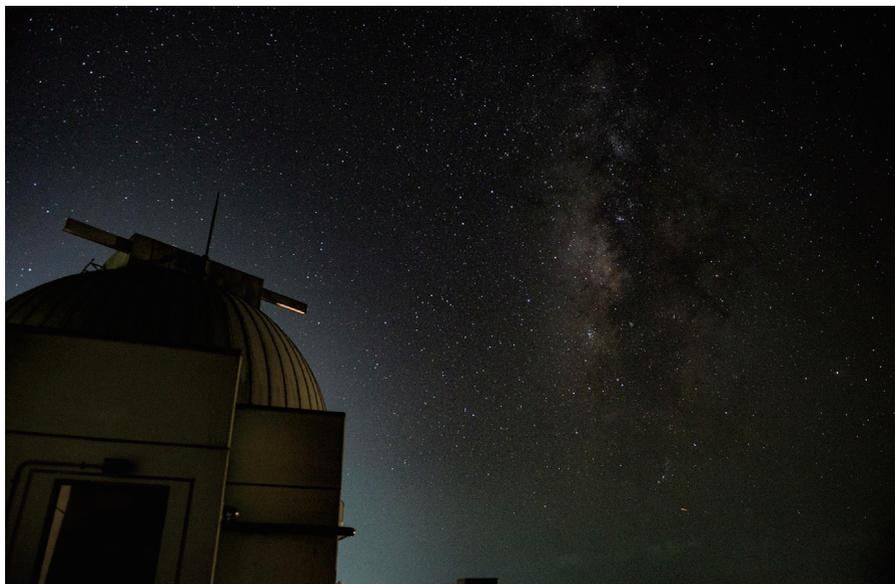




- Explore the regions -



The brilliant starry sky of Ishigaki Island, said to be the most beautiful in Japan, is an inspiring sight above the Ishigakijima Astronomical Observatory.

## Idyllic Isles for Stargazing and Horseback Riding

Some 400 islands dot Okinawa Prefecture, including uninhabited ones. Fascinating experiences of nature, culture, and history await on the main island of Okinawa and on remote islands well worth the visit.

Embraced by the ocean, Ishigaki Island has few streetlights. Once the sun goes down in blazing colors, the isle goes pitch black—so dark you may need a flashlight to guide your steps.

Unaffected by westerlies, stable atmospheric conditions enhance stargazing without the usual flickering. Nicknamed as “star island,” Ishigaki has such lucid night skies that its starscape was named in March 2018 as one of the world’s 169 International Dark Sky Places by the International Dark-Sky Association, the first of two so designated in Japan. Another stellar statistic is that 84 of the 88 constellations declared by the International Astronomical Union can be observed here—thanks, in part, to Ishigaki being a mere 24 degrees north of the equator—including the Southern Cross and others of the Southern Hemisphere.

With an invitingly level topography, Miyako Island is made of elevated coral reefs and known for beautiful beaches. You may be surprised to learn that this pristine isle is also



A fun stargazing event (left) at Ishigakijima Astronomical Observatory: its Murikabushi Telescope (with the Yaeyama name for the Pleiades) is a 105-cm optical-infrared telescope, largest in the Kyushu/Okinawa region.



Miyako horses in the Maipari Miyako Island Tropical Fruit Park. Enjoy palm trees, pineapples, bananas, coconuts, and a chance to meet or ride these lovely horses, a Natural Monument of Okinawa.

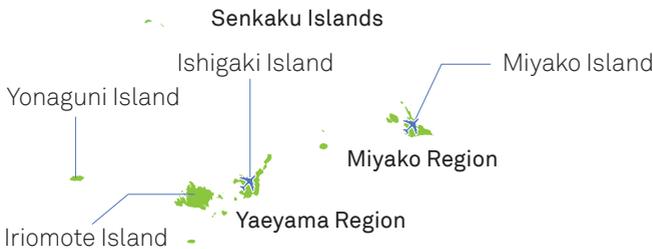
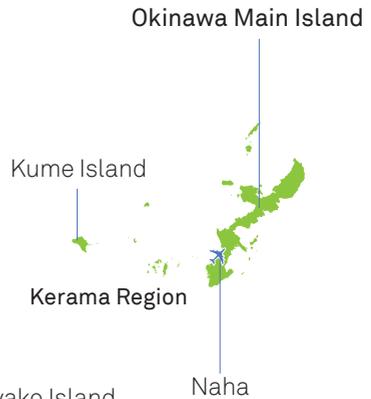


Miyako Island is home to strong yet gentle Miyako horses, a protected Okinawa species once ridden by Ryukyu dynasty kings and one of Japan's eight native horse breeds.

home to Miyako horses. This protected species of Okinawa, one of Japan's eight native horse breeds, were once used by Ryukyu dynasty kings as their main mode of transportation. One reason they may have been the royal choice is their large hooves, which make for a steady gait over gravel roads and bumpy areas. The friendly, gentle creatures raised freely under subtropical skies are rather small, classified as ponies, making them easy to ride for children as well as adults. One of the island's most popular recreational activities is horseback riding on a Miyako beach, a fun and memorable time for all with these lovely horses.

Note: Reservations are required for horseback riding classes (Nikadori Farm, 0980-73-3850, from ¥1,500).

**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.



**Handy URL**

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