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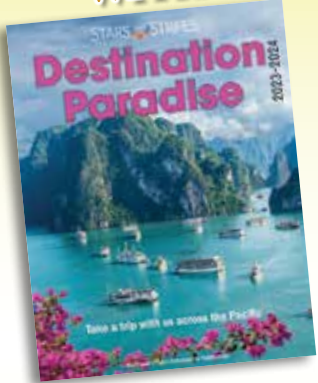
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Childhood memories, refreshing adventures in

# Nanjo City

Pages 4-5



TANABATA  
WISHING ON  
TWO LOVERS LEGEND  
PAGE 6

## Light up the sky

Okinawa's summer fireworks, eisa festivals set to return

Page 8

**Manza Natsuno Uchiage Hanabi**  
**DATES:** Jul. 13, 17, 20, 24, 27, 31, Aug. 3, 7, 10, 12, 14, 16, 17, 21, 24, Sept. 7, 14, 21, 28.  
**TIME:** 9 p.m. – (three minutes)  
**LOCATION:** ANA Intercontinental Manza Beach Resort  
**COORDINATES:** 26.506035, 127.859

**Ocean Expo Park Summer Festival Fireworks**  
**DATE:** July 13  
**TIME:** 8 – 9 p.m.  
**LOCATION:** Emerald Beach  
**GPS COORDINATES:** 26.699204, 127.877585  
 \* About 10,000 fireworks are expected to go off

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# USO Okinawa staff spotlight

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- **NAME:** Mari Velasquez
- **POSITION/TITLE:** Center Operations Manager
- **TIME WORKED AT USO:** October 2022 - Present
- **CENTER/OFFICE LOCATION:** USO Camp Hansen



## About Mari

Mari, Marine Corps veteran and a lover of all things coffee, is the Center Operations Manager at USO Camp Hansen. Born and raised in Okinawa, Mari frequently traveled between Japan and the United States as her father was an active-duty Marine. Shortly after high school, Mari followed in the footsteps of her father and enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. Post active-duty service, Mari obtained her degree in Business Marketing from California State University San Marcos. Mari loves the popular pastime of Karaoke and enjoys bringing her love of singing to the USO Camp Hansen center for their monthly programming.

## Q. Why do you love working at the USO?

**A.** I love working at the USO because each day brings something new and exciting. From surprising events to heartfelt moments, there is always an opportunity to create a home away from home for our patrons. We have the unique opportunity at USO Camp Hansen to support unit events as well as help someone feel comfortable and welcome. My coworkers and our volunteer team are amazing and help make every day a blast; we often share laughs, smiles, and create a warm environment for our service members and

patrons.

I am so excited to what new surprises and opportunities await us at USO Hansen and with my awesome team, anything is possible!

## Q. What's your favorite memory of working at the USO?

**A.** My favorite memory of working at the USO is planning and hosting our winter/holiday programs! Around Thanksgiving and Christmas, many service members miss home, so we do our best to create a cozy, home-away-from-home atmosphere for them. We want them to have a place where they can relax and celebrate the holidays together. To keep the holiday spirit alive, we host fun activities like Cookies and Cocoa, where we serve delicious homemade cookies with a cup of hot cocoa to service members visiting our center. We even host a holiday decorating event, where service members can stop by the center and help us

decorate for the upcoming holidays.

My favorite holiday program is our Holiday Meals-to-Go; our team hand delivers festive meals to service members who are on duty, bringing a little holiday cheer directly to them.

We want them to know that no matter where they are, the USO is right there with them ensuring they feel connected to their homes and families, especially during the holidays.

## FEATURED PROGRAM

We are all about Karaoke at USO Camp Hansen and host a monthly Karaoke Night for service members!

They love to come to the center with their friends and showcase their amazing talents--it's always a fun evening filled with laughter and music. Our next Karaoke Night will be Friday, June 21st at 5pm! Grab a friend and join us for the fun.

Another fantastic program we offer is our monthly Themed Japanese Class. This program is a great introduction for anyone new to Japan and wants the opportunity to learn about local customs and traditions. It's the perfect way to dive into the culture and get a taste of what makes Japan so unique and fascinating! Be sure to follow our Facebook page, @USO-Hansen, for the most up-to-date news!

– USO Okinawa

*(We are open this month please check our website for July business hours and details.)*



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# Childhood memories, refreshing adventures in Nanjo City

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA,  
STRIPES OKINAWA

**O**n a day in mid-May, I headed south to visit a couple of locations in Nanjo City. As someone who grew up in the mid-to-south

section of the island of Okinawa, this southern municipality was my quick, go-to destination. I still go there quite often, but there are some spots that I haven't seen in a while. Curious about what they look like now after all these years, I decided to give them a visit.  
kudaka.shoji@stripes.com



## Itokazu Castle Ruins

My first stop was at the Itokazu Castle Ruins. Although this site may be relatively low-profile if you compare it to the Nakagusuku Castle Ruins or Katsuren Castle Ruins, Itokazu is also

impressive. Located at an altitude of 180 meters (591 feet), which is the highest among all the castle ruins in the southern part of the island, it also boasts a dimension of 49,806 square meters.

Itokazu is believed to have been built in the early 14th century with the purpose of defending Tamagusku Castle, which is located nearby. Attesting to its capabilities as a stronghold for defense, a high stonewall as high as 6 meters (approx. 20 feet) runs north to south.

The best way to access this site is via a parking lot on the side of Gusuku Road, a paved way that connects it to Tamagusuku Castle Ruins. When you walk toward the castle ruins, you will run into a couple of historic sites along the way such as Kurayashikiato, a site where locals lived, or Neishi Gusuku, a site to worship god, which had temporarily functioned as a castle until Itokazu Castle was completed. After a 5-minute walk through a forest, huge stonewalls will appear behind the woods.

### Itokazu Castle Ruins

**GPS COORDINATES:** N 26.151314, E 127.762373

**PARKING:** N 26.151746, E 127.766434



GPS COORDINATES  
ITOKAZU CASTLE RUINS



PARKING



## Glass Boat tour at Miibar

On Nanjo City's southern coast, Miibar Beach was a regular swimming spot for me as a kid. Today, it is a major attraction for tourists seeking a natural beach with a laid-back sort of vibes. Its sandy shore runs a kilometer, including the neighboring Hyakuna Beach. A refreshing swim is, of course, a great activity. But a glass boat tour offers a change of pace for the first time in decades, which took me back to my childhood memories.

After departing from the pier, it took only a few minutes for a large school of fish to appear under the boat's glass bottom.

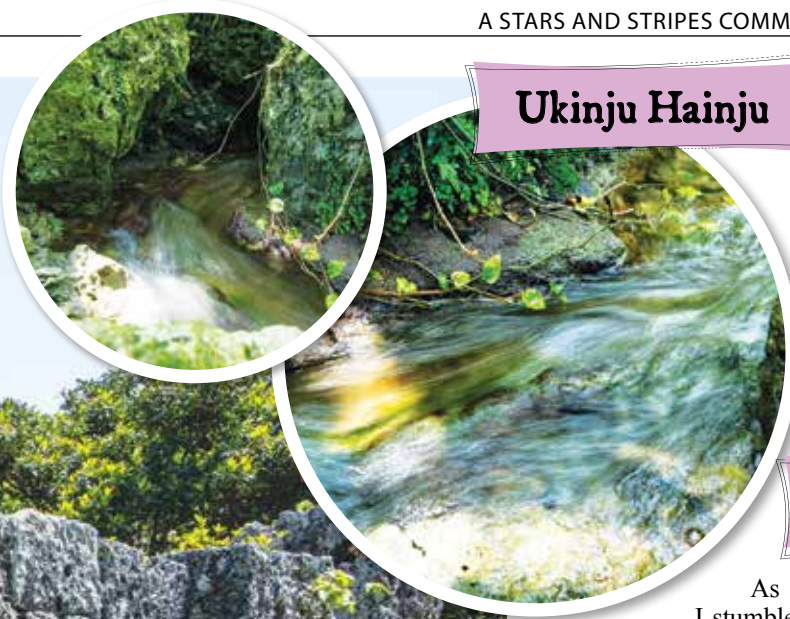
I spotted what I thought were spotted sea bream, like the spangled emperor and the blue wrasse, but those fish came back to the point where it was one from the other.

At one point, the boat came to a stop, letting us observe a spot populated by a large number of sea turtles. Then I noticed a sea turtle on the bottom of the sea. It did not



VIEW VIDEO!

### Ukinju Hainju



Just about a five-minute drive away from Miibaru Beach is this pair of springs. This is another location related to Amamikiyo believed to be the creator of Okinawa. Additionally, the site is also thought to be where rice farming began in the area.

Every January in the lunar calendar, a famous traditional ceremony is held here to pray for a rich harvest. The rest of the year, however, this is a quiet place to reflect and enjoy the stillness which had a soothing and lulling effect on me.

#### Ukinju Hainju

**GPS COORDINATES:** N 26.137720, E 127.793103

\*Paid parking is available nearby.



GPS COORDINATES UKINJU HAINJU

### Café The Palm

As I was on my way back home, I stumbled upon Café The Palm, a new establishment on a hill overlooking the southern coast.

This hidden gem in a brown cottage is nestled in the lush greenery. Inside, it felt more like a resort villa in a tropical location thanks to the view of the forest through the large windows.

Café The Palm's menu ranges from Indian dishes to Western dishes. But, after learning that the café's chef, Kathait Jagbir Hukamushign, worked in a five-star hotel in India, I decided to try the butter chicken curry from the eight options available on the menu.

The meal set (1,800 yen) included soup and salad, which I enjoyed. For a drink that came with the set, I chose lassi. The soup had a taste of chicken broth as its base, but it was also mixed with vegetable flavors and spiciness. The savory taste of the soup was intriguing. It took me just a few minutes to finish it.

When my order was brought to the table, I was instantly hooked by the aroma of the curry sauce and naan. As I chose level 1 for spiciness, the sauce didn't burn my tongue. Still, its savory taste felt great. The naan was humongous, so I was not sure if I could finish it myself. But once I took a bite, I realized that

the fresh-out-of-oven dough was hard to resist. It took me just about five minutes to eat it all. I can say for sure that the butter chicken curry was one of best I have had in my life.



Enjoying the authentic and delicious curry while taking in the beautiful view of the Okinawan forest made my day.

After my hearty meal, I took a walk in the forest adjacent to the café. This area is considered a place of worship, so the trails and footpaths were well-maintained and provided a nice place to walk off my full stomach and relax a little before heading home.

#### Café the PALM

**GPS COORDINATES:** N 26.146717, E 127.792372

**HOURS:** 11 a.m. – 10 p.m. (last order at 9:30 p.m.)

**WEBSITE:** <https://cafethepalm.com/>



GPS COORDINATES CAFÉ THE PALM



WEBSITE

### Tamagusuku Castle Ruins

Just a five-minute drive away from Itokazu Castle Ruins is another historic site that is well worth a visit. Legend has it that this castle was built by Amamikiyo, a god who created Okinawa. It is one of the sacred sites for Agari Umaai, a traditional pilgrimage to the places where Amamikiyo is thought to have lived.

The biggest feature of this historical site is its limestone arch sitting at the top. The narrow structure was hand carved and only allows one person through at a time. According to Nanjo City, its narrowness functioned to prevent enemies from coming inside. The top of the castle boasts an altitude as high as 180 meters, offering a good spot for a photo op.

#### Tamagusuku Castle Ruins

**GPS COORDINATES:** N 26.144302, E 127.780651

**PARKING:** N 26.144543, E 127.781745



GPS COORDINATES TAMAGUSUKU CASTLE RUINS



PARKING

### Miibaru Beach

coast, Miibaru Beach is a swimming spot or draw for fishermen the 1.5-kilometer long beach.

at way for some of pace. I tried which brought me

ly several min- appear below the

re familiar faces and yellow-brown by one after an- s difficult to tell

ne to a stop, let- ed by many fish. e resting at the show signs of



movement, so it seemed to be snoozing and reminded me of when I snorkeled around the Kerama Islands.

The boat tour ran just 20 minutes, but it let me enjoy memorable scenes without getting wet.

Once I was back on the shore, I felt thirsty under the strong sunshine so I grabbed a refreshment at the eatery by the boat ticket counter.

To cool off, I had an ichigo kakigori premium (premium strawberry shaved ice) for 950 yen.

It felt a lot more like sherbet or gelato thanks to its extremely fluffy texture. And it came in a large size. I took my time digging into the sweet, icy mountain as I enjoyed the beautiful view of summer before me, thinking back to the time I spent eating shaved ice at the same location when I was a kid.

#### Mi-baru Marine Center

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July 7

# Tanabata

## Wishing on two lovers legend

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,  
STRIPES OKINAWA

One of the most romantic and traditional festivals, Tanabata, also known as the Star Festival, is celebrated every year on the seventh day of the seventh month.

The Star Festival originated from the Chinese legend of two stars, Vega and Altair – lovers who were separated by the Milky Way and allowed to meet only once a year on July 7.

The legend of Star Festival in Japan varies according to the region, and one that I was told in my childhood goes like this:

Vega (a weaver and princess called Orihime in Japanese) was a beautiful daughter of King of the Sky. She always weaved celestial cloth for her father by the bank of the Milky Way. There was also a young herdsman named Altair (called Hikoboshi



in Japanese). One day, the herdsman visited the princess when she was working with her loom and they fell in love at first sight. As Vega met her lover more and more frequently, she began weaving less and less. The king, who was suspicious about his daughter's change, finally saw her meeting with the herdsman. In anger, the king separated the two lovers across the Milky Way and forbade them to meet again. The princess became so desperate and continued weeping until her father finally allowed her to meet with the herdsman once a year on the seventh day of the seventh month.

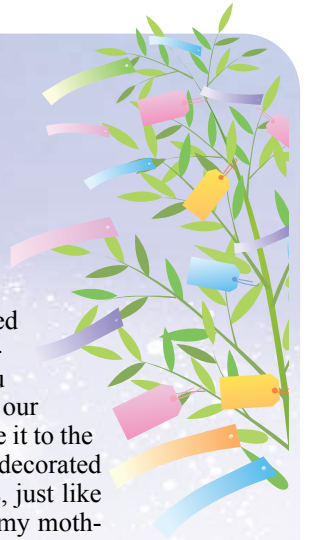
So, if you look up into the evening sky on July 7 and it is clear, you can see the two stars reunited. But if it is rainy or cloudy, know that they will try to meet again next year.

As part of the Tanabata celebration,

Japanese tie fancy slips of colored paper - blue, red, violet or yellow and white - called tanzaku on bamboo branches. We write our wish on one of the papers and tie it to the bamboo branch, which is also decorated with shiny, metallic decorations, just like a Christmas tree. According to my mother, girls back in the day used to wish that their weaving and sewing skills would improve, like the weaver princess. However, as weaver princess eventually became a guardian of arts in general, many children today wish improve their skills in handwriting, drawing or singing.

Shopping districts throughout the nation are decorated with colorful bamboo branches. Tanabata is not a national holiday but is a tradition observed by Japanese families. Some regions celebrate this festival on July 7 in accordance with the old lunar calendar, which is Aug.10 this year.

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com



### DID YOU KNOW?

July 7 - Tanabata, one of Japan's most romantic festivals

During one of the most romantic and traditional festivals, Tanabata, aka Star Festival, is celebrated every July 7. As part of the celebration, fancy slips of colored paper called tanzaku are tied to bamboo branches. Wishes are then written on the paper. Some of the wishes include things like "improved handwriting skills, drawing or singing".

- Takahiro Takiguchi, Stripes Okinawa



### Speakin' Japanese

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI  
AND SHOJI KUDAKA,  
STRIPES OKINAWA

Negaiwo kakemasho.

Tanabata, or Star Festival, is approaching on July 7. According to the legend around Tanabata, two star-crossed lovers will reunite on this night as the Milky Way stretches across the sky. Traditionally, we celebrate this yearly reconciliation by decorating bamboo branches with ornaments and paper slips where we write our wishes. When you write a wish on a strip of paper and hang it on the branch, your wish is believed to come true. What a romantic legend it is, isn't it? So, today's Japanese phrase is:

### Negaiwo kakemasho. = Let's make a wish.

- negai = wish
- kake = take/make/hang
- masho = let's

Why not celebrate the lovers' annual encounter by making our own wish upon the two-lover stars? Your wish may come true! Stay safe and don't forget to make a wish on July 7!



VIDEO LESSON



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# Stripes Sports Trivia

**SAY MY NAME!** I pitched for 10 years in the bigs, debuting with the California Angels before stints with the Yankees, White Sox and Brewers. My career numbers (87-108, 4.25) are nothing special, unlike my life story, which is pretty hard to believe. During my time in the Bronx, I threw a no-hitter – a neat feat for someone with two hands. Me? I did it with just one. Who am I?

**Answer**

Jim Abbott

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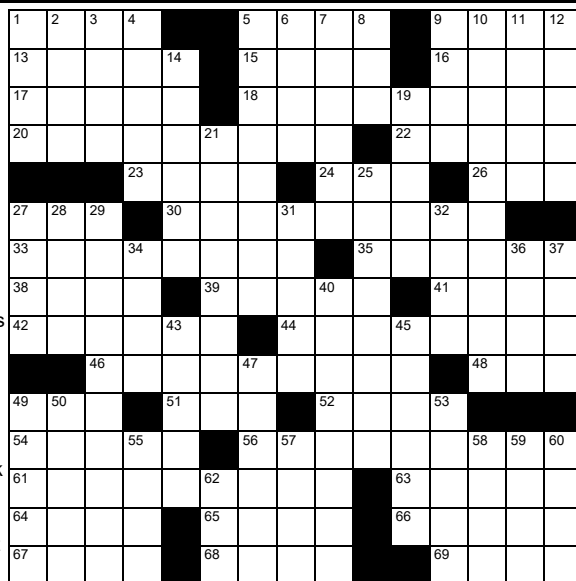
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## Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

### ACROSS

- 1 Tallies
- 5 German river
- 9 \_\_\_ chic
- 13 Cops' rounds
- 15 Verb preceder
- 16 Where the heart is
- 17 "Middlemarch" author
- 18 "Boyz n the Hood" director
- 20 Like some smiles
- 22 Leaves out
- 23 Greenish-blue hue
- 24 Canal site
- 26 Get the picture
- 27 Wide of the mark
- 30 Like a mumu dress
- 33 Equestrian event
- 35 Answer to "Where are you?"
- 38 Student overseer
- 39 "Mob Wives" star Graziano
- 41 Saharalike
- 42 Layers of rock
- 44 Irksome
- 46 Mock rock band in a 1984 film
- 48 \_\_\_ out a win
- 49 Fall mo.
- 51 Do away with
- 52 Agenda entry
- 54 Absurd comedy
- 56 Some are raw
- 61 Gym staple
- 63 Set aside
- 64 Word after break or get
- 65 Spur (on)
- 66 Geometry calculation
- 67 New Jersey five
- 68 Pushing up daisies
- 69 Come across as



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### DOWN

- 1 Still asleep
- 2 Where to find a hero
- 3 Roasting platform
- 4 Brown fur
- 5 Fodder storage
- 6 Pork \_\_\_
- 7 Thrill-seeker's cord
- 8 HS subject
- 9 Those guys
- 10 Cooking device
- 11 Overact
- 12 Pick up
- 14 Headache cause
- 19 "Two Women" Oscar winner
- 21 Indian royal
- 25 Drive off
- 27 Track figures
- 28 Guitar ridge
- 29 R. L. Stine book series

- 31 Kind of colony or code
- 32 Horse-drawn carriage
- 34 Jacket fastener
- 36 Gretzky's milieu
- 37 Advantage
- 40 Deserving
- 43 Played out
- 45 La Scala works
- 47 Think much of
- 49 Over and over
- 50 Slice the turkey
- 53 "Pollyanna" actress Hayley
- 55 Pantry items
- 57 Pond growth
- 58 Tissue additive
- 59 Run easily
- 60 Rose part
- 62 Really bad coffee

### Answers to Previous Crossword:

A	S	P	S	H	E	A	T	S	P	O	T	S	
B	A	I	T	E	L	B	A	N	A	U	R	U	
E	V	E	R	G	R	E	E	N	O	T	T	E	R
D	E	S	E	L	E	C	T	M	O	R	O	S	E
		W	A	T	T	C	A	P	O	N			
S	A	D	M	I	R	R	O	R	L	A	M	A	
P	R	E	C	O	C	I	O	U	S	C	L	A	W
R	O	T	O	R	C	A	N	R	A	I	T	A	
A	M	E	N	D	I	R	T	F	A	R	M	E	R
Y	A	R	D	I	T	S	E	L	F	B	Y	E	
		M	U	C	K	Y	N	U	T	S			
C	L	I	C	H	E	H	A	T	E	M	A	I	L
Y	E	N	T	A	C	O	N	T	R	A	L	T	O
S	N	E	E	R	O	N	C	E	S	T	E	P	
T	O	D	D	S	B	E	E	R	H	O	M	E	

## DID YOU KNOW?

The rainy season in Japan is cheerily referred to as "tsuyu," or plum rain, as it coincides with the seasonal ripening of this luscious fruit. Constant gray skies and gloomy showers can only mean one thing. The rainy season starts to fall on Okinawa in late May followed by mainland Japan and Kyushu Island in early June.

Kanji of the week



Iro/shiki (color)

## Language Lesson

I'm bored.

Taikutsu desu.

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## SUDOKU

Difficulty: Easy

Edited by Margie E. Burke

### HOW TO SOLVE:

Each row must contain the numbers 1 to 9; each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9; and each set of 3 by 3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 to 9.

Answer to Previous Sudoku:

2	7	8	5	3	1	4	9	6
9	5	4	7	6	2	1	3	8
3	1	6	4	9	8	7	5	2
4	9	1	2	8	3	6	7	5
8	2	7	1	5	6	3	4	9
5	6	3	9	4	7	2	8	1
6	4	2	8	7	9	5	1	3
1	8	5	3	2	4	9	6	7
7	3	9	6	1	5	8	2	4

			1	7				9
	1							5
		3						
2			5	7				
							4	1
3	4			8				
				5			6	
	9		7	4	3			
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# Okinawa's summer fireworks, eisa festivals set to return



BY SHOJI KUDAKA, STRIPES OKINAWA

With the summer arriving in Okinawa, fireworks and eisa dance festivals are making their way back. Here are some of the hot events coming up on the island. Join in and relish the moments of summer you've been waiting for!

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## Eisa & Summer Festivals

### Ocean Expo Park Summer Festival Fireworks

**DATE:** July 13  
**TIME:** 8 – 9 p.m.  
**LOCATION:** Emerald Beach  
**GPS COORDINATES:** 26.699204, 127.877585

\* About 10,000 fireworks are expected to go off.  
 \* Some areas are subject to fees (3,000 yen per person).

### Fireworks at resort hotels

#### Manza Natsuno Uchiage Hanabi

**DATES:** July 13, 17, 20, 24, 27, 31, Aug. 3, 7, 10, 12, 14, 16, 17, 21, 24, Sept. 7, 14, 21, 28.  
**TIME:** 9 p.m. – (three minutes)  
**LOCATION:** ANA Intercontinental Manza Beach Resort  
**GPS COORDINATES:** 26.506035, 127.859112

\* Parking fee costs 3,000 yen per regular car or motorcycle until around 4:30 p.m.

### Seaport Chatan Carnival

**DATE:** Sept. 28, 29  
**TIME:** TBD  
**LOCATION:** Sunset Beach  
**GPS COORDINATES:** 26.313500, 127.755456

### Nago Natsumatsuri 2024

**DATE:** July 27, 28  
**TIME:** 1 – 9 p.m.  
**LOCATION:** Nago Fishing Port  
**GPS COORDINATES:** 26.587119, 127.982603

\* There will be a ceremony at 11 a.m. on Saturday July 27.  
 \* Fireworks are scheduled to start at 8 p.m. on each day.

### Kunigami son Matsuri

**DATES:** Aug. 17, 18  
**TIME:** TBD  
**LOCATION:** Kunigami Middle School playground  
**GPS COORDINATES:** 26.746486, 128.175138

\* Fireworks are scheduled on Sunday Aug. 18, starting at 9 p.m.  
 \* Parking space to be prepared nearby.

### Zento Eisa Matsuri (All Island Eisa Festival)

**DATE:** Aug. 23, 24, 25  
**TIME:** 6:30 p.m. – (Aug. 23, parade), 3 p.m. – (Aug. 24, gate opens at 2 p.m.), 2:30 p.m. – (gate opens at 1:30 p.m.)

**LOCATION:** Okinawa City Koza Sports Park (South of Kadena Air Base)  
**GPS COORDINATES:** 26.333052, 127.788503  
**WEBSITE** (info to be updated on the website)

\* No parking available on site.  
 \* Fireworks are scheduled on Saturday and Sunday.



WEBSITE

### Uruma City Festival

**DATE:** Aug. 31, Sept. 1

\* Details to be announced.

### Higashi son Matsuri

**DATE:** Aug. 3  
**TIME:** 10 a.m. – 9 p.m.  
**LOCATION:** Higagshi Sonmin no Mori Tsutsujien  
**GPS COORDINATES:** 26.637381, 128.155865

\* Fireworks expected to start around 8:45 p.m.

Schedule may be subject to change.

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Cynthia McKeague

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