little as 200 yennies!), new (to you) kimono. There is also antique furniture and other bits to browse through.

11. BG resort

If you are into marine sports, then this is the place to go. You can ride jet skis, banana boats, and glass-bottomed boats. You can also rent a kayak or go sailing. For those who want to avoid the UV rays and saltwater, there is also an indoor pool!

12. Motobu Gym

If you are in the mood for a little indoor exercise, then why not try out the new Motobu Gym. While the workout and weights room is small, their equipment is relatively new compared to other city gyms in Okinawa! You can also rent badminton and tennis rackets (for a small fee) to play inside the sports hall. For locals, gym access is ¥105 per person, and for those outside of Motobu, it is ¥250.

Ferries

I. To Mina Island – Toguchi Port
II. To Ie Island – Motobu Port
III. To Izena / Iheya Islands – Unten Port

For ferry schedules, check Visit Okinawa Japan's website.

Good Views/ Camping / Picnic places!

A. Mt. Yaedake and the Cherry Blossom Festival (C) (End January)
This mountain is especially beautiful during cherry blossom season. The whole road from top to bottom is lined with cherry trees. At night, lanterns illuminate the beautiful trees. Halfway up the hill is a park where the 2-week festival is held. There is a nice view of Motobu Town as well as the Ie, Sesoko, and Mina Islands.

B. Sesoko Beach and Camp Site and Golf course
Even though this beach is popular on the weekends, it is long enough that you can get away from the crowds. In the summer months, you must pay to park your car, but you can sometimes get away with parking in the golf parking lot (just avoid the gaze of golfers as you walk by with your swimming gear and no clubs!) or in the area that is not a designated parking area. This beach is cleaner than most making it a really nice beach for watching a sunset or having an evening BBQ. On the far right-hand side, there are some caves, and it is well protected from wind, rain, and sunshine. I would recommend other beaches for snorkeling as the fish here are scarce.

There is another beach under the bridge, which is free and very good for swimming. The beach is smaller but still clean.

D. Annual Fireworks display

Every year in July, there is a massive fireworks display near Expo Park. They have some BIG, beautiful, very loud fireworks. It is pretty impressive. There is also a festival that night. Okinawans from all over the island come to see it, so the traffic is generally hectic. Either plan a hotel stay in the area or get up to Motobu early in the morning and leave late that night.

E. Emerald Beach / Snorkeling Spot / Picnic Area

If you are in the area to see the Expo Park, then you should consider stopping by the popular Emerald Beach for a swim. You can find better snorkeling and avoid the crowds by walking down the concrete path to the point. Right there is a safe pool, which has some good snorkeling. There is also a picnic area and a place to watch the sun set.

F. Bise Fukugi Tree Road

Fukugi trees are known for their strength and wind-breaking abilities in typhoons. The sound of rustling leaves and the tranquil stillness of Bise Fukugi Tree Road will make you feel like you’re exploring an Okinawan village from long ago.