



INTEREST IN REMOTE ISLAND ESCAPES IN OKINAWA GIVEN BOOST AS IRIOMOTE ADDED TO UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE LIST



From L-R: Iriomote Island, Nagannu Island, Taketomi Island

November 2021 – UNESCO has recently added Iriomote to its World Heritage List due to its “outstanding universal value”. The recent addition has increased attention on Okinawa as a perfect choice for a remote island escape. The southern prefecture of Okinawa comprises 160 subtropical islands of which only 49 are inhabited, making it the perfect destination for off-the-beaten-track exploration. Boasting untouched beaches, crystal clear waters, stunning coral reefs and beautiful natural scenery the archipelago spans over 1,000 kilometres of ocean from east to west and is home to some of Japan’s best remote hidden gems - all just three hours by air from Tokyo.

From charming traditional villages on the island of Taketomi and the wild untouched nature of newly added UNESCO World Heritage site Iriomote to the uninhabited islands of Nagannu and Oha, Okinawa combines stunning rural landscapes with a unique history and culture. Here, Visit Okinawa recommends the best places for a secluded escape in the prefecture...

Delve into nature on Iriomote Island

Just 40 minutes by boat from Ishigaki Island and part of the Yaeyama island group, Iriomote is a treasure trove of nature and adventure experiences perfect for even the most intrepid of explorers. Over 90% of its land is covered by dense jungle and vegetation - in fact it has the largest mangrove forest in Japan - making it ideal for trekking, hiking and canoeing. Recently added by UNESCO to the UNESCO World Heritage List for its ‘outstanding universal value’, it is home to several animals only found in the region, including the Iriomote Wild Cat found only on the island or the Kishinoue’s Giant Skink which can be found only within the wider area of Yaeyama and Miyako.

Step back in time in Taketomi

Also part of the Yaeyama island group is Taketomi, best known for its perfectly preserved traditional Yaeyama village. There are very few cars on the island and visitors can travel by water buffalo-drawn carts, but the small island can be just as easily explored on foot or by bike. There is a frequent ferry service from Ishigaki making it great for a day trip or visitors can opt to stay overnight in a local ryokan for an authentic insight into Okinawan life. Taketomi is also part of the Iriomote-Ishigaki National Park,

Japan's first certified 'Dark Sky Sanctuary' providing a beautiful starry skyscape for those that extend their visit.

Self-sail over to the deserted Oha Island

There are no boat tours or local ferries to the remote Oha Island, so this one is only for the most avid remote explorers wanting a truly off-the-beaten-track experience. Visitors can access the island by renting their own boat from Kume Island or, at spring tide, it can sometimes be possible to travel between the two on foot for those brave enough to risk it. Mostly deserted and uninhabited, the island is home to several abandoned houses surrounded by stunning white sand beaches and emerald waters. .

Soak up the sun on Nagannu Island

Close to the main island of Okinawa, Nagannu is a small lesser-known isle with pure white coral sands and a picturesque emerald-green ocean ideal for snorkelling. With unspoilt nature, the reef-lined island is also great for whale watching and visitors can enjoy parasailing between soaking up the rays on the beach. Nagannu can be accessed by local ferry from Tomari Port and is equipped with basic facilities including restrooms and beach huts to shelter from the sun. Local ferry service with routes between the North Wharf of Tomari Port and Nagannu as well as tours are operated by [Tokashiki Ferry Company](#). .

Ferry operators in the Yaeyama region include [Anei Kanko Co](#) and [Yaeyama-Kanko-Ferry](#).

To discover more about the wonderful nature and remote landscapes of Okinawa, watch: https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=a_PdyNmGWS0

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About Okinawa:

Japan's southernmost prefecture, Okinawa, comprises 160 subtropical islands boasting a year-round warm climate comparable to Hawaii, Miami and Cancun. Just 3 hours by air from Tokyo and blessed with incredible natural beauty, from lush forests to crystal blue waters with abundant coral and golden sands, Okinawa is perfect for beach lovers and sport enthusiasts alike whilst still appealing to culture seekers thanks to its unique history and heritage. Using the bountiful fresh produce its natural environment produces, Okinawa's culinary culture is also unique and is believed to be a key factor in Okinawa's status as one of only five blue zones in the world recognised for longevity.

For more information, visit: www.visitokinawa.jp.

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