Overview



With a population of over 317,000 and an area of almost 40 square kilometers, Naha is Okinawa Prefecture's largest city and its capital. While Naha is modern with its shopping malls, monorail, and stylish restaurants, it also has a great history and is rich in Okinawan culture and tradition. Naha is a great city to explore, so here are some recommendations to get you started.

Sites and Venues

As the capital, Naha has many sites and venues that are both historical and modern. Here are a few of the most popular, must-see spots:

Shuri Castle

Situated northeast of Central Naha, it is a stunning replica of what was once the headquarters of the Ryukyu Kingdom. During its more than 500 year history, Shuri Castle had burned down five times. The most recent fire was on Halloween in 2019. The newest reconstruction was completed in November 2026. Surrounded by beautiful gardens, it offers a great view of Naha and the neighboring islands. It also features the Shureimon, the main gate of the castle and the image displayed on the current ¥2000 note. While roaming the castle grounds is free, entry into the main hall is ¥400. During national public holidays, there are often dance performances held in the courtyard.

To access the castle, you can take City Buses 1, 12, 13, 14, and 17 and get off at Shurijo Koen Iriguchi. The monorail also has a station that accesses the castle.



Shikina-en Gardens (421-7 Maaji, Naha 902-0072)

These gardens hold the largest detached villa of the Ryukyuan royal family, which was used to entertain foreign diplomats and envoys. Within the garden are Chinese style pavilions and quaint stone bridges. The entrance fee is about ¥400.

Take City Buses 1 or 5 and get off at Maji Bus Stop.

Tsuboya (1 Chome-16 Tsuboya, Naha 902-0065)

Yachimun Dori in Tsuboya is a lovely limestone-paved street dotted with studios displaying the work of Naha's leading potters. It also has a Ceramics Museum along with a few quaint cafés.

Machigawa Public Markets

A local market that, while tricky to navigate, leaves you with a memorable experience. In addition to the many clothing and souvenir stalls, the Kokusai Dori entrance houses a food market with some unique creatures. This market is a great place to experiment with local foods, such as dried eel, pickled pigs, and skinned puffer fish. After picking your delicacy, the restaurant upstairs can prepare it for you. See Map, 2.

Shimin Art Gallery (1 Chome-1-1 Kumoji, Naha 900-0015)

Situated on the 6th floor of the Palette Kumoji, this gallery holds a constantly changing display of traditional and contemporary art by local artists. There is usually an eclectic display of Japanese calligraphy, photography, paintings, and ceramics. Entrance is free.

teamLabs★Future Park Okinawa (4 Chome−1, Omoromachi 900-0006)

teamLabs is an interactive art exhibition with several locations throughout Japan. The Okinawa teamLabs is kid-friendly and colorful, making for a fun afternoon with great photo opportunities.

Festivals

Festivals play an important role in bringing the community together, and Naha's festivals do not disappoint. Large in scale, Naha's festivals are great to enjoy with friends.

Naha Hari Festival

Held in May, the Hari Dragon Boat races were introduced from China and are held in various regions of Okinawa to ensure abundant fishing. The Naha Hari Festival is held at Naha Port. It is possible to compete with a team. Please check the official website for more information if you want to participate.



Shuri Castle Moon Viewing Festival

Held in September, this festival delivers a beautiful display of Okinawan music and dancing under the premise of watching the moon (and drinking beer).

Naha Festival

Held in October, this three-day festival includes one of the largest Tug of War tournaments in the world, along with numerous parades of Okinawan traditional folk dances.



For more information on various festivals and events happening in Okinawa, please check out Okinawan Seasons.

Activities

While we do recommend exploring Naha's history through visits to Shuri Castle and other historical sites, we also recommend taking advantage of the great public transportation to explore the city.

- **Walks**
  - Naha is best navigated on foot. There are many great stalls and small shops sitting on narrow back streets. If you get lost, look for the Kencho (Prefectural Government building), visible from quite a distance.
- **Exercise**
  - **Onoyama Park** offers a great athletics track, Olympic-sized swimming pool, and archery facilities.
- **Shopping**
  - **Main Place**, just north of Naha Central in Ameku, is a big mall that houses many specialty shops.
  - **Palette Kumoji Ryubo** sells a range of international food and wine, but can be quite expensive.



Kokusai Dori sells every kind of Okinawa souvenir imaginable. Step one block off the main drag (north or south) and browse the trendy street culture shops.

Opa on Kokusai Dori (diagonally opposite Starbucks) offers a host of trendy clothing shops. On the top floor is Tower Records, which has a huge selection of local and imported discs.

For help navigating the public transportation systems, please read Transportation.

Restaurants

While there are too many restaurants in Naha to list them all, here are some unique, delicious restaurant recommendations from other JETs:

- **TIỆM ĂN VIỆT** (3 Chome-2, Makishi, Naha 900-0013)
    - Best Vietnamese food in Okinawa with a small grocery store upstairs
- **Piparchi Kitchen** (2 Chome-6-16 Nishi, Naha 900-0036)
    - Cozy Okinawan restaurant that serves delicious home-cooked meals
- **Life Sakaba Okinawa** (2 Chome-9-6 Matsuyama, Naha 900-0032)
    - Korean restaurant with an amazing atmosphere
- **Mazemen Mahoroba** (1 Chome-3-34 Makishi, Naha 900-0013)
    - Customizable noodle restaurant
- 竜丹 (3 Chome-19-12 Kohagura, Naha 900-0024)
    - Delicious Chinese restaurant
- **Italian Tomato Café Jr.** (1 Chome-19-29 Makishi, Naha 900-0013)
    - Located on Kokusai Dori, this café/restaurant serves great pasta, coffee, and dessert.
- **Tondou Gibo-Ekimae** (1 Chome-21-9 Shurigibocho, Naha 903-0821)
    - Delicious ramen