



- Explore the regions -



Yambaru Forest, lush and subtropical, northern Okinawa Main Island. Photo courtesy of Okinawa Convention & Visitors Bureau (OCVB).

Immersion in Nature's Diverse Wonders

On the main island of Okinawa is a wondrous place known as “the miracle forest.” In the formation of the Ryukyu Islands, organisms evolved into an extraordinary diversity. Birds like the Okinawa rail and other plants and animals came to inhabit the nature-rich sacred place of Yambaru Forest, made a national park in September 2016.

Encompassing the northern villages of Kunigami, Ogimi,

and Higashi, the forest, whose name means “a mountainous area of deep forests,” fosters a bounty of species seen nowhere else on earth. Though located at a latitude of arid climates, the region experiences heavy precipitation from monsoons and is awash in the Kuro Current, all providing the warmth and humidity that sustain this largest subtropical laurel forest of Japan.

On Iriomote Island, the second biggest Okinawa island, you’ll find Japan’s largest mangrove forest amid virgin territory over 90% of this “Galapagos of the East.” In the jungle are wild and rare native flora and fauna, including the Iriomote cat,



Kayaking is some of the outdoor fun, like trekking or canyoneering, on Iriomote Island, dubbed “Galapagos of the East.” © OCVB.



Nature-rich Yamaru National Park (80% forest). © OCVB.



Lovely Okinawa rail (flightless), Yamaru Forest. © OCVB.



Trek to Pinaisara Falls (54 m), Iriomote Island. © OCVB.

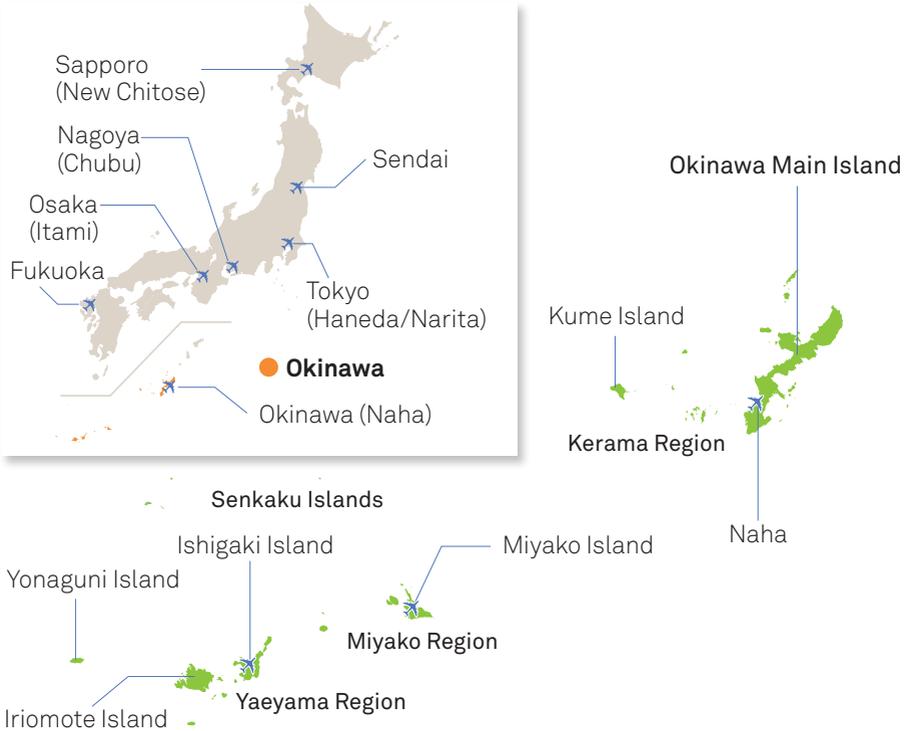


Beautiful jungle hiking, Iriomote Island. © OCVB

designated a natural monument by the Japanese government and inscribed as a critically endangered species on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List. Many island tours are yours to enjoy, along with fun activities like forest trekking, bird watching, mangrove kayaking, and more to explore the invitingly beautiful nature here.

Thanks to its impressive subtropical laurel forest and biodiversity as well as rare, native, and endangered species, the entire region, including the northern part of Okinawa Island (Yamaru region) and Iriomote Island—plus Kagoshima Prefecture's Tokunoshima and Amami-Oshima islands—has been nominated for registration in 2021 as a UNESCO natural World Heritage site. The hope is that registration will ensure conservation and the legacy of sacred biodiversity for future generations.

Getting There: ANA serves Okinawa (Naha) from many cities across Japan, including Tokyo (Haneda and Narita), Osaka (Itami and Kansai), Nagoya (Chubu), Sapporo (New Chitose), and Fukuoka.



Looking Ahead

The next theme of Get to Know Okinawa is Sightseeing, set for August, featuring two remote islands: Ishigaki, for ideal stargazing spots; and Miyako, for visiting and riding Miyako horses, a native Japanese breed.

Handy URL

Visit the special website of Tastes of JAPAN by ANA Okinawa.



Save on domestic flights within Japan by booking early and accessing lower fares!

