



JAPAN

**OKINAWA**  
**THE NEW HAWAII**

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Island of Kouri, tourists going down to the beach known as Heart Rocks.

- ▶ For the first time, in 2017 the number of tourists visiting Okinawa surpassed the number of tourists visiting Hawaii
- ▶ The group of islands reached almost 10 million tourists last year but the objective for 2020 is to reach 12 million visitors
- ▶ Okinawa occupies a strategic position at the centre of the Pacific, easily reachable from China, Korea, and Taiwan
- ▶ What attracts tourists are the archipelago's beauties as well as the huge number of low-cost flights
- ▶ The majority of tourists are Japanese, who see Okinawa as an exotic location with its own language and traditions



Naha, a guide inside one of the rooms of Shuri Castle, the residence of the kings and the religious centre of the Ryūkyū Kingdom.



Island of Kouri, tourists buying a drink in the car park at the beach of Heart Rocks.



Nago, a water playground at Lawson Kariyushi Beach Resort.



Cape Hedo, a surfer on a beach along the northernmost promontory of the island.

## How the islands of Okinawa are becoming the queen of the Pacific

They are already calling it “the new Hawaii”: Okinawa, the tropical paradise for vacationing Japanese, the group of islands that, reaching almost 10 million tourists last year, in terms of visitors has surpassed the American archipelago. But the objective is even more ambitious: Okinawa wants to become the uncontested queen of the Pacific and arrive at 12 million visitors by 2020.

Famous for the 1945 battle of the same name, Okinawa is also famous for being a so-called “blue zone”, an area with a particularly long-lived population. The high number of centenarians is connected to various factors, including their lifestyle and a particularly healthy diet; elements which, together with the beaches, landscapes, and coral reefs (but also its strategic position, low-cost flights, rapid entrance procedure, and high number of cruise ships which stop there), attract tourists from China, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and, above all, Japan itself. Which considers these remote southern islands known as Ryūkyū – with its own language and traditions, annexed to the country of the rising sun only in 1879 – to be a particularly exotic destination.



Nanjo, the entrance to the Cave Café.



Ogimi, Ungami Festival participants preparing for a ceremony. In Japan, Ogimi is called the "village of longevity".



Naha, traditional clothing at the entrance to Shuri Castle, the residence of the kings and the religious centre of the Ryūkyū Kingdom.



Naha, a young woman walks along one of the main streets, Kokusai Dori.



Ginowan, boys practicing archery at sunset.



Nago, tourists on a glass-bottom boat at Busena Marine Park.



Naha, a "longevity meal" during a celebration dedicated to the longevity of Yukarui Hall.



Ogimi, women in the gulf of Shioya giving homage to the god of the sea on the occasion of the Ungami Festival. In Japan, Ogimi is called the "village of longevity".



Motobu, at Churaumi Aquarium tourists looking at Kuroshio tank, 7500 cubic metres of water that hosts around 70 different species of marine animals.



Nago, the glass-bottom boat from Busena Marine Park.



Ginowan, baseball players listening to their coach.



Naha, the entrance of the Japanese Navy Underground Headquarters, active during the Second World War.



Nago, a tourist gets off a glass-bottom boat at Busena Marine Park.



Nago, locals and tourists gambling at a casino.



Naha, celebrated karate master Minoru Higa, 77 years old, posing just a few steps away from his dojo. The martial art of karate was born in Okinawa.



Naha, visiting Shuri Castle, the residence of the kings and the religious centre of the Ryūkyū Kingdom.



Naha, Japanese Navy Underground Headquarters, active during the Second World War: this is the room where Admiral Minoru Ōta, final commander of the Japanese naval forces in Okinawa, wrote his goodbye letter before committing suicide so as not to fall into the enemy's hands.



Naha, the photo of a Japanese soldier in the Second World War on display in the museum of the Japanese Navy Underground Headquarters.



Cape Hedo, tourists on the northernmost promontory of the island.



Motobu, at Churaumi Aquarium a tourist is photographed inside the mouth of a whale.



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