



OKINAWA GUIDE for KARATE VISITORS



Compiled by Okinawa Traditional Karate Liaison Bureau - okkb.org

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ACCOMODATION

Hotel rates in Okinawa are generally charged by person, not by room. Also, confirm if meals are included. Some facilities accept credit cards; some do not.

Right-on-the-beach resorts: Most resorts are located beachfront or near a beach. They offer breathtaking views of the beautiful blue waters, sports activities, spa services, delicious cuisine, etc. Prices range from ¥ 20,000 and above.

Near-the-city hotels: These hotels range from resort-like facilities with pools to hotels strictly for business travelers. Prices range from ¥ 5,000 and above. Most are conveniently located near downtown areas.

Local Inns: If your budget is limited and experiencing vibrant conversation with locals is on your itinerary, then these are the places to stay. Prices range from ¥ 2,000 and above.

Weekly rooms & Monthly rooms: These types of accommodations come completely furnished with kitchenettes & cookware. Rooms are rented on a weekly or monthly basis and a deposit is required. Prices for weekly rooms start from ¥ 25,000 and above, monthly rooms from ¥ 90,000 and above.

DRINKS

Awamori: the Okinawan distilled liquor. It can be enjoyed *Mizuwari* (mixed with water and ice), straight or on the rocks. Try also *kusu* or vintage *awamori* to better enjoy Okinawan nights

Goya juice: made out of the *goya* bitter Okinawan melon, it is quite an experience. Most of the time, the juice is prepared with other fruits.

Habu sake: *Awamori* with the local poisonous snake (*habu*) fermenting in the bottom.

Helios: this Okinawan beer can be enjoyed in the Helios Pub, located in the middle of street Kokusai Dori and in other selected establishments.

Nife de Beer: *Nife-de-biru* means “thank you” in Okinawan language. Nihe de Beer is another brew of the island.

Orion beer: THE Okinawan beer! A beer mug usually costs 500 yen but some restaurants offer special deals like all you can drink set and happy hours for cheaper prices...

Shikuwasa juice: *Shikuwasa* is the Okinawan citrus fruit. Its juice is sharp but refreshing.

Sports drinks: The major brands are Pocari Sweat and Aquarius.

Tap water: Drinkable depending on location but we suggest bottled water.

Water: Okinawa can be extremely hot in summer so always drink plenty water, especially if you train!

EMERGENCY

For the POLICE: Dial “110”. (English ok)

For lost and found, go to the closest *koban* (Police box)



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For an ambulance or in case of fire, dial “119”. The word for “help” is *Tasu kete kudasai*.

(Ambulance is *Kyukyusha* and Fire is *Kaji*)

ETIQUETTE

Chopsticks: Don't put your chopsticks upright in your rice or food as it is a symbol of death used in funeral ceremony. Don't pass food from chopsticks to chopsticks. At a diner, do not use your own chopsticks to take from the dish. Use the serving chopsticks found close by the tray.

Shoes: Take your shoes off before entering a house, dojo or the Budokan. Don't leave your shoes lying in the entrance way but put them in the stands provided. If there is no stand, place them at the entrance, tiptoes facing outward for an easy way out and if possible to the side of the entrance so your shoes are not in somebody's way. Try not to step on the ground when taking your shoes off. Don't sit down on the entrance way to tie up your shoes.

Sitting: When in a dojo or in a tatami room, don't sit with your legs out in front of you or pointing at another person; Sit in a *seiza* position and if not possible, request to sit Indian style (*agura* in Japanese).

Smoking: Recently, non-smoking regulations have spread. Therefore, many restaurants adopt the non-smoking/ smoking area system. For example, Kokusai Dori is a smoke free street! By law, tobacco can only be purchased by those 20 years of age and above. You'll find many vending machines selling tobacco till 11:00 P.M. After 11:00 P.M., tobacco can be purchased at stores.

Tattoos: *Irezumi* in Japanese. Tattoos are still seen by many as a symbol of Yakuza, the Japanese mob, and criminality. Many places like sauna and public baths may refuse the entrance to their establishment to people wearing tattoos, regardless of the size and design.

What to wear in and out the dojo: Kids walking to and out the dojo in *karategi* is a common sight in Okinawa but less common with adults. Putting your *gi* pants on and a normal T-shirt and then wearing the *gi* top once in the dojo is usual. If wearing the full *gi*, wear something to cover the *gi* top. Do not wear watches, socks, rings and the likes during training.

FOOD

Okinawan cuisine often contains pork, in actual pieces of as an ingredient to most broths and soups.

If you are a vegetarian, the following expressions may be useful:

Niku nashi: no meat

Buta niku nashi: no pork meat

Sakana nashi: no fish

Niku wa tabemasen: I don't eat meat

Niku to sakana to hamu to toriniku wa tabemasen: I don't eat meat or fish or ham or chicken

Watashi wa bejitarian desu: I'm a vegetarian



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Bejitarian ryori ha arimasu ka: Do you have any vegetarian dishes?

Niku ga haitte imasu ka = (pointing at the dish) Does this dish contain meat?

General food:

Miso soup: soybean paste soup

Sashimi: raw fish

Soba: buckwheat noodles

Sukiyaki: beef and vegetables in soy sauce

Sushi: raw fish on rice ball

Tempura: batter-fried food

Tofu: soybean curd

Tonkatsu: fried pork cutlet

Udon: thick wheat noodle

Yakitori: grilled chicken

Okinawan food:

Chanpuru is the Okinawan word for “mixture”. There are many kinds of *chanpuru* dishes in Okinawa. It usually contains vegetables, tofu and meat or Spam (canned pork). Here are the most common ones: *Tofu chanpuru* (the basic dish of tofu, vegetables and pork), *Somen chanpuru* (with thin noodles called *somen* and tuna), *Goya Chanpuru* (with bitter melon, tofu and pork), etc...

Okinawa Soba: noodle in pork broth soup, usually served with some pieces of pork and fish cakes. There are many types: *Soki soba* (noodles topped with ribs), *Yasai soba* (noodles topped with vegetables) and *Tebichi soba* (noodles topped with pigs feet). If you don't want the soup, order *yakisoba* (fried noodles in sauce). It is said to be a derivate of the Chinese dish *Chow mein*.

Mimiga: Thinly sliced pigs' ears, served pickled or in a peanut sauce

Mozoku: Seaweed usually served in vinegar

Shima rakkyo: Island shallots. Served as is, pickled or in tempura. Fantastic with bit of salt!

Taco rice: Okinawan version of a taco except made with rice.

Tebichi: Pigs feet

HOSPITAL

Emergency hospital: Naha city: (098) 877-1199 (you can go there by monorail getting off at *Byoin-mae-eki* station)

Adventist Medical center: (098) 946-2833 (English speaking doctors available – 30 minutes from central Naha – 10 minutes in car from monorail Shuri Station)

Okinawa Red Cross Hospital: (098) 853-3134 (in front of Yogi Park, next to Naha Police Station)



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INTERNET

Net café: There are a few 24 hours opened Internet cafes around. “Space create” is located almost opposite to the Makishi Police box in the building PIER88. The basic fee is 280 yen for 30 minutes. “GeraGera NET Café” is in middle of Kokusai Dori, located on 2nd floor next facing the Ryukyu Bank Tsuboya Branch. The basic fee is 400 yen for 60 minutes.

Free access to email accounts: Visit the café and bars “Dojo Bar” (18:00-24:00), “Eager Beaver” and “Rehab” (opened 19:00 to 2:00) and the restaurant RIZE (18:00-2:00).

Free internet corners: Visit the Naha Library in Yogi Park (098-917-3449) and the Naha Business Incubate Office in Shintoshin (098-941-7000).

Free wifi: Starbucks and Mission Coffee have free wifi. Mission Coffee will give the password for free. Starbucks is for free as well, you just need to register with an email address once. They have a flyer with English instructions if you ask them. It works in every Starbucks, at least in Japan.

LAUNDROMAT

If your hotel doesn't have a laundry service or a washing machine within the establishment, there are many laundromat (coin laundry) available in most cities. You will need 100 yen coins for both the washing machine and the drying machine. Laundry detergent is available depending on stores. It generally costs 300 yen to wash and 100 yen every 10 minutes of dryer time.

MISCELLANEOUS

Ancestor worshipping: In many homes, there is a family altar with *totome*, mortuary tablets, to worship family ancestors. People show their respect several times a year during special gatherings.

Baths: You are supposed to shower before you get in the bath. If you use the public bath, don't soap up in the tub!

Convenient stores: Family Mart and Lawson are the most popular. They are open 24hours.

Helpline: Japan Helpline is a 24 hour service, toll free and offers advice in many languages. Dial 0570-000-911.

Izakaya: These Japanese style pub-restaurants are regular beer & food pubs, different from bars in which hostesses welcome and serve you mostly alcohol. *Izakaya* are usually affordable places to eat with a wide variety of dishes to enjoy. Charges in hostess bars are far more expensive than in *Izakaya*.

Library: Located in Yogi Park of Naha City is the Okinawa Prefectural Library. The library is open from 9:00AM- 7:00PM on weekdays and 9:00AM- 4:00PM on weekends. Closed on Tuesdays, 4th & 5th Sundays, holidays, June 23rd, New Years, & special book arrangement days. Many books with some English books specializing in Ryukyuan history, culture and karate are available.



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Massages: Many hotels offer massage services. Just ask the front desk. While there are many stores called *Temomin* that offer quick back, head and foot massages, it might be wiser to go to a Chiropractic clinic (*seitai* in Japanese) for efficient massages. It usually costs 3,000 yen for a 30-45 minutes session. Other experiences are the cobblestone reflexology footpaths found in parks and hard and soft reflexology.

Nommunication: Many Okinawan people enjoy having a few drinks after a long day of work. It's the time of day when people get together to enjoy conversation and a few drinks. It's common to hear "First, let's have a beer! (*Mazu, nama ippai!*)" After a beer, many switch to Okinawa's traditional sake, *awamori*.

Photo booths: There are usually found outside supermarkets or inside malls.

Senior citizens: The people of Okinawa treasure their senior citizens. They are witnesses to and important storytellers of our heritage and history.

Tipping: Don't tip! As in mainland Japan, tips are not a tradition, therefore it is not necessary nor expected.

Western toilets: Convenient stores like Lawson's and Family Mart have public western toilets, in case you really need to go.

MONEY

Banks: They are closed weekends and National holidays. Banking hours are Mon- Friday 9:00am to 3:00pm (May vary depending on the bank). You can exchange traveler's checks and foreign currency at most main branches.

Credit Cards: Travelers should confirm in advance if credit cards are accepted.

Currency exchange: The Bank of Okinawa has set some cash exchange machines in major shopping malls. You can change 8 currencies there. In Naha, visit San-A Main Place in Shintoshin and AEON Naha in Oroku.

Withdrawing money: It is not possible to withdraw money from a regular ATM machines found in Japanese banks with a card issued outside of Japan. The most convenient option is to go the closest post office. Post office ATM's offer a guide in English and accept most major credit cards. The Post office ATM located on the 1st floor of Ryubo Palette Kumoji is in service 7:00~23:00 weekdays, 9:00~21:00 Saturdays and 9:00~19:00 Sundays.

POST OFFICE

Post offices are open Monday to Friday 10:00 to 17:00. Main branches only have a counter opened 24hours all days. Look for a mark that looks like a T with an extra stroke, which is the symbol for a post office. It generally costs 50 yen to send a postcard and 80 yen to send a letter. For international rates, ask at the counter.



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SHOPPING

Shureido store: Martial artists clothing and accessories. It is located close-by the Sogenji wall.

Supermarkets: The major stores are Jusco, Union and San-A. Most are opened 24hours.

Kokusai Dori, Heiwa Dori and Makishi Public Market: The best to feel Okinawa and for souvenir shopping.

100 yen shop: Many department stores have one and there is one also in Heiwa Dori.

Naha Main Place: Located in Shintoshin, next to the Okinawa Prefecture Museum, it has a wide choice of shops, restaurants and a cinema complex. 5 minutes walk from the monorail Omoromachi station.

Junkudo: The biggest bookstore in Naha. The Okinawa and karate corner is on the 2nd floor and the foreign book and magazine section is on the 3rd floor.

Ryubo: Another big Japanese department store at the South end of Kokusai Street that is linked to the Kencho-mae station.

Tsuboya: Famous Ryukyu pottery quarter located at the back of the Heiwa Dori markets. Next to the many potters shops and ateliers, it also houses the Tsuboya Pottery Museum.

TELEPHONES

Telephones in Japan are color coded: green phone takes either coins or a phone card and is used for making domestic calls only. A gray telephone can be used for domestic or international calls. Cards or coins can be used and there is an English guidance. Pre paid calling cards are available at convenience stores or you can make collect calls or use your own credit calling service. The country code for Japan is "81".

To call overseas, you can purchase a prepaid card in many convenient stores. (NTT World Prepaid Card, KDDI Super World Card, etc...).

For cellular phones, it is not possible to by a prepaid SIM card in Okinawa.

Now, it is possible to purchase a prepaid SIM card ONLINE with Japan Communications Inc. (More at <http://www.bmobile.ne.jp/english/14days.html>)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Naha Tourist Information Bureau: This is a great place that should be visited first. Located in Okiei Street, close-by the Kokusai dori Star Bucks, they have English maps and pamphlets and English speaking staff available.

Okinawa Explorer Guidebook: Definitely the best guide on Okinawa available so far. Visit: www.okinawaexplorer.com or get a copy at Junkudo.

Multilingual call center service: The OCVB has set a call center for visitors. It operates every day



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9:00 to 24:00. The phone number for English Inquiries is 0570-077201.

TRANSPORT

Driving: Car and scooter rental is very simple. Don't forget to bring your International license with you. If you rent a car, remember there is a 0 tolerance in Japan for drinking and driving. According to the law, you must wear a seatbelt and no driving in the bus lane is allowed during certain hours of the morning and evening.

Taxis: There are many taxi services in Okinawa. Just wave your hand at the driver and he should stop for you. A red sign in the front window means the taxi is free. A green sign means it is occupied. Fares start from 450 yen and go up from there.

Monorail: Yui-rail, the Naha monorail, runs from Naha Airport to Shuri Station. It is cheap and very handy to get around Naha city. Fares starts at 200 yen and go up to 320 yen. The first train is at around 6:00 and the last train at around 11:30. Trains are available every 10 minutes or so.

Ferries: There are many ferries that leave from Tomarin (Tomari port) for the surrounding islands like Tokashiki and Zamami islands.

Bus information: All buses routes 1 – 20 are city buses and will usually trundle down Kokusai Dori Street and end up at Naha bus terminal. Flat fee of 200 yen paid into a box beside the driver as you enter the bus. Buses numbered 20 plus are suburban lines. Take a ticket as you get on and pay when you get off according to your ticket number.

VISITING A DOJO

In the past in Okinawa, a letter of introduction to the master was needed to become a student. In other cases, parents would bring their son asking the master to make an adult of him. Today, while many dojo open their doors to foreigners, being escorted or introduced is sometimes the best way to find a good instructor or visit a dojo. If you want to go visit other styles while on island, a good way is to simply ask your instructor for advice on which dojo he would recommend for a visit. It is a nice way to have some doors open for you the traditional way! If you do not have an instructor in Okinawa, you can contact the Okinawa Traditional Karate Liaison Bureau (www.okkb.org) for help in this matter.

Tuition fee: While they vary from dojo to dojo, remember that in Okinawa like in Japan, it is impolite to give money directly to someone. When paying a tuition fee, please put the money in an envelope. Note that there is no specific format or design therefore you don't need to buy a nice one.

What to bring: A karate uniform, called *karate-gi* and not a kimono! A towel and a bottle of water!



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WEATHER

Overall: Okinawa is a year-round destination. January to March brings temperatures ranging from 16°-18°C (60°-64°F) with occasional chilly winds. Long sleeves and sweaters are recommended during these months. April, May and June bring short-sleeves weather with temperature averages from 21°-26°C (69°-78°F). Temperatures start climbing from July till September, rising to an average of 28°C (82°F). Sunglasses and caps are a must during this time of the year. And as we enter the month of October, the temperature gradually declines till December with an average of 18°C (64°F).

The Rainy Season: Traditionally, the rainy season begins in May and continues to June. Humidity rises to 80% or above.

Typhoons: The so-called "peak season" for typhoons is from July to October.

END NOTE and ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The idea of such a guide is based on Anni Moynihan's "ANNI'S OKINAWA SURVIVAL GUIDE" that was compiled in early 2000 while she lived in Okinawa. We thank her for inspiring hard work for karate.

This **Okinawa Guide for Karate Visitors** was compiled in July 2013 and updated in September 2013. It will be updated along the way. If you have any comments, advices or updates, they are more than welcome.

The people who helped us complete this guide: Marius Betz (Germany) and Steve Lyons (Canada)

Regards,
Miguel Da Luz
www.okkb.org