



Unmissable Autumn Events in Subtropical Okinawa



From L-R: Ryukyu Lantern Festival, Shuri Castle Festival, karate in Okinawa

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September 2024: Home to 160 sub-tropical islands and located just three hours by air from Tokyo, Japan's southernmost prefecture, Okinawa, is set to welcome a host of exciting events this Autumn – from record-breaking tug-of-war extravaganzas and martial arts celebrations in the birthplace of karate, to festivals bringing the historic Ryukyu Kingdom to life. Here, the team at Visit Okinawa summarises some of the must-visit events in the region during the season...

September/ October 2024: Record-breaking tug-of-wars

Large-scale tug-of-war events are a traditional hallmark of Okinawan festivals and the [Itooman Great Tug-of-War](#), taking place on the 17th of September, is a spectacle not to be missed. Theatrics and performance are at the heart of this traditional celebration, which includes a procession of flag bearers leading a parade of dancers and performers whilst locals entertain the crowds dressed as figures from Okinawan folk law before the tugging begins. The prefecture's capital, Naha, will also host the [Naha Great Tug-of-War Festival](#) from the 12th -14th of October - an event which welcomes tens of thousands of spectators and made its way into the Guinness World Record Book in 1995.

October 2024: Celebrating martial arts in the birthplace of karate

Okinawa is the birthday place of karate, a martial art with roots that can be traced back 700 years on the islands. The sport is celebrated each year with a week of karate-themed celebrations in October including '[Karate Day](#)' on the 25th of October where a dedicational performance by karate masters takes place followed by a larger commemorative performance on the 27th of October where thousands of locals and visitors alike gather on Kokusai Dori in Okinawa's capital city Naha to witness skilled karate pros demonstrating their finely disciplined skills.

November 2024: Stepping back in time to the Ryukyu Kingdom

The [Shuri Castle Festival](#) taking place from 2nd – 4th November invites guests to immerse themselves in the culture and pageantry of the Ryukyu Dynasty at one of Naha's greatest festivals. Performers entertain the crowds dressed in exquisite replicas of the traditional attire worn by Ryukyu nobles as

they parade through the streets of the capital accompanied by music. During the festival, the historic Shurijo Castle is also adorned with over 6,000 lights to mark the occasion.

December 2024: Shining a light on Okinawa's past

The beginning of December marks the start of the [Ryukyu Lantern Festival](#), a celebration that crosses over into winter where over 3,000 colourful paper lanterns illuminate the traditional wooden buildings of the Murasaki Mura Experience Kingdom – a sympathetic recreation of a traditional village from the Ryukyu Dynasty in the 14th and 15th centuries. The four-month-long festival calendar includes lantern-making with Japanese paper, projection mapping and a night-time lantern café serving food and drinks.

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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 sports 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.

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