Okinawa City Guide

Overview

Okinawa City is the second-largest city in Okinawa Prefecture after Naha. It is centrally located with access to both the southern and northern regions. The most extensive of the U.S. military bases, Kadena Air Base, is located within Okinawa City, resulting in a large American influence in certain parts of the city, such as Gate 2 Street. Compared to the modernness of these areas, Awase, which stretches along the East Coast, is an area rich in nature.

Despite its many foreign influences, Okinawa City is home to the traditional folk dance, Eisa (エイサー). Because of this, Okinawa City has become known by the title "*The City of Eisa.*" In addition, Okinawa City hosts many festivals, such as the Island-wide Eisa Festival, Orion Beer Festival, and the International Carnival.



Okinawa City Mascots (image credit)

If you find yourself in Okinawa City, you're in luck! Okinawa City is bustling and full of fun things to enjoy!

Venues

Due to its central location, many tourist attractions are located here in Okinawa City. You can easily spend a fun day or afternoon in the area.

- **City Hall**
    - Okinawa City's City Hall is located behind Route 22 and guarded by large trees. New OkiJETs will register their Resident Card at the City Residents Section (Shimin ka) service window. This process and documentation may take about a week.
    - While visiting, please ask for the Okinawa City Living Guide, an English document that contains helpful information about the city and government-related matters. Staff members may also offer maps, brochures, and a monthly Okinawa City newsletter copy.
        - Open 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. with a one-hour lunch break between 12 P.M. and 1 P.M. Free parking is available.
- **Okinawa City Culture Center**
    - The Culture Center is located on the right side of National Route 330 when traveling south. In addition to a municipal museum, the second floor houses a public library with a small selection of English books. To join, you will need your Resident Card.
- **Okinawa City Koza Athletic Park**
    - This athletic park contains eight sports facilities with a track and field stadium, a sub-track and softball field, a baseball field, a gymnasium, a swimming pool, an indoor training building, tennis courts, and a martial arts hall.
    - This park also hosts the All-Island Eisa Festival in unison with the Orion Beer Festival in August. This is a fantastic festival with energetic and colorful performances by Eisa groups from all over the island.
        - The park is open from 9 A.M. to 10 P.M. It is closed on Tuesdays, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Day.
- **Okinawa Prefectural Athletic Park (Ken Sogo Undo Koen)**
    - Found along Route 329 in Awase, this park has many grass areas, a lake (with paddle boats for rent), a mini golf course, an indoor heated pool, an outdoor pool, tennis courts, a weight room,

a basketball court, and marked running tracks (3 km, 4 km, and 5 km courses). While walking along the rim of the sea track, you can see locals fishing for seaweed and shellfish. This park is also the start of the Okinawa Marathon in February.

- **Okinawa Zoo & Museum (沖縄こどもの国 | Kodomo no Kuni)**
    - The only zoo in Okinawa Prefecture, Kodomo no Kuni includes the typical zoo animals, such as elephants and lions, but also has animals unique to the Ryukyu Islands, such as the Ryukyu dog and Yakushima monkey. There is also a petting zoo, an area for birdwatching, a fishing pond, charter boats, and the Wonder Museum. During the winter, the zoo has an illumination and fireworks show that runs for a few days.
        - Summer Hours: 9:30-6 P.M. Winter Hours: 9:30-5:30 P.M.
- **Southeast Botanical Gardens**
    - The largest tropical garden in Japan, this area not only houses a stunning array of plants but also a petting zoo, an event area, restaurants, and a gift shop. The gardens are split into two main areas: botanical and aquatic. In the winter months, they display stunning illuminations.
        - Summer Hours: 9:30-6 P.M. November-May Hours: 9:30-10 P.M.
        - Ticket prices range from ¥ 1,540 to ¥ 2,800.



- **Koza Music Town** (1 Chrome-1-1 Uechi, Okinawa, 904-0031)
    - Located a short drive from Rycom, Koza Music Town is known for its musical events–from Eisa performances to local bands. Outside Gate 2 Street, this venue is a great place to walk around and enjoy the area. There are also a variety of restaurants.
    - If you wish to learn more about Eisa (エイサー), Okinawa's traditional folk dance, visit the Eisa Museum on the main floor of Koza Music Town. Koza Music Town also holds the famous Zento Eisa Matsuri in September, wherein Eisa teams around Okinawa Prefecture perform in a parade.
- **Theater Donut**
    - This is a wonderful local theater to go to when you are having a slow Saturday or Sunday morning. It is located right in front of the Goya bus stop, making it very accessible by public transportation. If you choose to drive, you can easily pay to park at Music Town and walk over. However, if there is a big event at Music Town, you may have to search for another parking lot. The owner shows international and domestic (often indie) films. As the name indicates, there is a selection of scrumptious donuts to purchase and enjoy while you watch a movie. However, if you see the last movie of the day, they may be sold out.
- **American Village in Chatan**
    - Located a short drive away from Okinawa City, Chatan's American Village is a great place to shop, eat, and use English. Located along the coast, American Village also has great photo opportunities as you stroll along the boardwalk. Every Saturday at 8 PM, there is a short fireworks show. During December, the Village is decked out with light displays.
- **Yomitan Public Library**
    - Yomitan's new public library is not like other public libraries. This is a spacious library with many places to study, a kids' play area, and a Starbucks. You will certainly see children playing while their parents enjoy a coffee. Around the corner, you will find a spacious study area. While they don't have a large selection of English books they do have many books about hobbies (cooking, sewing,

crocheting, etc.) that you could follow even with little Japanese ability.

- **Murasaki Mura in Yomitan**
    - Murasaki Mura (not to be confused with Ryukyu Mura) is a reproduction of Naha City during the 14th and 15th centuries. During the day, craftsmen offer various workshops, including glass-blowing, painting Shisas, making sanshins, dyeing cloth, and more. During the night, Murasaki Mura transforms with various illuminations for each of the seasons. In the fall, the village is overrun with *yokai*, Japanese and Okinawan demons. In the winter months, you can enjoy the Ryukyu Lantern Festival that features thousands of lanterns in various styles.



Shopping

- **AEON MALL Okinawa Rycom** (1 番地 Raikamu, Kitanakagusuku 901-2306)
    - One of the two main malls on the island, Rycom Mall has a little bit of everything. Check out the food court for great ramen, curry, Korean food, and dessert. Check out the first floor to see the small aquarium and Okinawa's Pokémon Center. If you go to the very top floor, you can enjoy beautiful scenery as well as a bank heist-themed escape room.



Pokémon Center in Rycom

- **Plaza House** (3 Chome-1-12 Kubota 904-0023)
    - Plaza House, located across from Rycom Mall, is a small shopping center that sells expensive foreign brands.
    - In addition to shops and a movie theatre, there are a few restaurants, including KFC, A&W, Baskin-Robbins, Shakey's (pizza), and Melrose American Bakery & Café.
    - For supermarkets, there are Bon Paniere and Roger's. Bon Paniere has a wide selection of expensive, imported foods, including delicious Indian and Thai curries and foreign alcohol. Similar to Bon Paniere, Roger's sells gourmet and imported goods, including various cured meats and foreign cheeses. There is also a café inside.
- **Alutekusu (Alteks) International and National Wines and Beers**
    - Okinawa City has two Alteks: one outside Kadena's Gate 2 and another in Awase, close to the MaxValue (behind the KFC).
- **Chuo Park Avenue**
    - Very close to Gate 2, this avenue has many funky shops, restaurants, and coffee shops. The Korinza Shopping Centre with Best Denki is at the end of Park Avenue. There is also a theatre on the second floor that runs plays.
- **Gate 2 Street**
    - Gate 2 Street is directly in front of the Gate 2 entrance to Kadena Air Base. Like Kokusai-dori in Naha, exploring this street can take

a whole day. This street includes second-hand clothing stores, tailors, restaurants, and shops.
    - While fun to explore during the day, Gate 2 Street comes alive at night with many clubs, bars, and karaoke bars. There are often live bands performing as well. Due to its proximity to Kadena Air Base, many military personnel frequent this area.
- **San-A Gushikawa Main City** (450-1 Esu, Uruma 904-2244)
    - One of the San-A department stores, this is a great place to shop for groceries, eat at restaurants, and shop for other essential goods.

Second-Hand Shops

While there are many great places to shop in and around Okinawa City, we also encourage you to check out some of the second-hand stores in the area. Second-hand shops can be filled with both unique treasures and like-new gadgets. They are the perfect place for those shopping and furnishing their apartments on a budget.

- **Manga Soko Awase** (3 Chome-13-1 Yogi 904-2174)
    - The largest second-hand shop in Okinawa City, Manga Souko sells clothing, musical instruments, Japanese books, manga, video games, electronics, and more.
- **2nd Street** (464 番地 1 Esu, Uruma 904-2244)
    - A large 2nd Street location that sells the usual kitchenware, clothing, and toys, as well as furniture, appliances, and electronics
- **Hard Off/Off House Okinawa Awase** (2-chome-19-1 Koja 904-2161)
    - A large thrift store that sells the usual selection of clothing and household goods as well as electronic parts, computers, and gaming items

Restaurants

Okinawa City has many delicious restaurants that serve food from around the world. Here are some recommendations from other JETs:

- **Donald's Poke Shop** (1-chome-16-2 Uechi 904-0031)
    - This Hawaiian restaurant owned by a local from Hawaii serves fresh, authentic Hawaiian poke bowls.
- **DOS MANOS** (1 Chome-3-15 Central, 904-0004)
    - One of the few places in Okinawa that has tamales, DOS MANOS serves a variety of great Mexican food in huge portions.
- **Ajitoya Awase Branch** (5 Chome-24-6 Awase 904-2172)
    - A curry restaurant that serves both Japanese-style and Indian-style curries as well as some very unique fusion curries.
- **Brown Roll** (1 Chome-31-15 Central 904-0004)
    - A small shop in Koza, Brown Roll serves customizable cinnamon rolls and delicious, ginormous glasses of coffee.
- **Mid Village** (4 Chome-28-26 Takahara 904-2171)
    - A charming cafe that has an extensive tea menu and delicious scones served with clotted cream and jam.
- **Peri Peri Chicken** (403 フォレストマーケット 1F-3, Kitanakagusuku 901-2306)
    - This restaurant, located by Rycom, serves chicken in a variety of delicious forms, including sandwiches, curries, and burritos.
- **YOKAZE ni ICE** (1 Chome−28−19 1F, Teruya 904-0011)
    - An ice cream shop with a large variety of parfaits and sundaes
- **Tsukemen Jinbei in Chibana** (5 Chome-13-18 Chibana 904-2143)
    - A ramen shop that specializes in dipping noodles
- **Naughty by Nature in Chatan** (51-3 Mihama, Chatan 904-0115)
    - A small restaurant that serves the best wagyu burgers
- **Masisoyo in Chatan** (9-8 シーサイドスクエア 1F Mihama, Chatan 904-0115)
    - Delicious Korean food for a great price. Ordering can be done through a self-ordering ticket machine.
- **Five Star Deli in Chatan** (14 Sunabe, Chatan 904-0111)
    - Run by a former JET, this sandwich shop serves authentic subs along with a fantastic selection of sides (macaroni salad, pickled peppers, etc.).

- **Bacon Bar Japan in Ikehara** (1F, 3 Chome-4-16 Ikehara 904-2141)
    - While a little pricey, this restaurant is well worth it because of the fantastic owners, the real bacon, and all the amazing food. If you are in the mood for some American burgers and food, check this place out.
    - Check Google for the hours. Note that Saturday night is reservation-only.
- **Farmers Café in Uruma** (690-3 Kyan, Uruma 904-2225)
    - A beautifully decorated café with friendly staff. Their coffee is served with coffee ice cubes to prevent the ice from watering down your coffee.
- **QQQ Okinawa in Uruma** (341 Akamichi, Uruma 904-2245)
    - A small dessert place that serves wonderfully soft shaved ice
- **Chokoto on Hamahiga Island** (1521-2 Katsurenhiga, Uruma 904-2316)
    - A cute, small café that serves light cake and delicious fruit