



**SUBMIT A PHOTO
FOR THE COVER OF**

Welcome to the Pacific

Got a great shot of mainland Japan, Okinawa, Korea or Guam? If so, submit it and maybe it'll end up on the front page of Welcome to the Pacific.

Photo deadline: Jan. 17



Facebook.com/StripesPacific
okinawa.stripes.com

INSIDE INFO



**COMING-OF-AGE DAY
INCITES RITE
OF PASSAGE**

PAGE 3



**VALLEY OF GANGALA
& CAVE CAFE**
AN UNDERGROUND
SECRET GARDEN OF EDEN

PAGES 6

STARS AND STRIPES®
Community Publication

OKINAWA

VOLUME 15 NO. 10

JANUARY 6 – JANUARY 19, 2021

SUBMIT STORIES TO: OKINAWA@STIPES.COM • OKINAWA.STIPES.COM • [f FACEBOOK.COM/STIPESPACIFIC](https://www.facebook.com/stripespacific)

FREE

FLOWER POWER

Cherry blossoms blooming across Okinawa

PAGES 4-5



Photo by Shoji Kudaka, Stripes Okinawa

'TRULY NOT ALONE'

Kadena spouse's support group aims to improve mental health

STORY AND PHOTO BY MATTHEW M. BURKE,
STARS AND STRIPES
Published: December 13, 2021

KADENA AIR BASE — Air Force spouse Sarah Russell created her own kind of mental health support group after being diagnosed with bipolar disorder in 2020.

Kadena has an adequate share of therapy and Defense Department health programs, Russell said, but she wanted to supplement her treatment with something less serious, revolving around fun activities and making new friends.

"I was told by one of the psychiatrists

I had seen outpatient that they didn't offer group therapy here," she recently told Stars and Stripes. "I decided that I would try to start something, a peer-to-peer social support group."

She founded the Mental Health Peer Alliance in September 2020. Its events typically draw six to eight members, but over 400 people belong to their closed Facebook group.

A group like Russell's supplements treatment found on base, sort of like Alcoholics Anonymous, said Air Force Maj. Emily Graze, the 18th Wing's mental health flight commander and a licensed psychologist.

When it comes to mental health, you can never provide too many services, she told Stars and Stripes.

"There's always room to advance and provide more," Graze said.

The military has a need for mental health services that it often fails to meet, according to an August 2020 Defense Department Inspector General's report.

Approximately 14% of all active-duty service members — 203,040 of them — had diagnosed mental health disorders in 2017, according to the report. By contrast, 18.9%

SEE GROUP ON PAGE 2

STARS AND STRIPES
www.stripes.com

Max D. Lederer Jr.
Publisher

Lt. Col. Michael Kerschbaum
Commander

Michael Ryan
Chief of Staff

Chris Verigan
Engagement Director

Marie Woods
Publishing and Media Design Director

Chris Carlson
Publishing and Media Design Manager

Eric Lee
Advertising and Circulation Manager

Kentaro Shimura
Production Manager

Rie Miyoshi
Engagement Manager

Denisse Rauda
Publishing and Media Design Editor

Publishing and Media Design Writers
ChiHon Kim
Shoji Kudaka
Takahiro Takiguchi

Layout Designers
Kazumi Hasegawa
Mamoru Inoue
Yuko Okazaki
Kayoko Shimoda

Multimedia Consultants
Max Genao
Jason Lee
Chae Pang Yi
Doug Johnson
Hans Simpson
Gianni Youn
Robert Zuckerman

Graphic Designers
Yukiyo Oda
Kenichi Ogasawara
Yosuke Tsuji

Sales Support
Yu Mi Choe
Ok Ki Kim
Yusuke Sato
Saori Tamanaha
Hiromi Isa
Yoko Noro
Kanna Suzuki
Toshie Yoshimizu

For feedback and inquiries,
contact MemberServices@Stripes.com

To place an ad, call DSN 645-7419
okinawa.stripes.com/contact

GROUP: Giving people hope

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

of all adults in the United States that year had a mental illness.

However, the report found the DOD falls short of its duty to provide access to timely and ongoing mental health care, although the Military Health System is taking steps to improve, according to the report. It did not specifically address the availability of group therapy.

In June 2020, Russell, 34, of Sacramento, Calif., began acting irrationally, suffering from paranoia and delusions surrounding her marriage, she said during an interview with Stars and Stripes in November. She told base security forces her husband was following her and had hacked her phone.

"I was suffering from paranoid delusions," she said.

The mother of four was admitted to the mental health unit at U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa on Camp Foster.

Russell discovered she has a family history of the disorder, which is characterized by "unusual shifts in mood, energy, activity levels, concentration, and the ability to carry out day-to-day tasks," according to the



Sarah Russell, an Air Force spouse, created the Mental Health Peer Alliance at Kadena Air Base after being diagnosed with bipolar disorder in 2020.

National Institute of Mental Health.

After her diagnosis, Russell received medication that helped her control the disorder, she said. Then she discovered art therapy and made new

friends who were going through similar difficulties. This seemed to put her mind at ease.

"Making an authentic friend and art therapy were a couple things that helped me heal mentally," she said. "Friendships

can change people, improve quality of life and even save lives."

Russell left the hospital after nine days. She focused, first, on making sure she was well. She found the best medication for her and went to counseling with her husband, which improved their marriage.

Next, Russell wanted to bring like-minded people together and began researching beneficial activities for a group setting, she said.

She came up with four criteria for activities: exercising,

volunteering, socializing and taking productive risks, like teaching, learning a skill or overcoming some small phobia. The Mental Health Peer Alliance was born.

The group meets at Kadena twice a week for activities like art therapy, exercise for mothers and small children, yoga, game nights and service projects like beach cleanups.

"Just having us exist on social media, I think, gives hope to people, that they're truly not alone," she said.

The group is open to any adult who has suffered from depression or anxiety, Russell said. No formal diagnosis is necessary.

Nikita Restrepo, 28, an Air Force spouse from Miami, arrived in Okinawa over the summer. She responded to a social media post about the group because she has social anxiety and is prone to depression.

"We started painting and it was actually therapeutic, and I'm not usually a painter," she said. "I was like, 'I enjoyed this; I want to do this more.'"

For more information, request to join the group's Facebook group at www.facebook.com/groups/mhpaokinawa.

burke.matt@stripes.com

Twitter: @MatthewMBurke1



Free & unlimited internet (Wi-Fi) access

Attention contractors, Long-term stay OK!

HAMAGAWA LODGE

CALL FOR RESERVATIONS!

Friendly English speaking staff

(098)-936-7139

Office 9-6 Mon.-Fri., 9-1 Sat., closed Sun.

72hamagawa@gmail.com

- ★ Fully Furnished Living & Dining Room and Kitchenette.
- ★ Free large parking area, Cable TV and Pets always welcome.
- ★ Conveniently located near Kadena Air Base, Camp Foster.



Kadena Gate 1 23 **Camp Foster** 58

Chinese Restaurant • Family Mart • KFC

Hamagawa Lodge • Pizza House Jr. • BAMBOCHE

San-A



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

Open 9:00-17:00 (Last entry 15:30)
Yen only
Tel. 098-965-3400
961-30 Ishikawa Kadekaru
Uruma City Okinawa
www.bios-hill.co.jp
Please check our calendar
(<https://www.bios-hill.co.jp/price/>)

Bios Orchids Garden Bios no Oka




Entrance Fee + Boat ride
Adult(Over 13)¥1,800 Child(4-12) ¥900

Canoe Experience • not including entrance fee.
Adult(Over 13)¥1,500 Child(4-12) ¥800

Water buffalo Carriage • not including entrance fee.
Adult(Over 13)¥1,200 Child(4-12) ¥650






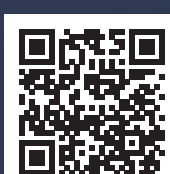
We're giving away new books every month.

Sign up for our FREE Pacific E-newsletter,
or follow us on social media
to receive Book Shelf notifications.

STARS AND STRIPES

BOOK SHELF

eNewsletter: stripes.com/newsletters
Facebook: @StripesPacific
Twitter: @StripesPacific



Coming-of-Age Day incites rite of passage

STORY AND PHOTOS BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,
STRIPES OKINAWA

Becoming an adult is an important milestone in most cultures, and in Japan it is celebrated on Seijin-no Hi, or Coming-of-Age Day, the second Monday of January (Jan. 10 this year). This year the rite of passage, like many other activities, is gradually making its way back to how it was. While there are cities around the country which are planning to hold ceremonies on site, others are choosing to do it on-line.

Despite the many adjustments that we still see, the reason for this occasion still rings true: to mark Japan's young men and women becoming legal adults.

In Japan, age 20 is when someone becomes a legal adult. At age 20, they can legally drink, smoke and get married without parental consent. They also become subject to the laws and

social responsibilities that bind adults. However, they need to wait a few more years to run for a public office. The minimum age for a congressman and mayor is 25; it is 30 for a senator and governor.

"The purpose of this holiday is to congratulate and encourage young men and women who attain the legal age of adulthood to fulfill their newfound responsibilities and become self-reliant members of society," said Masahiko Uchino, of the National Cabinet Office's holiday section.

The number of new adults has been decreasing in recent years due to Japan's shrinking birthrate. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, the number of new adults in 2021 was 1.24 million (640,000 men and 600,000 women) – less than half the 1976 peak of 2.76 million.

The number of new Okinawan adults in 2021 was 16,729, showing a decrease of 116 from the previous year. The birthrate was 10.4 newborns per 1,000 people

in 2019, the highest among all 47 prefectures in the nation. Nothing new for Okinawa, which has been the prefecture with the highest birthrate for the past 46 years.

The tradition of celebrating coming-of-age in the middle of January can be traced back to ancient times, although the national holiday was established for Jan. 15 in 1948. (In 1998, it was moved to the second Monday in January as part of Japan's Happy Monday system, which moved several holidays to create three-day weekends.)

Originally, coming-of-age was celebrated on or around Jan. 15 according to the old lunar calendar. Traditionally called "koshogatsu" (Small New Year's), it was the day of the first full moon of the year.

"It was considered right to celebrate coming-of-age in the beginning of year with festive atmosphere," Uchino said.

Although there was no precise age that determined the onset of adulthood throughout Japan's feudal era, it was usually celebrated when boys reached

the age of around 15 and when girls reached about 13. The Meiji government set the legal age of adulthood for both sexes to 20 in 1876.

"Seijin-shiki," or coming-of age ceremonies, are generally held the morning of the national holiday at local city offices throughout the country. Those who turn 20 during the current school year, which runs from April 2 to April 1 the next year, attend. During the ceremony, heads of local government and guest speakers from various backgrounds give speeches and small presents are handed out to the new adults.

On this day, young adults also often visit shrines or have parties with family and friends after the ceremony.

In some Okinawan villages, such as Shiraho, Ishigaki City, new adults perform a dance to thank the villagers for their support.

Though Seijin-shiki will not yet be completely back in order this year, the rite of passage will continue in a manner to ensure the safety of others.

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com



Dressing the part in style

For most of young women, Coming-of-Age Day and the related ceremony are an opportunity to dress up in their most formal clothes. Many don "furusode," a style of kimono with long sleeves that hang down.

The furisode is the most formal style of kimono worn by an unmarried woman in Japan. It is made of very fine, brightly colored silk, and is commonly rented or bought by parents for their daughters to wear to celebrate their coming-of-age.

By wearing a furisode, a young woman signifies that she is both single and a legal adult, and thus available for marriage, since the garment may not be worn either until adulthood or after wedlock. In this sense, a furisode might be associated

with the formal gowns worn by debutantes in the West.

A full furisode set is very expensive, so it is usually borrowed from a relative or rented. Typically, a young woman rents a kimono, dresses up and has her hair styled at salon before having a formal photo shoot at a portrait studio to commemorate the occasion. This can easily cost 150,000 yen (\$1,250) or more. Purchasing a new kimono set may cost more than 1,000,000 yen (\$8,400).

There are some young men who might wear a traditional dark kimono, called a "haori" (half-coat) and "hakama" (loose-legged pleated trousers) on this holiday. However, nowadays most of young men wear a Western suit and tie for the occasion.

Speakin' Japanese

Coming of age

Jan. 10 is "Seijin no Hi (coming of age day)" in Japan. Let's try these phrases and congratulate our new adults!

"Go-seijin Omedetou gozaimasu"

= Congratulations for coming of age.

("go" = a prefix to express something in a polite way, "seijin" = adult/coming of age, "omedetou gozaimasu" = congratulations)

"Otona no Nakama-iri desune"

= Now you are an adult member of society.

("otona" = adult/grown-up, Nakama-iri = join)

"Tomoni Shakaijin Toshite Ganbari-masho"

= Let's work hard together as adult members of society.

("tomoni" = together, "shakaijin" = adult member of society, "toshite" = as, "ganbari-masho" = let's work hard)

"Atarashii Koto ni Dondon Charenji shite itte Kudasai"

= Please keep trying something new.

("atarashii" = new, "koto" = thing/stuff, "ni" = a particle to indicate an object, "dondon" = a phrase to indicate a momentum, "charenji" = challenge, "shite/suru" = do, "itte" = go, "kudasai" = please)

"Minna Ouen Shite-imasu"

= Everybody is rooting for you.

("minna" = everybody, "ouen" = rooting, "shite-imasu" = be doing)

"Shakaijin toshite seicho shite itte Kudasai"

= Keep being a better adult member of society.

("shakaijin" = adult member of society, "toshite" = as, "seicho shite/suru" = grow up/step up, "itte" = go, "kudasai" = please)

"Ookiku Habataite Kudasai"

= Fly high and be successful.

("ookiku" = widely, "habataku" = flutter one's wings, "kudasai" = please)

"Korekarano jinsei ni Takusan no Deai to Shiawase ga Aruyouni Inotte Imasu"

= I wish you meet many wonderful people and find a lot of happiness.

("korekarano" = in the future, "jinsei" = life, "ni" = in/at, "takusan/takusan-no" = many/a lot of, "deai" = encounter/meeting, "shiwase" = happiness, "ga" = a particle to indicate a subject, "auyouni" = so that there is~, "inotte imasu" = be praying/wishing)

- Shoji Kudaka, Stripes Okinawa

Pronunciation key: "A" is short (like "ah"); "E" is short (like "get"); "I" is short (like "it"); "O" is long (like "old"); "U" is long (like "tube"); and "AI" is a long "I" (like "hike"). Most words are pronounced with equal emphasis on each syllable, but "OU" is a long "O" with emphasis on that syllable.



Cherry blossoms to bloom in the

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPES OKINAWA

Editor's Note: We are living in uncertain times, so please make sure to follow your base command's rules and guidelines when you decide to travel. Wear a facemask, practice social distancing and proper handwashing procedures.

When January's cherry blossom season rolls around on Okinawa, it means it's time to hit the road and head north. Usually, this is the time of year where many festivals draw in crowds of people to celebrate the arrival of the blossoms on the island. But, much like last year, many of the seasonal events will be scaled down or canceled due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The pandemic may still be putting a damper on the season, and yet, nature continues to persevere and soon we'll once again be surrounded by the pink and blush hues of Japan's favorite flower. So, get your facemask on, practice social distancing and head out for a brisk walk under the cherry blossoms. Okinawa offers several locations for great blossom viewing, but those in Yambaru, the hilly areas in the northern part of the main island, draw special attention for a few reasons.

First, Yambaru is home to the earliest blooms on the island. The "cherry blossom front," which refers to the frontline of cherry blossom blooming, travels north to south. On the mainland, the front goes in the opposite direction due to a difference in the type of

If you have seen cherry blossoms on mainland Japan in late March or early April, you may wonder why these flowers bloom in January on Okinawa.

The gap between cherry blossom seasons between Okinawa and mainland Japan can be traced back to a difference in types of cherry blossoms and how the flowers "wake up."

"Cherry blossoms form floral stems during summer and go dormant without growing further before the new year starts," Yoshitaka Kamiya, a member of the Okinawa Regional Headquarters of the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA), said in an interview with Okinawa Times. "To break their sleep, cherry blossoms need to be exposed to low temperatures. To wake up Somei-Yoshino, the temperature needs to be around 40s, while 60s are good for Hikan-zakura."

cherry blossoms. Locations like Mt. Yaedake (Mt. Yae), Nakijin Castle Ruins, and Nago Chuo Park, are some of the prime spots to catch the first blossoms of the season in the country. Second, the mountains and forests of Yambaru are in themselves great attractions for a quick getaway. When they are adorned with the pink color of the cherry blossoms, the dynamic nature of the north becomes even more attractive. At Mt. Yaedake, which kicks off the season on Jan. 22, visitors can enjoy

Early Risers on Okinawa

Somei-Yoshio is a type of cherry blossom commonly seen in mainland Japan. On the other hand, Hikan-zakura, is found in Okinawa. Somei-Yoshino's petals in pale pink draw a clear contrast with the vibrant colors of Hikan-zakura.

"Once awake, cherry blossoms bloom as the temperature rises. Because it takes a temperature around 40s (to break its sleep), Somei Yoshino is not fit to grow in Okinawa," said Kamiya.

The JMA staff also noted that while Somei Yoshino waits for the temperature to rise before blooming, Hikan-zakura can grow and reach full bloom with little change of temperature in Okinawa.

— Shoji Kudaka

the view as they drive up a 2.5-mile-long cherry blossom tree-lined road. In total, there are about 7,000 cherry blossom trees on the second tallest mountain on the island. About 25 minutes from Mt. Yaedake, 600 cherry blossom trees add vibrant colors to Nakijin Castle. This World Heritage Site is thought to have been built around the 13th century and was used as a stronghold for a kingdom that ruled the northern part of the island.

Nago Chuo Park is known for its grand scale

presentat
acre park
a playgro
runs thro

Though
Chuo Par
will still b
sure to c
crowd co

For vis
southern
couple of
cated, bu
timers.

To go t
way is to
north on
on Route
An entra
hand side

R
P
C
I
A
I

nal to go
In Jan
is expect
flowers g
defy the
kudaka.sh

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE: 'Dead bodies are buried under cherry blossoms'

Ah, the beauty of the flowers. The parties with friends under picturesque trees. The wonderful feeling that comes with knowing spring has arrived. There's nothing quite like cherry blossom season in Japan.

But there is a dark side to everything. A side where things aren't always so rosy – or, in this case, cherry. We all know about the warm and sunny side of cherry blossoms in Japan. But what about that other side?

Given the long-term local love affair with these delicate flowers, you may wonder how there could possibly be any negative association with them at all. Well, for starters, that hasn't always been the case.

The "Manyoshu" was written in the seventh to the eighth century and is the oldest existing collection of Japanese poetry. It only has 40 poems on cherry blossoms, compared to 118 in praise of the

then more popular plum blossom. It's believed that cherry blossoms didn't catch on until about the 10th century. Before then, as well as after, Japanese haven't always been so happy to see them.

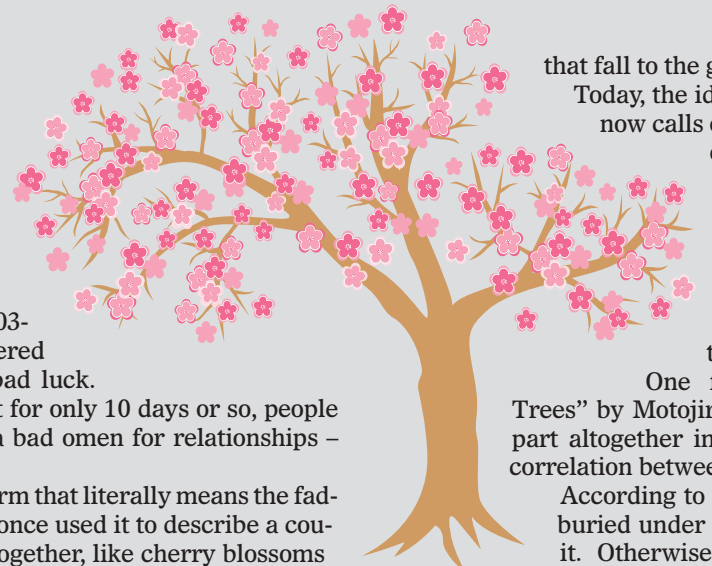
In fact, before the Edo Period (1603-1867), many people here considered cherry blossoms to be a symbol of bad luck. Because they are very fragile and last for only 10 days or so, people used to think cherry blossoms were a bad omen for relationships – especially marriage.

"Sakurazame" is an old Japanese term that literally means the fading away of a cherry blossom. People once used it to describe a couple that breaks up soon after getting together, like cherry blossoms

that fall to the ground
Today, the idea has
now calls on che

during
yu,"
serve
No
often
cher
sort
tween

One famous
Trees" by Motojirō Kaj
part altogether in its in
correlation between dea
According to the no
buried under cherry
it. Otherwise, you





tion with 20,000 cherry blossoms. The 170-
includes castle ruins known as “Nangusuku,”
ground, an area for hiking, and a promenade that
ough a forest and near a river.

h the annual cherry blossom festival at Nago
rk has been canceled again for this year, you
be able to enjoy the blossoms there. Just make
check ahead of what rules each site has for
ontrol and safety guidelines on their websites.
itors who go to Yambaru from the middle and
part of the island, it will most likely take a
f hours by car. Directions are not so compli-
t they may need some explanation for first-

to Mt. Yaedake and Nakijin Castle, the easiest
take the highway, exit at No. 10 (Kyoda), go
Route 58, and make a left to head northwest
e 84, which cuts through Motobu Peninsula.
nce to Mount Yaedake will be seen to the left
e of the road.

To go to Nakijin Castle, take a right onto
oute 115 before hitting the coastline of the
eninsula.

Nago Chuo Park is not far from Exit No. 10.
Go north on Route 58 and make a right on to
Route 84 at the first light after passing by an
A&W. Turn left at the signal near the Orion
Beer factory and make a right at the first sig-
on a road that runs along a river.

January in Okinawa, the average temperature
ed to be the lowest of the year. However, the
ive a lot of reasons for people on the island to
chill.

oji@stripes.com



1 Motobu Yaedake Cherry Blossom Festival

DATES: Jan. 22 – Feb. 6

LOCATION: Yaedake Sakura-no-Mori Park

GPS COORDINATES (ENTRANCE): N 26.656959, E 127.911611

ADMISSION: free

* There will be no vendor stalls this year.

2 Nakijin Gusuku Cherry Blossom Festival

DATES: Jan. 29 – Feb. 6

LOCATION: Nakijin Castle

GPS COORDINATES: N 26.691457, E 127.929023

ADMISSION: 400 yen for adults, 300 yen for Elementary School, Junior/Senior High School Student

* Free admission for those younger than elementary school age

* Open: 8 a.m. – 9 p.m. (last admission at 8:30 p.m.)

* Cherry blossoms will be lit up 6 - 9 p.m.

* For Saturdays and Sundays, additional parking space will be prepared. A shuttle bus to the castle ruins will be available for free.

WEBSITE (JAPANESE): www.nakijinjoseki-osi.jp



3 Nago Chuo Park

GPS COORDINATES: N 26.591213, E 127.997147

4 Yaese Park Cherry Blossom Illumination

DATES: Jan. 21 – Feb. 13

GPS COORDINATES: N 26.131409, E 127.721109

HOURS: 6 – 8 p.m.

d soon after they bloom.

s changed completely. Tradition
erry blossoms to bring good luck
g a wedding ceremony. “Sakura-
or cherry blossom tea, is often
ed at weddings for this reason.

ovels as well as poems have
n drawn public attention to the
ry blossom – especially for a
of melancholic contrast be-
its beauty and short lifespan.
s novel, “Under the Cherry
ii (1901-1932), skips the beauty
ntroduction and draws a direct
th and cherry blossoms.

ovels opening, “Dead bodies are
y blossoms! You have to believe
couldn’t possibly explain the

beauty of the cherry blossom. I have been restless, lately, because I
couldn’t believe in this beauty. But now I finally understand: Dead
bodies are buried under the cherry trees! You have to believe it.”

In fact, Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery, home to the ash re-
mains of around 360,000 unidentified war dead from World War II, is
just a stone’s throw away from Tokyo’s most popular cherry blossom
viewing area, Chidorigafuchi Park. And you may have noticed that
cherry blossom trees are a common sight at gravesites and cemeter-
ies as well as shrines and temples.

So I wouldn’t recommend digging around any cherry blossom
trees to see what lies six feet under – even if you have had your fill
of blossom viewing party beverages.

Whether true or tall tales, such trivia might make for some inter-
esting small talk while viewing cherry blossom with your friends and
family. No matter what you talk about, the sheer beauty of Japan’s
cherry blossoms will likely take your breath away in the end.

– Stripes Okinawa

Speakin’ Japanese

Sakura shout-out

A symbol of spring in Japan, cherry blossoms or “sakura” are enjoyed throughout Japan. The cherry blossom front moves from south (starting in February on Okinawa) to north, arriving on the Kanto Plain around the end of March and reaching Misawa by the end of April.

Under the gorgeous pale pinkish colors of branches, locals often sit down and enjoy their hanami party with sake, beer and all sorts of delicious food. So, as cherry blossoms get ready to bloom, make some plans to enjoy them with your Japanese friends. Here’s some Japanese words and phrases that will help you enjoy the cherry blossoms.

“Sakura wa itsu sakimasu ka?”

= When do cherry blossoms start blooming?

(“itsu” = when, “sakimasu” = bloom)

“Sakura no meisho wa doko desuka?”

= Where are some cherry blossom attractions?

(“meisho” = attractions, “doko” = where)

“Sakura ga mankai desu.”

= Cherry blossoms are in full bloom.

(“mankai” = in full bloom)

“Kirei desu!”

= They are beautiful!

(“kirei” = beautiful)

“Ii nioi desu.”

= They smell good.

(“ii nioi” = good smell)

“Watashi wa sakura ga daisuki desu”

= I love cherry blossoms.

(“watashi” = I, “daisuki desu” = love)

“Sakura no shashin wo ippai tori mashita.”

= I took a lot of photos of cherry blossoms.

(“shashin” = photo, “ippai” = a lot of, “tori” = take/shoot)

“Hanami ni iki masen ka?”

= Let’s go look at cherry blossoms, shall we?

(“hanami” = cherry blossom viewing/party, “iki masen ka?” = let’s go)

“Yozakura kenbutsu ni ikimasu.”

= I will go to see cherry blossoms at night.

(“yozakura” = cherry blossoms at night, “kenbutsu” = view, “ikimasu” = will go)

“Hanami wo shimasen ka?”

= Let’s have a hanami party, shall we?

(“hanami” = cherry blossom party/viewing, “shimasen ka” = let’s do)

“Moo ippai ikaga desuka?”

= How about another refill of sake?

(“moo ippai” = another refill (of sake), “ikaga desuka?” = how about)

“Hanabira ga matte imasu.”

= Petals are fluttering in the air.

(“hanabira” = petals, “matte” = flutter in the air)

“Totemo kimochi ga ii desu.”

= It is very refreshing.

(“totemo” = very, “kimochi ga ii” = refreshing)

– Takahiro Takiguchi, Stripes Okinawa

Pronunciation key: “A” is short (like “ah”); “E” is short (like “get”); “I” is short (like “it”); “O” is long (like “old”); “U” is long (like “tube”); and “AI” is a long “I” (like “hike”). Most words are pronounced with equal emphasis on each syllable, but “OU” is a long “O” with emphasis on that syllable.

Nearby Gyokusendo Cave is even more beautiful with its blue hues. Photo by Nelo Hotsuma, CC BY 2.0

The cave is so large it threatens to overwhelm the cafe underneath. Photo by Bonson Lam

Valley of Gangala & Cave Cafe

An underground secret garden of Eden

BY BONSON LAM,
JAPAN TRAVEL

One of the life's unexpected charms is serendipity. Like strolling at night and being delighted by the fragrance of jasmine flowers, long before the corner of your eyes detects the silhouette of the shrub on the sidewalk. In the dark, it can be a little otherworldly when certain senses turn on before others.

Being in a cave gives a similar sensation. Day is turned into night, tree shaped sculptures grow from above, not below. The light and shadow plays tricks on your eyes and your perceptions on what a landscape looks like. Of course, in the absence of cognition, your mind will naturally fill in the gaps with its own

imagination.

There is a story behind the name Gangala. On top of a hill there was a hole. If you threw a rock from there it would make a gan, gara, gara sound. While the name has such a nice sound to it, maybe I would be more enchanted if I was left in the dark about its origins.

Origins is what this cave is about. Archaeologists have discovered remains of the Minatogawa Man from the Palaeolithic Era from 20,000 years ago. Even now, you can see active digs, uncovering fishhooks, shell jewellery and red beads from that period, though most remains have been taken for preservation at the Okinawa Museum.

So, what is it about caves in Okinawa? The nearby Hyakuna Garan in the local language means a hundred beautiful monasteries or cathedrals, where

"things outside of nature cannot be seen, sounds outside of nature cannot be heard." It is said that in outer space, sounds cannot be heard, but could it be the same in a cave, where the sounds and stresses of urban life are so far away, I may as well be in another galaxy. These hundred cathedrals may also refer to the underground caves, some large enough to feel like a cathedral, but until recently were off limits to visitors, until now with Valley of Gangala and Gyokusendo Cave revealing its secrets to the outside world.

Since the Stone Age, caves have been sanctuaries, whether to cellar fermented tofu or awamori until your child comes

of age, or bomb shelters during the Battle of Okinawa.

In the other direction is Sefa Utaki, a mystic place filled with spiritual splendour. You can really feel the connection between Okinawan people and nature. These days scientists are discovering that being in nature helps us to reduce anxiety, increases our ability to pay attention and to connect with other people.

To truly uncover the secrets of the Valley of Gangala, you must take a guided tour, which operates every 2 hours from 10 a.m. Online reservations are also recommended. You are to rendezvous at the Cave Café 15 minutes before the tour, which serves the famous Sango coffee and various tropical drinks and snacks. The Cave Café can be booked for

private parties and is a popular spot for concerts.

VALLEY OF GANGALA & CAVE CAFE

ADDRESS: 202 Maekawa, Tamagusuku, Nanjo City, Okinawa Prefecture
TEL: 098-948-4192
WEBSITE: https://peraichi.com/landing_pages/view/gangalaen

GETTING THERE

From Naha bus terminal next to Asahibashi Monorail Station, take bus No. 54 (Maekawa line) or No. 83 (Gyokusendo line) departing approximately every 60 mins and disembark at Gyokusendo-mae bus stop. If you are visiting a few places here, driving or a taxi could be more convenient. It is 30 min. from Naha Airport, or 10 min. from Okinawa Expressway Haebaru Minami Interchange. There is an electric vehicle charging station on the other side of Route 17, opposite the taxi rank near Gyokusendo Cave.



Okinawa Zoo & Museum Christmas Fantasy

One of the largest illumination events in the prefecture

BY KIM.B,
JAPAN TRAVEL

The Okinawa Zoo & Museum Christmas Fantasy event has been running for over 25 years now, and it is one of the largest illumination events in the prefecture. Along with an array of dazzling light and laser beam displays, the event includes appearances from Santa Claus, stage performances showcasing Eisa dancing

(a traditional Okinawan folk dance), and even bingo competitions.

Do note that in 2021, there are specific closure dates during the event window. The event is scheduled to run from December 18th until January 10th, but the venue will close on December 20th to 23rd, December 27th, January 1st, and January 5th to 7th. Bear this in mind if you're making a special trip.

OKINAWA ZOO & MUSEUM CHRISTMAS FANTASY

VENUE: Okinawa Zoo & Museum
WHEN: Until Jan. 10
TIME: 4:30 - 9:30 p.m.
FEE: ¥2,200
ADDRESS: 5 Chome-7-1 Goya, Okinawa, 904-0021, Japan
TEL: +81989334190
WEBSITE: xmas-fantasy.com

GETTING THERE

The Okinawa Zoo & Museum is located just over 30 minutes driving time from the downtown Naha area. Free on-site parking is available for approximately 350 vehicles. For those visiting via public transport, take bus # 90 from the Naha Bus Terminal until you reach the Nakanomichi Stop.

From there, the venue is around 15 minutes away on foot.



Stripes Sports Trivia

As of late, the AFC has been dominated by a trio of future Hall of Fame quarterbacks. Tom Brady, Peyton Manning or Ben Roethlisberger have represented the AFC in the Super Bowl in 14 of the last 15 seasons. The one exception was the Joe Flacco year in 2012. Who is the last QB, outside of the 4 mentioned, to win the Super Bowl from the AFC?

Answer

Trent Diller (2002-03)



Free STARS AND STRIPES 2022 Calendar is now available!

Get your copy at Stars and Stripes Office

Sponsored by **LAKELAND UNIVERSITY JAPAN**

FOLLOW STARS AND STRIPES ON THE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM OF YOUR CHOICE!



facebook.com/StripesMedia
facebook.com/StripesPacific



@StarsandStripes
@StripesPacific



youtube.com/StripesChannel



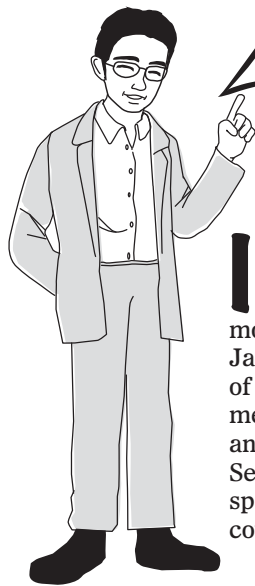
Stripesphotography



@StarsStripes
@StripesPMD



pinterest.com/Stripesnews



DID YOU KNOW?

In 1940, Sasebo Naval Shipyard, former facility of U.S. Naval Base, equipped The Musashi, one of the World's heaviest and most powerful naval vessels built by the Japanese. After sinking during the Battle of Leyte Gulf in 1944, killing 1,023 crew members, Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen and his team discovered her in the Sibuyan Sea off the Philippines in 2015. Allen's team spent eight years searching when they uncovered it.

Kanji of the week

町

Machi/cho (town)

Language Lesson

What do you recommend?

Osusume wa nandesuka?

Find local restaurant reviews,
travel information,
community news and events in

STARS AND STRIPES **OKINAWA**



Submit your own reviews, articles
and organization's information at
okinawa.stripes.com

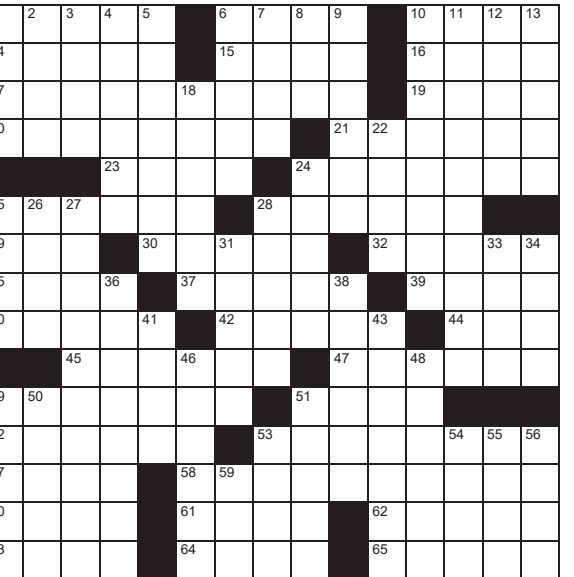


Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

- 1 Support piece
- 6 Seafood choice
- 10 Surgery souvenir
- 14 Baseball's Hank
- 15 Place to wait
- 16 Drug bust qty.
- 17 Burn unit procedures
- 19 Look (study)
- 20 Whiplash preventer
- 21 Two-seater
- 23 Klutz's cry
- 24 School note-books
- 25 Thinly spread
- 28 It's tossed after a wedding
- 29 Alley prowler
- 30 "It pains me to say...."
- 32 Unsavory
- 35 Voting "no"
- 37 _____ and true
- 39 Court action
- 40 Taqueria side
- 42 Elba of "The Suicide Squad"
- 44 Barrister's field
- 45 Get some air
- 47 Shock big-time
- 49 Investment choice
- 51 Train for a bout
- 52 Mourn
- 53 TV series "_____ Horror Story"
- 57 Kind of mitt
- 58 Flashbulb effect, e.g.
- 60 Ranch worker
- 61 In the 50s or 60s, say
- 62 Emphatic refusal
- 63 Quartet member
- 64 Set aside
- 65 Miser's motivation



Copyright 2022 by The Puzzle Syndicate

- | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 2 Yard tool | 34 Small boat | 51 Troutlike fish |
| 3 Opera feature | 36 Insinuation | 53 Resting on |
| 4 Vulture cousin | 38 Nursery need | 54 Bat's home |
| 5 Captivate | 41 Tibia locale | 55 "The African Queen" screen-writer |
| 6 Graduating group | 43 Not wasteful | 56 Social misfit |
| 7 Falling out | 46 Lash out at | 59 Enemy |
| 8 Crumb carrier | 48 Painter's prep | |
| 9 "Tribes" anagram; rouse | 49 Kapolei greeting | |
| 10 Superficial, as beauty | 50 Part of U.S.N.A. | |

Answers to Previous Crossword:

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

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

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

Copyright 2022 by The Puzzle Syndicate

DESTINATION PARADISE

STARS AND STRIPES



Pick up the magazine or get it online

During COVID-19 crisis, we are here for you.

Due to COVID-19, our offices in Japan will be temporarily closed throughout 2022. However, H&R Block tax pros can get your U.S. taxes done virtually. Get experience you can count on and your maximum refund, guaranteed:



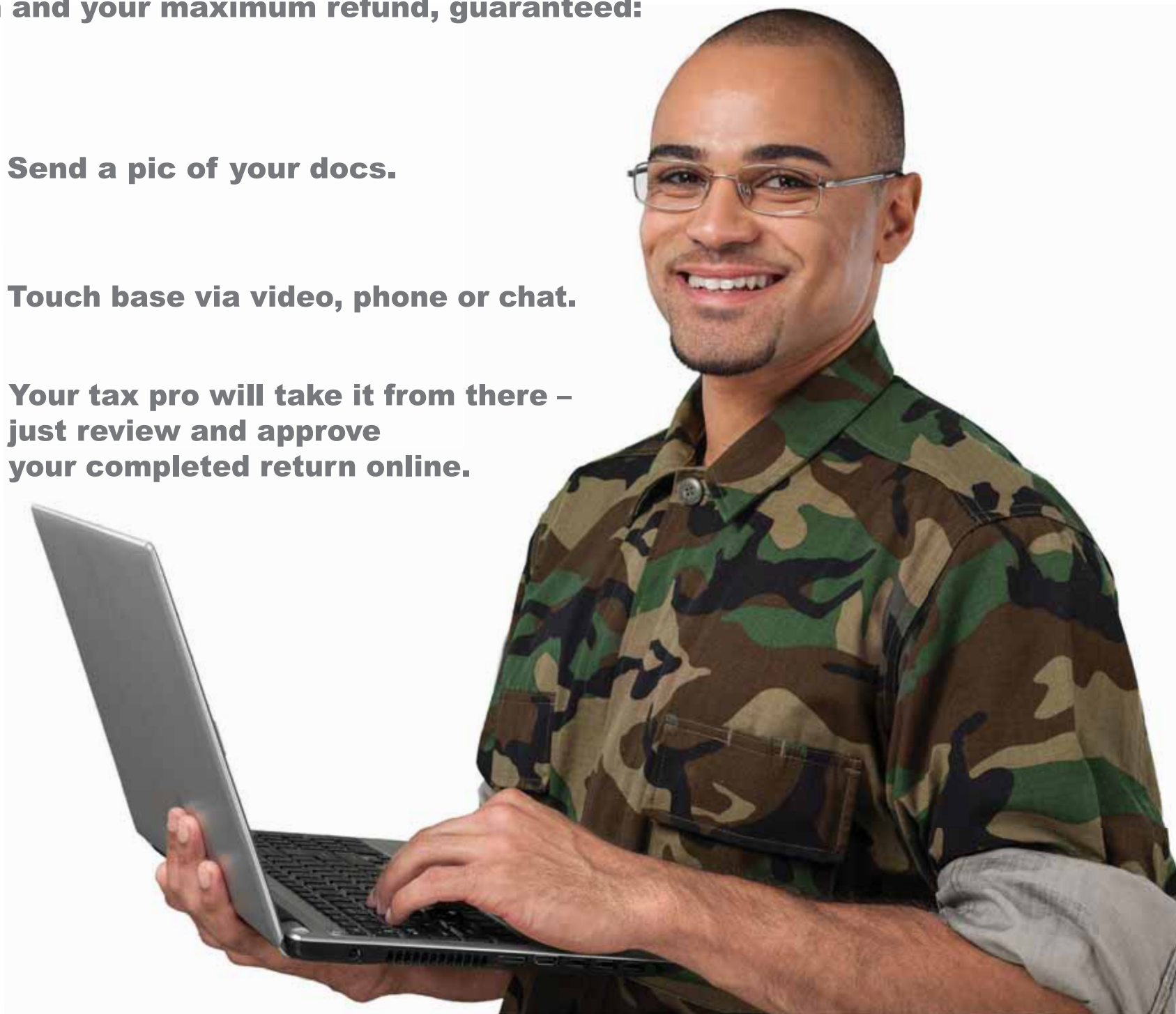
Send a pic of your docs.



Touch base via video, phone or chat.



Your tax pro will take it from there – just review and approve your completed return online.



**H&R
BLOCK®**

**Need tax help? Got tax questions?
Please contact us at**

japan@hrblock.com