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SPECIAL 4-PAGE PULLOUT INSIDE

ZIP TO IT!

Summer fun at Forest Adventure in Onna
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BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPES OKINAWA

Summer is not just for having fun at the beach, it's also a time in Japan to show respect to your ancestors.

Obon is a memorial service for ancestors, which takes place from Aug. 13-16 at many locations on mainland Japan. Okinawans, on the other hand, mark this season from July 13-15 by the old calendar, which falls on Aug. 25 - 27 of the new calendar in 2026. Obon is often called "kyuubon (old bon)" on the island.

The first day of obon in Okinawa is called "un-kee," which refers to the day "to welcome." The second day is "nakabi (mid-day)," and the last day is "uukui (to see off)."

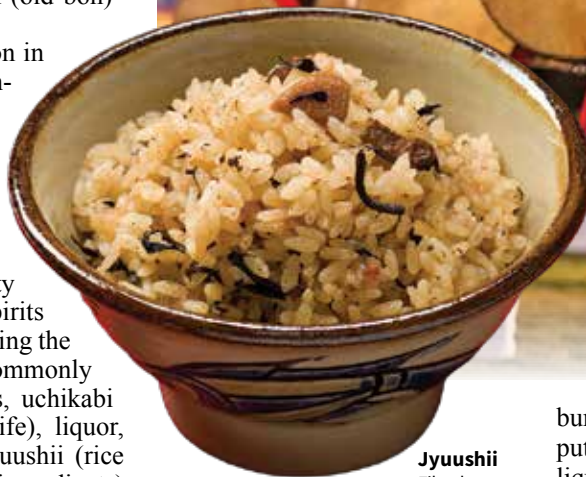
To offer hospitality to loved ones whose spirits are thought to visit during the period, Okinawans commonly prepare incense sticks, uchikabi (money for the afterlife), liquor, flowers, fruits, and jyuushii (rice cooked with various ingredients) among other things.

Plus, a sugar cane is a must because it serves as a cane for the ancestors.

During the period, families and relatives get together at a house with a family Buddhist altar. The house's entrance or gate is lit with



The Okinawan dance "eisa" File photo



Jyuushii
File photo

candles or lanterns and with incense burning to welcome their deceased loved ones' spirits home.

The last day "uukui," on the other hand, comes with a unique way to see off the temporary visitors. One example is that Okinawans

burn money for the afterlife and put out the fire by pouring tea and liquor on it before bringing it to the entrance along with incense sticks and some food as souvenirs. The send-off takes place at the entrance or the gate just like the welcoming on the first day.

The Okinawan dance "eisa" is meant to be performed on the "uukui" day to send their loved ones

off. Today, eisa festivals don't necessarily follow this rule. This year, festivals like Okinawa Zento Eisa Matsuri (Sept. 4 - 6) and Uruma City Eisa Matsuri (Sept. 19 - 20) are coming up.

Check out the eisa festivals for a taste of local tradition with performances and fireworks to mark the summer and obon season.

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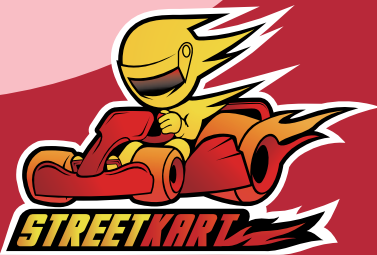
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STORY AND PHOTOS BY MAX DECO,
STRIPES OKINAWA

Last week I visited Forest Adventure, a wooded zip line and climbing park in Onna, and it turned out to be one of the most fun and unexpectedly immersive outdoor activities I've tried on the island.

The whole experience started with parking at the large Maeda parking lot and catching the free shuttle bus that ran up to the park. The staff at the Maeda lot and at the park are bilingual (Japanese and English) and were extremely welcoming and they handled check-in, payment and gear distribution quickly. After I arrived, I was fitted with a rock-climbing harness and safety shoes and then given a hands-on

safety briefing, which included a short video. They walked me through how the equipment works and had me practice attaching and detaching the gear. The staff makes sure everyone understands the system before sending you out on the course, which I appreciated as safety is clearly a priority without killing the fun.

The course itself is cleverly designed and gradually ramps up in challenge. It starts with a low tightrope style practice bridge about 10 feet off the ground to get your balance and nerves under control, followed by a short introduction zip line to ease you into the

sensation of flying. From there, the course alternates between zip lines and small obstacle sections with rope bridges, suspended ladders, cargo nets and platform transitions, with each section testing coordination and offering great adrenaline blasts. Some parts felt easy and relaxing while others required more focus. One standout feature is the freedom the park gave me; Unlike many high supervision courses, Forest Adventure trusts you to manage your own safety after the initial

briefing. Staff are available and attentive, but you're largely responsible for clipping in, moving at your own pace and choosing how far to push yourself. That autonomy makes the experience feel more like a true adventure and less like a staged attraction, and you can take your time, enjoy the views, or go for the rush.

Speaking of views, the scenery is fantastic. Many of the zip lines and high platforms look out over the East China Sea, with the coastal forest dropping away below you and the contrast of blue water. The dense green canopy makes even the simpler sections visually rewarding and has many great places for photos.



A few practical tips to make your visit smoother:

- There are no secure lockers for big bags, so don't bring heavy luggage. The park can provide small wearable pouches for phones and wallets that stay attached to your harness, and I'd use those rather than trying to hold items while you move.
- Wear comfortable, sturdy lace-up shoes (no flip-flops) and clothes you don't mind getting dirty; long sleeves can help with scrapes but can be warm in summer.
- Bring sunscreen and a hat for the open sections.
- Expect the whole visit, from check-in to finish, to take a couple of hours, depending on who

you bring and how relaxed you want to do it. Forest Adventure is perfect for families with older kids, groups of friends, coworkers, or solo travelers. It's beginner-friendly but still rewarding for people who enjoy physical challenges and outdoor thrills.

- Check their website for up-to-date schedules and online booking and try to go on a clear day for the best views and conditions and make sure to ask for military specials.

Overall, if you're looking for something that combines light physical challenge, beautiful coastal forest scenery and hands-on adventure with a relaxed, self-paced vibe, Forest Adventure Okinawa in Onna is it.



Forest Adventure Okinawa

THINGS TO KNOW

ADDRESS: 1525 Maeda, Onna, Kunigami District 904-0417

PHONE: 090-4739-9140

OTHER INFO: Forest Adventure Okinawa is a wooded zip-line & climbing park with 4 courses for different ages & skill levels and has 40 locations from Hokkaido to Okinawa. The park combines zip lines with suspended rope bridges and obstacle courses, and it takes about 1.5 to 2 hours.



HOME PAGE

Speakin' Japanese

Zip away!

"jippurain wo shitakoto wa arimasuka?" = Have you ever tried ziplining?

("jippurain" = zipline, "wo" = a particle to indicate an object, "shitakoto" = experience of doing, "wa" = a particle to indicate a subject, "arimasuka" = is there?)

"Konshumatsu ni jippurain ni chosen suru noga machidoshii desu." = I can't wait to try ziplining this weekend!

("konshumatsu" = this weekend, "ni" = a particle to indicate a time or a location or an object, "chosen" = challenge, "suru noga" = doing is, "machidoshii" = can't wait)

"Bureki wo donoyoni kakemasuka?" = How do I hit the brake?
("bureki" = brake, "wo" = a particle to indicate an object, "donoyoni" = how, "kakemasuka" = apply?)

"Aizu wo matte kudasai!" = Wait for the signal!
("aizu" = signal/cue, "wo" = a particle to indicate an object, "matte kudasai" = please wait)

"Herumetto ga kihchinto kabureteiruka kakunin shitekudasai." = Make sure your helmet is secured.
("herumetto" = helmet, "ga" = a particle to indicate a subject, "kihchinto" = properly, "kabureteiruka" = if being put on/worn by, "kakunin" = check/making sure of, "shitekudasai" = please do)

"Yoi wa iidesuka?" = Are you ready?
("yoi" = ready/preparation, "wa" = a particle to indicate a subject, "iidesuka" = is good?)

"Rettsu go / shuppatsu!" = Let's go!
("rettsu" = let's, "shuppatsu" = departure)

Zipline (jippurain)
Harness (hanesu)
Helmet (herumetto)
Carabiner (karabina)
Platform (purattohomu)

– Takahiro Takiguchi,
Stripes Okinawa

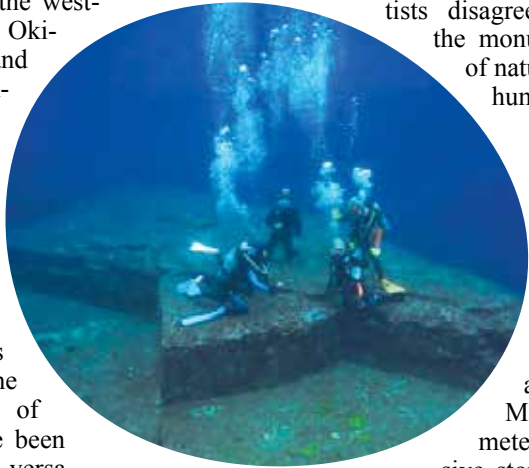
Mysterious underwater ruins

Explore the unexplained in Yonaguni

STORY AND PHOTOS BY EMI TAKAHATA,
JAPAN TRAVEL

Are you an adventure-seeker with a passion for history and diving? Then get ready to explore one of the world's most mysterious underwater sites—Yonaguni!

Yonaguni is located in the westernmost region of Japan's Okinawa island chain. The island offers not only breathtaking natural beauty but also a deep sense of mystery. Some divers and professors believe the structures are natural, shaped by erosion, while others argue they are man-made, possibly from an ancient civilization. To me, it was difficult to judge one or the other. When I saw some of the spots, they could have been formed naturally and vice versa. It's hard to believe such a giant turtle monument could have been created naturally. Features like step-like formations and carvings fuel the theory of human construction, but the true origins remain uncertain.



This rock is called a giant turtle monument, a sharp carved rock looking like a turtle seen from above.

Professor Kimura Masaaki with the University of Ryukyu has suggested that the site may date back thousands of years, perhaps built by older civilizations. However, many divers and scientists disagree, proposing that the monument is a product of natural forces rather than human hands.

Could these submerged structures be the remains of an ancient civilization, or are they simply natural formations, shaped by time and the ocean's currents? The debate has reached global audiences, with the BBC covering Yonaguni's mystery in 2021.

Kihachiro Aratake, a local scuba diver and tour operator, discovered the Yonaguni Monument in 1986. The monument is just 100 meters off the coast, and the site features massive stone formations that resemble ancient architecture, with structures that appear to include terraces, straight edges, and right angles. While still shrouded in mystery, it has been suggested that the site could be part

of a larger submerged complex. Thus, Yonaguni is a

popular destination for divers, researchers, and tourists alike, drawn by its unusual and enigmatic features today.

The monument is reachable by a shallow dive at just 10 to 15 meters. It is accessible for divers of all levels. However, the area can be subject to strong currents, so a certain level of experience is required to explore the site safely.

If diving isn't your thing, you can still enjoy the monument by taking a glass-bottom boat tour, which runs once a day, and it offers a unique perspective of this enigmatic underwater wonder.

Is Yonaguni's monument a gateway to an ancient past—or simply an awe-inspiring natural wonder? Dive in or take a boat tour and decide for yourself!

Where is Yonaguni Island?

With a population of approximately 1,670 people, Yonaguni is home to both locals and military personnel due to the island's strategic importance in international relations. Although Yonaguni is part of Okinawa Prefecture, it lies about 509 km away from Okinawa's main island. Interestingly, the nearest island is Taiwan, which is only 111 km away. The second is Ishigaki Island at 119 km.

Please be aware that in Yonaguni, cash is still the primary payment method—credit cards and QR code payments are not accepted. While some dive shops and accommodations accept credit cards, most restaurants and local grocery stores are cash-only. Be ready to withdraw enough bills before landing the island since only the Japan Post Branch is available in Yonaguni.

After a thrilling dive, it's time to enjoy some local cuisine! Lunchtime is casual—just go and wait for your turn. As long as the restaurant is open, they'll serve you delicious dishes.

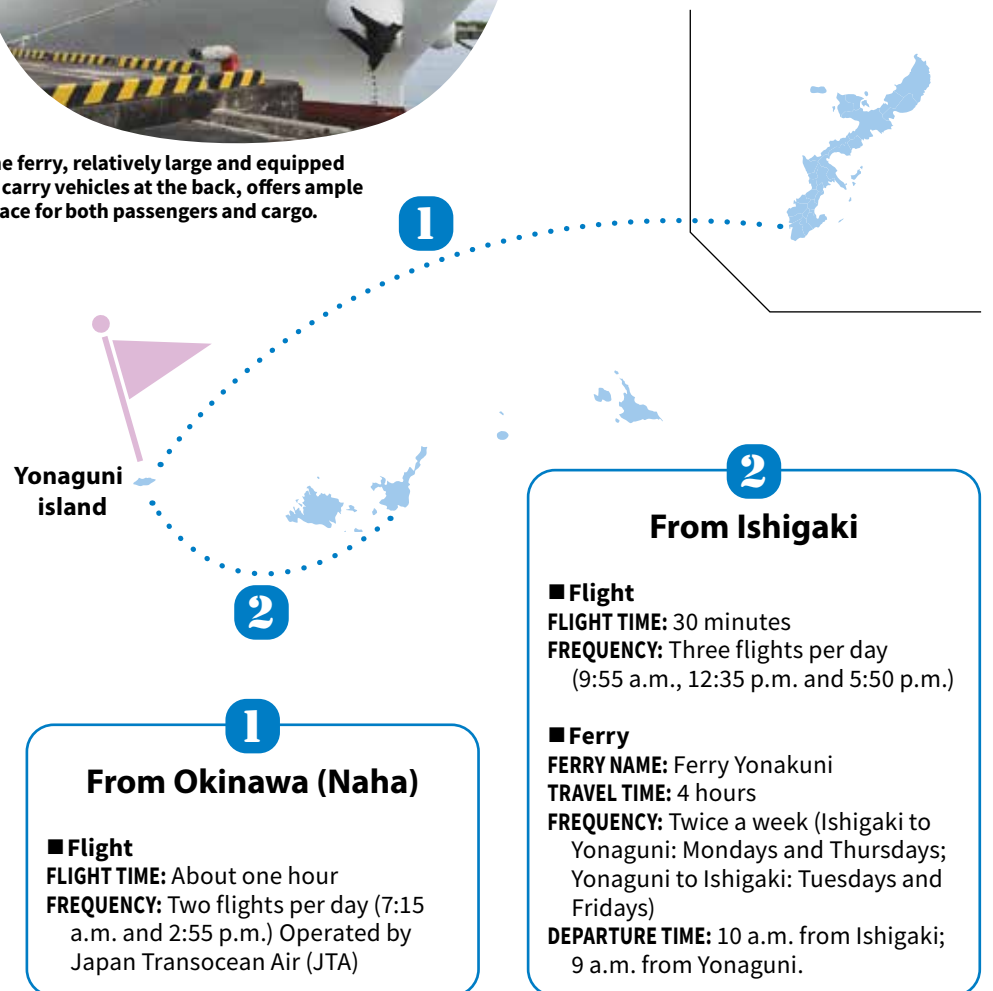


Known as Battleship Rock, this monument gets its name from its striking resemblance to a warship.

Fresh fish—especially Kajiki (marlin)—is a local favorite in Yonaguni. Most restaurants serve it as sashimi, fried, or in a variety of small appetizers.



The ferry, relatively large and equipped to carry vehicles at the back, offers ample space for both passengers and cargo.



Getting around Yonaguni

Make sure to arrange accommodation with a pick-up service or rent a car in advance. Rental cars are available near the airport, but booking ahead is recommended to ensure availability. While public transportation is minimal, the Yonaguni Life-Line Bus (a free mini bus) operates around the island, and its ocean-blue color makes it easy to spot.

Cycling or renting a motorbike is also a great way to explore Yonaguni. If you decide to cycle, be aware that the island has steep hills, but most rental bikes are equipped with electric motors, making the ride easier.



YouTube
Video

Local Tanabata tradition a reminder of upcoming Obon

STORY AND PHOTO BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPES OKINAWA

If you have lived in Japan, you are likely familiar with Tanabata. It is a tradition where folks make a wish on July 7 by writing down what they want on a piece of paper called “Tanzaku” and hanging it from bamboo leaves. It is celebrated here in Okinawa as well, but do you know that Okinawans have another kind of Tanabata?

“Kyureki (old calendar) Tanabata” is an Okinawan version of Tanabata, which takes place on July 7 of the lunar calendar, as its name suggests.

While Tanabata of the new calendar is dedicated to what folks wish in their future, this “old” tradition is for their ancestors. In 2026, the day of Kyureki (old calendar) Tanabata falls on Wednesday, August 19.

It is supposed to be a day when Okinawans visit their family tombs, do the cleaning, and pray. The idea is to notify ancestors that the obon period is coming up soon, from July 13 to 15 of the lunar calendar. The Obon period from Aug. 25 to 27 this year in Okinawa is the time to welcome back the spirits of the deceased.

If you compare it with Shiimii or

Seimeisai in April, this tomb visit season may not have a big profile. While you often see families get together almost like a picnic at their tombs in the spring tradition, Kyureki Tanabata is meant to be a simple event, which doesn’t require many participants. Nowadays, many Okinawans even skip this tradition.

That said, July 7 of the lunar calendar

remains important to some Okinawans.

There are many local tombs remaining on U.S. installations in Okinawa.

If you see locals visiting their tombs remaining on base on this day, please be respectful and let them prepare to welcome their ancestors in the Obon period.

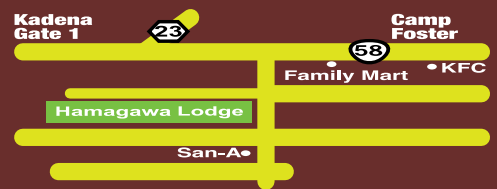
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Stripes Sports Trivia

Which slugger earned the nickname Mr. October thanks to his talent for delivering in the playoffs?

Answer
Reggie Jackson

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DID YOU KNOW?

In Japan, hanko (stamp) or inkan (seal impression), which uses a pad of thick red ink called shuniku, actually serves as personal identification. This seal is necessary when opening a bank account, joining a new company or school or getting married. While you probably won't need to use one, they are a symbol of Japanese culture and can make for a great souvenir.

Kanji of the week

行

i(-ku)/gyo/koo [go]

Language Lesson

It's cold.

Samui desune.

Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

1 Wrangler's rope
6 Normal beginning?
10 Spew forth
14 Poe's middle name
15 Grandson of Adam
16 Pot starter
17 Monthly bank mailings
19 Familiar with
20 Kachina doll carver
21 Withdrawal to a safe place
23 Proverbial waste-maker
25 Neighbor of Uganda
26 Straw hat
28 Teakettle emission
30 Blue whales have big ones
32 Sorority letter
36 Small drink
37 Big plot of land
39 50 Cent piece?
40 "Flowers for Algernon" author Daniel
42 Mistaken
44 Carnival attractions
46 Kitchen whistler
47 Pre-euro Portuguese money
50 Close-knit group
51 Collaborator
54 SOS responder
57 Quite often
58 Kitchen surface
60 Yard tool
61 Baxter or Bancroft
62 Historic Tuscan city
63 Historic Scott
64 Arabian and Caspian
65 Brings home

DOWN

1 Eyelid fringe
2 Voice below soprano
3 Foolishly giddy
4 Fill to excess
5 Start for step or stop
6 Annoyance
7 Writer Quindlen
8 Drilling grp.
9 Guarantee
10 Siddhartha ____: the Buddha
11 Remove fasteners
12 Ceded a seat
13 Cosmetic dye
18 Like grams and liters
22 Roused from sleep
24 Save for later
26 Luxuriate
27 Sheriff Taylor's son
28 Prophets
29 Russian emperor

31 Locust or larch
33 Sit-in participant
34 Reiser or Rudd
35 Cathedral recess
38 Racing vehicle
41 Blew, as a volcano
43 Tuscany, once
45 Biblical seamstress

47 Digital greeting
48 Kind of panel
49 "You Send Me" singer Sam
50 Road markers
52 Blue-ribbon
53 Sushi selection
55 Mass. neighbor
56 Transcript stats
59 Opposite of WNW

Answers to Previous Crossword:

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

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Medium

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

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:

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

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VIEW VIDEO!

Mini trip to Minna Island

STORY AND PHOTO BY SHOJI KUDAKA, STRIPES OKINAWA

Unwind on Minna Island off Okinawa's Motobu Peninsula. This small crescent-shaped island has many fun water activities to enjoy including snorkeling, parasailing, banana boat rides and more. Relax on Minna Beach, grab a bite to eat just down the road and explore other parts of this incredible getaway. Just off the coast, uncover what's beneath the crystal blue waters with a refreshing snorkeling tour. Check it out!

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com

Things to know

TOGUCHI PORT GPS COORDINATES: 26.659302, 127.889365 Minna Island (Minna Port)

GPS COORDINATE: 26.650747, 127.817912



THE FERRY'S TIMETABLE

*A ferry shuttles between the above-mentioned locations between 8:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. The schedule varies depending on the season. For example, from July 20 through Aug. 31, the ferry departs eight times a day from Toguchi to Minna (at 8:30 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 1 p.m., 2 p.m., 3 p.m., and 4 p.m. respectively).

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VIEW VIDEO!

Photo courtesy of Kadena FSS

Stationed on Okinawa? Head to Okuma Beach!

BY SHOJI KUDAKA, STRIPES OKINAWA

On Okinawa there are many beaches perfect for a fun day for visitors to choose from. But, Okuma Beach managed by Kadena FSS is one you won't want to miss. This piece of paradise is only a two-hour drive away from Camp Foster and is host to many fun activities. Hit the links at their golf course, or putt-putt course. Ride waves, paddleboard, snorkel and more! It's a great spot for the whole family to enjoy and relax.

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com

Things to know

GPS COORDINATES: N 26.737533, E 128.159075

CORAL CONNECTION SNORKEL EXCURSION COSTS: \$30 per person (minimum \$70 departs at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.)

MINIATURE GOLF COSTS: \$8 (ages 13 and over), \$6 (ages 5 and 12), free for ages 4 and under.

JET SKI RENTAL: COSTS: \$39 per 20 minutes (16 years old and older to operate)

BANANA BOAT SLED COSTS: \$17 per person (6 years and up/20 minutes/\$51 minimum)

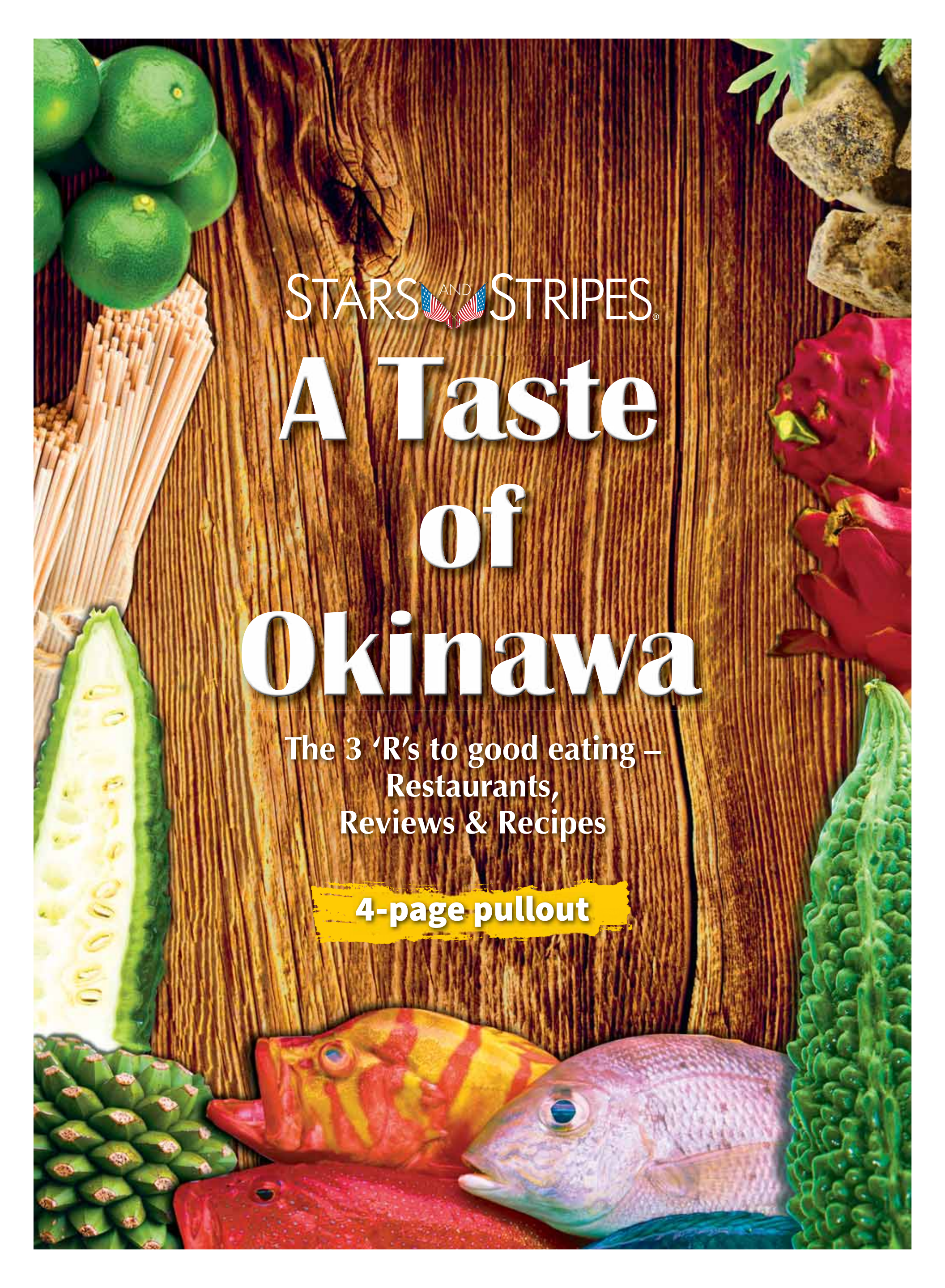
CAMP SPOT COSTS: \$5 per night.

TURTLES' NEST BEACH HOUSE COSTS: \$230 per night.



WEBSITE

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STARS  AND STRIPES[®]

A Taste of Okinawa

The 3 'R's to good eating –
Restaurants,
Reviews & Recipes

4-page pullout

Pancake lovers rejoice!

Try this Okinawan crepe recipe today!



STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPES OKINAWA

Chinpin is an Okinawan sweet often described as a pancake or crepe flavored with brown sugar. According to Jitsuyou Ryukyu Ryori, a textbook on Okinawan cuisine, this sweet used to be a special treat made to celebrate Yukkanuhi, a seasonal festival marked on May 4 or May 5 of the lunar calendar.

Today, you can have chinpin year-round at local cafes with a cup of tea or coffee. It's really easy to make and doesn't require special ingredients you don't already have in your kitchen.

The recipe for chinpin calls for brown sugar, which gives it a delicate and restrained sweetness different from traditional pancakes and crepes made with regular granulated white sugar.

Adding to the sweetness is the brown sugar syrup topping which will not ruin the taste of the treat itself. So, let's dig in and try this Okinawan delight!

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com

INGREDIENTS (for approx. eight cakes)

FOR CHINPIN CREPE/PANCAKE

- Flour (approx. 600cc)
- Baking powder (a small spoonful)
- Salt (a little)
- Brown sugar (Crushed and powdered, 500cc)
- Water (600cc)
- Egg whites of one egg

FOR BROWN SUGAR SYRUP

- Water (100cc)
- Powdered brown sugar (50g)

RECIPE

FOR CHINPIN CREPE/PANCAKE

1. Crush and powder brown sugar.
2. Pour the powdered brown sugar and an egg white in a pot and mix in water. Smooth out clumps with a whisk.
3. Heat the pot on a stove with moderate heat while constantly whisking the mixture.
4. If the mixture starts to boil, stop stirring and continue heating the pot for about five minutes more until the brown sugar melts in the pot.
5. With a strainer, remove the foam that collects at the top. (If you have a larger strainer, you can carefully pour the hot mixture into a bowl instead.)



6. Let the mixture cool.
7. Sift flour and baking powder into a separate bowl.
8. Pour the cooled mixture into the bowl and add salt.



9. Whisk the mixture and let it sit for about 10 minutes with a wet towel covering the bowl.



10. In a pan, pour a little mixture as you would a crepe or pancake. Use oil or non-stick spray so the cakes do not stick to the pan.



11. As it starts to cook, make sure to roll your crepes.



* Ingredients (especially the brown sugar) can be adjusted to your preference.

FOR BROWN SUGAR SYRUP

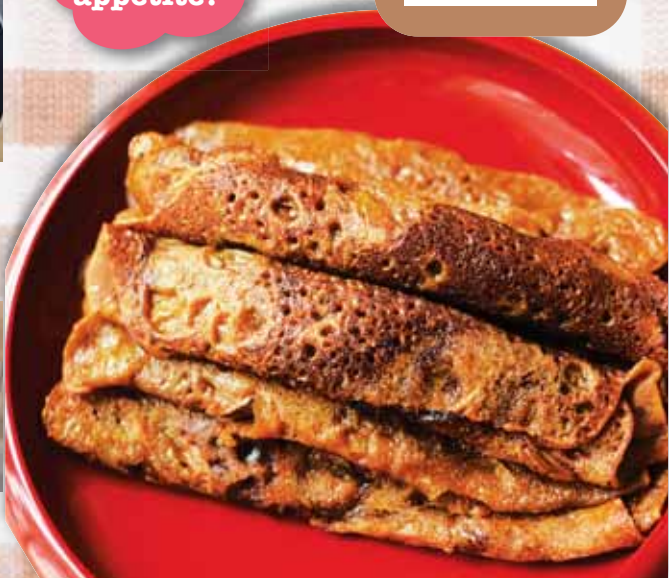
1. Pour 100cc of water and 50cc of powdered brown sugar in a pot stirring until the sugar dissolves. Let the ingredients reach a boil.
2. Once the ingredients start to thicken into a syrup, it is time to top your chinpin!



VIEW VIDEO!



Bon appetite!





Healthy cooking with the kids!

A Very Hungry Caterpillar Sandwich

STORY AND PHOTO BY RIEKO SUZUKI, METROPOLIS MAGAZINE

Let's cook something easy, healthy, and fun with your kids! This tuna okara sandwich contains a good amount of soy protein and fiber from okara (soy pulp that you can get from local supermarket at quite a reasonable price). Slicing the tomato just a little bit makes it easier to keep it on the bread. I kept the stem of the tomato to make antennae, but it will do without them.

Servings: 2 sandwiches
Cooking time: 30 min (with kids)

Ingredients

- 2 pieces of french baguette (15cm long each) or any bread you like
- 40g of canned tuna (drained)
- 4 tbs of raw okara
- 2 tbs of finely chopped onion
- 1 tbs of yogurt
- 1 tbs of mayonnaise
- A pinch of salt
- A pinch of pepper
- 1 tbs of butter
- 1 cucumber
- 2 mini tomatoes
- Small amount of hard cheese (for caterpillar's eyes)
- 4 piece of black sesame seeds (for caterpillar's eyes)

Directions

- Combine tuna, okara, onion, yogurt, mayonnaise, salt, and pepper, and mix well.
- Slice bread if needed, and toast lightly. Spread butter, then the tuna okara mixture.
- Place cucumber slices and mini tomatoes on tuna okara spread.
- Put small pieces of hard cheese on tomatoes, then black sesame seeds to make eyes.



METROPOLIS HOMEPAGE



METROPOLIS EVENTS

A Taste of Okinawa





Tasty food, great drinks, fun events at Sidelines

Established in 2012, Sidelines is a family-owned, up-scale Sports Bar & Grill. Our menu offers delicious homemade Classic American Food, Vegan dishes, Kid's options and fantastic Weekly Specials. Try our Fish & Chips and Creamy Homemade Cheesecake, both undoubtedly the Best in Okinawa. Join us for Trivia Tuesday, Wednesday's Humpday Super-Specials, Thursday's Darts Tournament, Friday's Happy Hour, Weekend Bottomless Mimosas & to watch Live Sporting Events on our 20 indoor & outdoor TV's! You'll enjoy unrivalled Service, Full Bar, ample outdoor seating, and a fabulous Ocean View from our Upstairs Bar! Visit us soon and join the Sidelines Family!

RESTAURANT INFO



Stone-oven-baked pizza, pasta, spare ribs and more

Have you heard of Pizzeria MARINO, renowned for our delicious cuisine in Okinawa? At Pizzeria MARINO, you can savor a wide variety of dishes, including stone-oven-baked pizzas, pasta, cheese fondue, and spare ribs. Our freshly baked pizzas are a must-try, offering a unique and irresistible flavor that you won't find anywhere else. Treat yourself to one of our set menus and choose your favorite pizza and pasta combination for an unforgettable dining experience. At Pizzeria MARINO, we're here to give you a taste of home that will leave your tastes begging for more. We can't wait to serve you!



Gushikawa
Main City
Branch

Naha
Main Place
Branch

Urasoe
West Coast
Parco City
Branch

RESTAURANT INFO

A Taste of Okinawa

STEAK HOUSE

FOUR SEASONS

Credit card accepted
VISA JCB Mastercard

TEPPANYAKI SINCE 1972 www.the4seasons.jp

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2-4-5 Iso, Urasoe City

TEL: (098)877-0429 / Open Hours: 11:00-

Four Seasons Awase

Renewal open! 4-12-13 Awase, Okinawa City

TEL: (098)937-0029 / Open Hours: 11:00-

Enjoy great teppanyaki just five minutes from Camp Kinser!

Awase branch has 2 parking places.

Lunch
Hours: 11:00-

Lunch Steak Set ¥1,980-

Dinner
Hours: 17:00-

Dinner Steak Set ¥2,640-

Seafood & other menus are widely available. All sets come with soup, salad, bread or rice, tea or coffee.

Four Seasons Okinawa City

3-1-25 Sonda, Okinawa City / TEL (098)933-5731

Four Seasons Mihama

2-5-2 Chatan, Mihama Town / TEL (098)926-1329

Four Seasons will dazzle you in Awase & Urasoe

Four Seasons Teppanyaki Steak House in Awase and Urasoe will not only dazzle you, but also tingle your taste buds! Watch as our talented chefs slice, dice and cook up your entrees right at your table. It's more than a meal, It's a special event! Our restaurant is the perfect place to relax, unwind and simply enjoy some foodie fun with your family, friends or that special someone. If you haven't had the pleasure of enjoying Japanese teppanyaki, come in for a visit! We promise that you won't be disappointed, so what are you waiting for? Reservations recommended.

RESTAURANT INFO

Back to School!

‘Military-connected students are at the heart of all we do’



Lois Rapp

Welcome back to school, Pacific family!
It is my pleasure to welcome DoWEA Pacific students and families to the 2026–27 school year.

We are proud to serve military-connected students from prekindergarten through 12th Grade across our schools in Guam, Korea, mainland Japan, and Okinawa.

At DoWEA, military-connected students are at the heart of all we do. Wherever military life takes your family, our schools are committed to helping every student feel welcome and supported. Whether your child is entering a DoWEA classroom for the first time or preparing for graduation, they will find a school community ready to educate and empower them to succeed in a dynamic world.

This year, DoWEA will continue celebrating our nation’s 250th anniversary. Students will have opportunities to explore the people, events, innovations, and ideals that have shaped our nation while developing the knowledge, curiosity, and love of learning that will serve them throughout their lives.

DoWEA’s Blueprint for Continuous Improvement continues to guide our work in providing a high-quality educational experience for every student, every day. Families can learn more about our Blueprint and focus on Student Excellence, Instructional Excellence, Service Excellence, and Organizational Excellence at dodea.edu/blueprint.

We value the important role parents play as their child’s first educators and are proud to partner with you in your child’s academic journey. Here’s to another fantastic school year!

— Lois Rapp, DoWEA Pacific Director for Student Excellence



School Year 2026–2027

(175 Instructional Days and 190 Teacher Workdays)

First Semester (79 Instructional Days)

Monday, August 17	First Day of School
Monday, September 7	Labor Day: Federal Holiday
Monday, October 12	Columbus Day: Federal Holiday
Thursday, October 15	End of First Quarter (40 Instructional Days)
Friday, October 16	No School for Students – Teacher Workday
Wednesday, November 11	Veterans Day: Federal Holiday
Wednesday, November 25	School Holiday
Thursday, November 26	Thanksgiving Day: Federal Holiday
Friday, November 27	School Holiday
Thursday, December 17	End of Second Quarter and First Semester (39 Instructional Days)
Friday, December 18	No School for Students – Teacher Workday
Monday, December 21	Begin Winter Recess (21 December – 2 January)
Friday, December 25	Christmas: Federal Holiday

Second Semester (96 Instructional Days)

Friday, January 1	New Year’s Day: Federal Holiday
Monday, January 4	Begin Second semester and Third Quarter
Monday, January 18	Martin Luther King Day: Federal Holiday
Monday, February 15	Presidents’ Day: Federal Holiday
Thursday, March 25	End of Third Quarter (56 Instructional Days)
Friday, March 26	No School for Students – Teacher Workday
Monday, March 29	Begin Spring Recess (29 March – 2 April)
Monday, May 31	Memorial Day: Federal Holiday
Wednesday, June 2	End of Fourth Quarter and Second Semester (40 Instructional Days)
Thursday, June 3	No School for Students – Teacher Workday

What’s Inside

- Residential Fitness Test mandatory in schools
- Mobile device ban to take effect this year
- Families welcome decision to add middle school sports

Helpful links



DOWEA
PACIFIC



STUDENT
ACTIVITIES



MILITARY.
TUTOR.COM



CONDITIONAL
ENROLLMENT



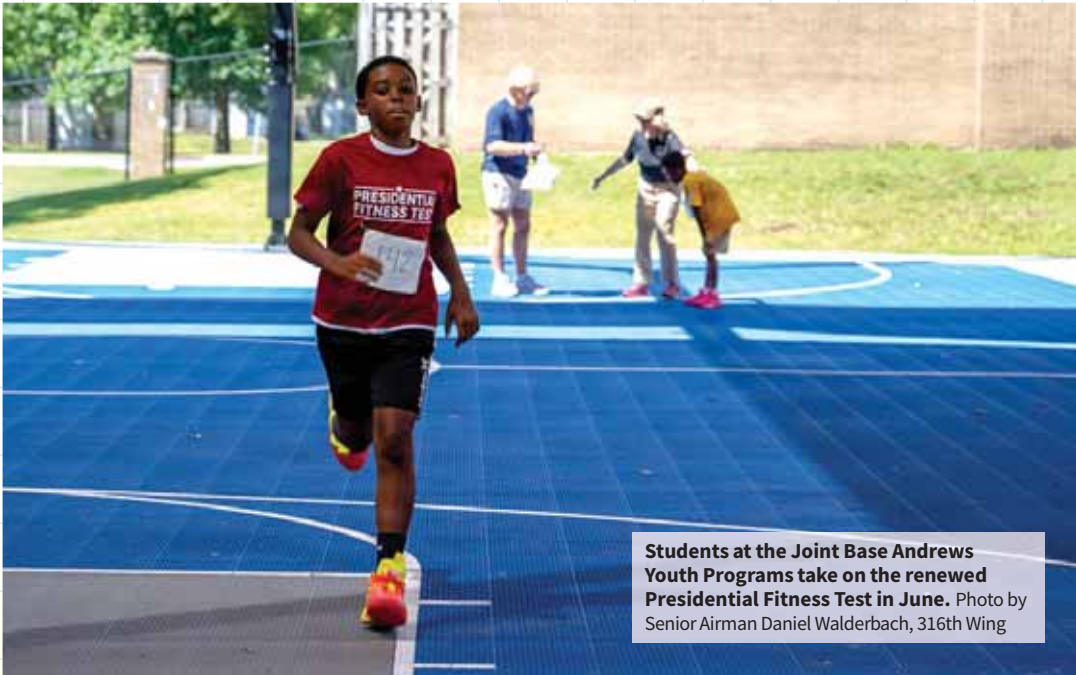
SPECIAL
EDUCATION
SUPPORT



STUDENT
TRANSITION
PROGRAM

2026

2027



Students at the Joint Base Andrews Youth Programs take on the renewed Presidential Fitness Test in June. Photo by Senior Airman Daniel Walderbach, 316th Wing

Presidential Fitness Test mandatory in schools

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN,
STARS AND STRIPES

Schoolchildren of U.S. service members will be vying for an award in gym class that many of their parents and grandparents likely remember well. In May, the Pentagon reinstated the Presidential Fitness Test at its schools as part of a broader push by the White House to reverse a decline in health and physical fitness across America.

EXCLUSIVE NEWS FROM:
STARS AND STRIPES
www.stripes.com

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said the fitness program will be mandatory at 161 Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) schools across 30 installations worldwide. He hopes the rest of the nation's schools will follow DODEA's lead, he said.

"It's going to be mandatory for the young kids of those service members who use those schools," he said while speaking alongside President Donald Trump, schoolchildren, professional athletes and others at an Oval Office ceremony.

"We need young, strong, healthy Americans, whether you serve in the military or any other aspect of your life," Hegseth said. "The idea that competition is bad is the beginning of a decline of a nation."

The Presidential Fitness Test was an annual ritual for generations of American schoolchildren, from the late 1950s, when the first tests were administered, to 2013. Students were scored on a variety of drills, including a 1-mile run, broad jump and pullups. President Barack Obama replaced the test with the Presidential Youth Fitness Program, with a focus on minimizing comparisons between children and supporting students in their pursuit of personal fitness goals and overall health. Advocates of the Obama-era program said children were more likely to stay active long term if fitness was framed around improvement rather than competition.

In July 2025, Trump signed an executive order restoring the test in public schools. At May's ceremony, he signed a proclamation to reestablish the Presidential Physical Fitness Award, which recognizes the top test takers across all categories in the fitness test.

A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report published in April said Trump's directive restoring the test included no mandates, timelines or enforcement mechanisms, leaving implementation dependent on existing state education policies. The report found many states lack the infrastructure needed for large-scale standardized fitness testing. Despite those challenges, Trump framed the effort as part of a broader push to revive competition and athletic culture in schools.

"We're bringing it back," he said. "My administration is working very hard to defend America's cherished athletic traditions and pass our values of excellence and competitiveness to the next generation."

The awards are certificates signed by the president, which are available for download on the White House's website. "Hit at least one target from every category and you'll earn the Presidential Physical Fitness Award. Train hard — you've got this!" it says on the page.

The new fitness categories for the test are divided into core strength, cardio and upper body, with a choice of two different exercises for each one: curl-ups or planks; 1-mile run or 20-meter beep test, also known as a shuttle run; and right-angle pushups or pullups.

A 13-year-old boy, for example, could earn the presidential fitness award by holding a plank for at least 134 seconds, running the mile in 6 minutes, 50 seconds or faster and completing seven pullups, according to a fitness benchmark chart posted by the White House. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who is leading the administration's "Make America Healthy Again" initiative, lamented the growing obesity rate among American youth, maintaining that nearly 80% of young people cannot meet the standards for military service.

"That should be an eye-opener for all of us," he said, adding that competition is good for kids. "We need to teach people how to win and how to lose and how to process victory and defeat," he said.

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@stripesksttown



WEBSITE



Photo by Brian McElhiney, Stars and Stripes



Photo by Eric Mendiola, Stars and Stripes

Mobile devices not allowed in classrooms this year

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN,
STARS AND STRIPES

Students attending the Pentagon's schools this year will no longer be allowed to keep personal electronic devices on them during the school day, according to new guidance.

Smartphones, smartwatches, tablets, Bluetooth-enabled devices and gaming systems with internet-connected capability must be silenced or turned off and securely stored from the start of the school day until dismissal, according to a form letter emailed to parents and guardians in May from some Department of Defense Education Activity principals.

"This change will remove distractions and keep the focus of our

classrooms on education," was viewed by Stars and Stripes known as the Department of Defense Education Activity.

The implementation guidelines allow exceptions to the school-day rule for medical purposes, special education instructional activities, safety or curriculum-based activities that require a student to be able to contact home during the school day. The guidance also allows for a designated location with staff supervision where students can use their devices, parents says.

"We are sharing this information so parents and guardians have time to prepare their children before the start of the school year," an email says. "We appreciate your understanding and enforcing these expectations to ensure a focused, safe, and productive learning environment for all students."

Get involved this school year!

Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO) strengthen school communities through family involvement, volunteer support, events and activities.

School Advisory Committees (SAC) provide parents, students, staff and military community representatives with a forum to share feedback and advise school leadership directly on matters affecting students and families.

Families interested in participating are encouraged to contact their school for more information.



WEBSITE





Photo by Colin Cruickshank, DODEA Europe



Middle schoolers play flag football at Yokota Air Base, Japan, on April 20, 2024. Photo by Alexzandra Gracey, U.S. Air Force



Photo by Cynthia Abel, Special to Stripes

Dave Ornauer, Stars and Stripes

Families welcome decision to add middle school sports

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN, STARS AND STRIPES

Military families that have spent years pushing for middle school sports at Defense Department schools welcomed a Pentagon decision to launch athletic programs for students in grades six through eight worldwide.

The Pentagon's middle schools will begin offering sports this year, defense officials announced this week, marking the first time a school-sponsored athletic program will be available for children in those grades.

The Department of Defense Education Activity "this winter is expanding athletic opportunities to every DODEA middle schooler worldwide," Anthony Tata, the defense secretary for personnel and readiness, said on X on July 17.

"Parents & students asked - @SecWar answered," he added, referring to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, whose department oversees the Pentagon's network of 161 schools in Europe, Asia and the United States.

Military and civilian families, especially those stationed overseas, have long called for more sports at DODEA middle schools, where extracurricular athletic opportunities have ranged from sparse to nonexistent and fall far short of those at comparable U.S. public schools.

Maribel Jarzabek, an Air Force spouse in Belgium, called the announcement a "phenomenal opportunity."

"It looks like they took to heart a lot of the parents' comments on this issue," she said.

While stationed at Camp Humphreys in South Korea, Jarzabek started a middle school running club after learning that students had no organized school sports. Nearly 90 students joined, she said.

"We had all of these kids who wanted to run, who needed something to do (after school)," Jarzabek said. "And they loved it."

Her older daughter, Cassie, had participated in a middle school running club while the family lived in Japan, allowing her to continue competing before high school.

"She was able to keep practicing, be in competition with other kids and enhance her skills," Jarzabek said. Without the running club, Cassie "would not have started until her freshman year" and "would be a few years behind," she added.

Overseas families often lack access to gym space, YMCA programs and other recreational opportunities available in the United States, said Army spouse Kim Haith, who also advocated for middle school sports while stationed at

Camp Humphreys.

"Sports have been shown to improve mental health, provide critical team building skills and allow for students to obtain scholarships to attend colleges they may not have been otherwise able to afford," said Haith, a mother of three school-age children.

At some bases overseas, DODEA middle schools have allowed students to practice with high school teams in sports such as tennis and cross-country, but often not in competitions.

Other installations have relied on command-sponsored recreational and developmental leagues to fill the gap, such as the Army's Morale, Welfare and Recreation and the Air Force's Child and Youth Program.

Those programs, however, often limit the number of participants because of funding constraints and lack of volunteer coaches.

DODEA, which also goes by the Department of Defense Education Activity, did not provide details on which sports will be available at its middle schools and whether programs will be competitive, recreational or a mix of both.

"Schools will receive dedicated funding to successfully launch and sustain these middle school athletic opportunities," DODEA spokeswoman Jessica Tackaberry said in a statement.

The agency plans to coordinate with middle and middle/high schools throughout the fall to support the rollout, she said. The goal is to provide families starting this fall with more information about participation, schedules and other program details, Tackaberry added.

Expanding middle school sports is consistent with a focus by President Donald Trump and Hegseth on physical fitness, she said.

Starting this past spring, DODEA made the Presidential Fitness Test mandatory after Trump signed an executive order to restore it.

The test, which consists of events to gauge core strength, upper body strength and cardiovascular fitness, dates to the 1950s in public schools.

The sports offering for middle schoolers could affect nearly 14,000 students, a number that reflects enrollment in grades six through eight at DODEA schools worldwide as of June, according to agency data.

Some parents of DODEA middle schoolers are already dreaming big.

"We are stationed in Japan with a middle schooler who is obsessed with baseball, as are so many other kids at his school," said Kara Misiak, in response to Tata's X post. "Please make sure it is included. It would make them so happy!"

svan.jennifer@stripes.com @stripesktown



Photo by Michael O'Day, DODEA

provide a secure place for students to store their devices during instructional time, such as lockers. Prior to the DODEA-wide ban, smartphone use in the Pentagon's school system, which serves more than 65,000 children of American service members and DOD personnel stationed in the United States and overseas, varied by school. Some schools already limited use of devices, while others had no restrictions.

In the U.S., at least nine states have laws in place to curtail students' use of cellphones during school hours. The restrictions reflect a broader push by educators and policymakers who say smartphones have become a major classroom distraction and may contribute to student mental health and behavioral problems.

svan.jennifer@stripes.com @stripesktown

owed
ear

said the memo, which
stripes. DODEA is also
of War Education Ac-

guidance notes that ex-
ban on devices will be
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services and approved
such as digital photogra-
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ive learning environment
all students."

The letter did not say
ether schools would





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