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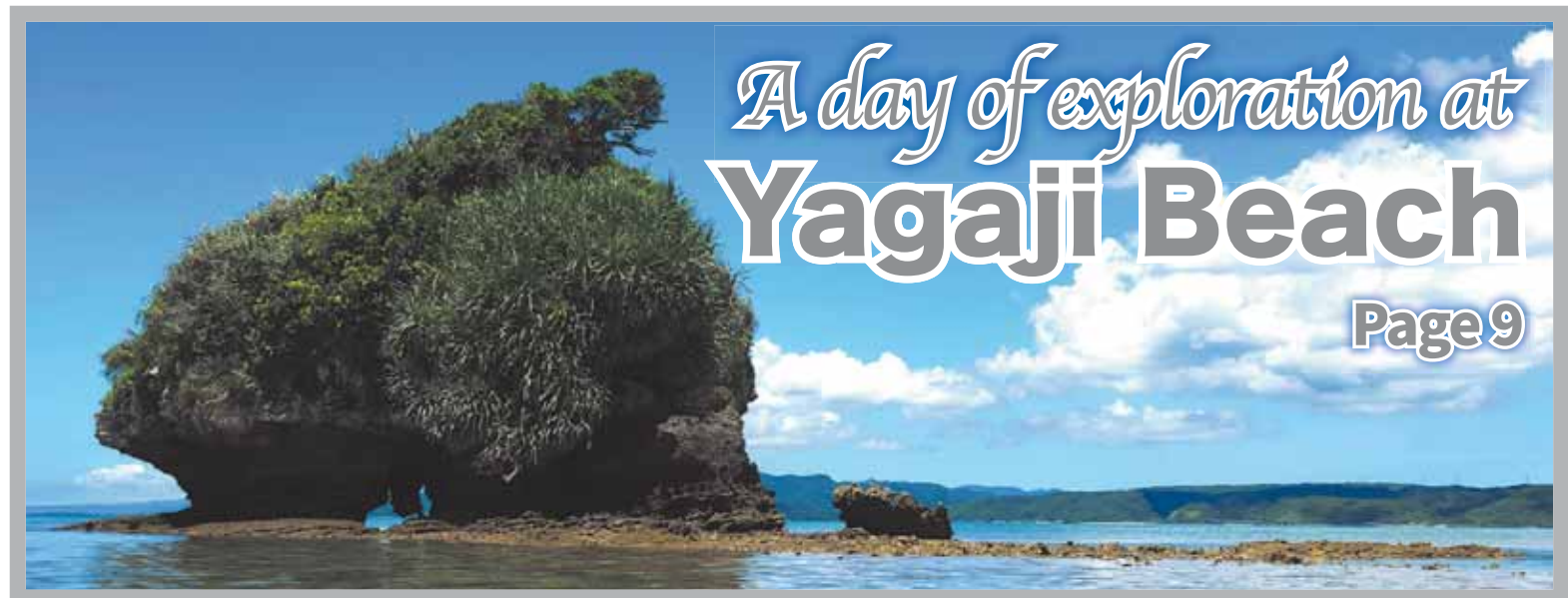
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A day of exploration at Yagaji Beach

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Marine app aims to curtail drownings

STORY AND PHOTO BY FRANK ANDREWS,
STARS AND STRIPES
Published: November 2, 2022

CAMP FOSTER — The Marine Corps has launched a smartphone app that provides troops with information about drowning hazards around Okinawa and a bridge over language barriers in an emergency.

Drowning in riptides is a leading cause of accidental death on Okinawa. The forceful undertow rip currents near many of the island's beaches can pull a swimmer quickly out to sea, often as they struggle helplessly against it.

Marine Corps Community Services developed the Liberty MCCS Okinawa app to provide users upfront information about Okinawa's often beautiful but hazardous shoreline, according to Shawn Curtis, safety director at the Marine Corps Installation Pacific Safety Office. The Liberty app was initially developed in 2017 and is free to download and use.

It's available for download from Google Play or the Apple App Store. Among its features, the Liberty app gives users a map of recommended sites for recreation, but also the drowning hazards associated with the island's beaches and the locations of past drownings. It includes information on places eat on and off base, off-limits establishments, command and emergency numbers, liberty policy and



People visit Sesoko Beach on Oct. 28.

scam alerts.

It comes with an audio translator that allows English speakers to report an emergency by clicking the statement that corresponds to the emergency. An audio message plays back in Japanese for bystanders or an emergency services operator.

Drowning is the No. 1 cause of accidental death on Okinawa and October is the deadliest month in that category, according to Curtis.

The island prefecture is a hotspot for watersports like surfing, bodyboarding, snorkeling and scuba. But its year-round volatile weather can go from safe to

dangerous in minutes. Some of the most popular sites along the prefecture's 296 miles of shoreline are also associated with hazardous water conditions.

Altogether, 33 people have drowned on Okinawa this year, according to the Okinawa Prefectural Police website. Sixteen were Okinawans; 16 were tourists, including people from elsewhere in Japan; and one was a U.S. service member.

Forty service members have drowned on Okinawa since 2000, according to the safety office. Ten have perished since 2020, including five last year, Curtis said in an email Thursday to Stars and Stripes.

Altogether, 33 people have drowned on Okinawa this year, according to the Okinawa Prefectural Police. Sixteen were Okinawans; 16 were tourists, including people from elsewhere in Japan; and one was a U.S. service member.

Since 2014, he said, 37 service members, civilian employees or family members have been rescued on Okinawa beaches, although he suspects many more incidents go unreported. One drowning and two rescues were reported this year to the Marine Corps in Okinawa, he said.

The Marine Corps on Okinawa encourages people to download the Liberty app to their mobile phones and preprogram emergency phone numbers into it, including the Japan Coast Guard emergency number, 118, and the off-base emergency dispatcher at Kadena Air Base, 098-934-5911.

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Delicious dinner discussion

Sushi, tempura, savory ‘okonomiyaki’ pancakes – there are so many yummy edibles in Japan that you shouldn’t miss during your stay. Sample some of this lingo the next time you’re at a local restaurant to experience some of these specialties.

“Welcome!” = Irraishaimase.

(Said by shop owners almost every time you enter store. And it is used in not only restaurants but in any store.)

“Please give me _____.”

= _____ wo kudasa.

(For example, you can say “tempura wo kudasai” or “beer wo kudasai.”)

“Please give me another one.”

= Okawari kudasai.

“Very delicious.” = Totemo oishii.

- amai = sweet
- karai = spicy
- nigai = bitter
- noukou = raich

“Check please.”

= Okaikei onegaishi masu.

“I will be back.” = Mata kimasu.



FULL
LESSON

Making instant noodles

Next time you make instant noodle, try this phrase – “Oyu wo sosoide san-pun machimasho.” Japanese instant noodles are awesome. If you get a craving for the guilty pleasure, this is a phrase for you.

“Pour hot water and wait three minutes.”

= Oyu wo sosoide san-pun machimasho.

- oyu = hot water
- sosoide/sosogu = pour
- machimasho = let’s wait

It could be “yon-fun” for four minutes or “go-fun” for five minutes for some instant noodles, so please check the instructions on the label.

And don’t forget to enjoy your favorite noodles!



VIDEO
LESSON

Check, please!

At many restaurants in Japan, once your food is brought to the table, you will likely receive a check even if you don’t ask for one. However, at izakayas and bars, you may need to ask for one when you are ready to pay.

So, when you would like to receive a check, try this phrase:

“Check, please!”

= Okaikei wo onegai shimasu.

- okaikei/kaikei = accounting
- wo = a particle to indicate an object,
- onegai shimasu = please ~



VIDEO
LESSON

Avoid driving in bus lanes!

If you drive in Japan, you may have seen designated bus lanes on the roadways. You’ll see them in many city in Japan and on Okinawa. These lanes are specifically for buses on designated dates and times, so it can be tricky to figure out when. Even locals forget about it and end up driving in the bus lanes when they shouldn’t be.

So next time you get behind the wheel, remember this phrase, **“Basu reen (bus lane) wo sakete unten shimasu.”**, which means **“I will avoid bus lanes when I drive.”**

- basu reen = bus lane
- wo = a proposition to put after a noun which functions as an object
- sakete/sakeru = avoid
- unten = drive
- shimasu = I will do ~



VIDEO
LESSON



Speakin'
Japanese

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI
AND SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPE OKINAWA

Irraishaimase!

Beware of hangover!

There’s nothing wrong with having fun, but taking it too far can cause problems on the following day. To avoid drinking too much, let’s keep in mind this phrase:

“Beware of getting a hangover.”

= Futsukayoi ni Goyoujin.

- futsukayoi = hangover
- ni = a particle to indicate an object
- goyoujin/youjin = precaution



VIDEO
LESSON

Telephone talk

What would you say when you wrap up a telephone call or in-person conversation with your friend?

Be sure to say “Okiwo Tsukete,” which means “take care of yourself” before you hang up your phone or leave your friends. This is a nice, heart-warming expression that shows your considerations to your friend’s health and safety.

Today’s Japanese phrase is:

“Take care of yourself.”

= Okiwo tsukete.

Use this expression anytime you’re ending a conversation.
Stay safe and OKIWO TSUKETE!



VIDEO
LESSON

Okinawa is ‘relatively’ warm!

Although it sometimes gets chilly on the island, Okinawa is relative warm if you compare it with mainland Japan.

Here’s a phrase to describe such climate of Okinawa.

“Okinawa is relatively warm if you compare it with mainland Japan.”

= Okinawa wa Hondo to hikaku suruto, hikakuteki atatakai desu.

- Hondo = mainland
- to = with
- hikaku suru = compare
- hikakuteki = relatively
- atatakai = warm
- desu = is



VIDEO
LESSON

Could you repeat that?

To progress in learning a new language, asking a lot of questions is a good way to start.

We may often feel embarrassed to do that, but we shouldn’t hesitate because we’re learning.

Like we say in Japan, “To ask a question is a shame for a moment. Not to ask a question is a lifetime shame.”

To start, let’s try this phrase:

“Could you repeat that?”

= Mou ichido onegai shimasu.

- mou = an adverb to indicate that you are going to add something
- ichido = once/one time
- onegai shimasu = please do ~



VIDEO
LESSON

How to say ‘splendid view’

On the hunt for nice views of the autumn colors, I headed to Nozoriko Lake in Gunma Prefecture. What a landscape! It is a splendid (and gusty) view, isn’t it?

“It’s a splendid view, isn’t it?”

= Subarashii Keshiki desune?

- subarashii = splendid/wonderful
- keshiki = view/landscape
- desune? = isn’t it?



VIDEO
LESSON

The wind is getting stronger

In Japan (especially in the mainlands of Honshu, Kyushu and Shikoku), September and October are known as months with many typhoons. In previous years, I remember many typhoons hit the country and cause serious damage, so watch out for high winds and heavy rains characteristic of this season.

“The wind is picking up.”

= Kazega tsuyoku nattekimashita.

- kaze = wind
- tsuyoku = strong
- ... ga .. nattekimashita = becomes more and more..



VIDEO
LESSON

“The rain is getting heavier.”

= Amega tsuyoku nattekimashita.



Stay safe and keep an eye out for the next Speakin’ Japanese lesson!



Fresh sashimi!

Stores beckon on first level of the Makishi Public Market.

Goya beer and Hirayachi are acquired tastes.



Makishi Public Market

Enjoy Okinawa's traditional food in this Naha market

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JACLYNN SEAH, JAPAN TRAVEL

A good place to sample some traditional Okinawan delicacies is the Makishi Public Market. A small,

two story building located just off Naha's famous Kokusai street. The first floor is a wet market of sorts where vendors sell fresh produce and seafood. It is air-conditioned, a nice respite from the humidity, and you are greeted with a cacophony

of voices encouraging you to look and sample their wares.

Fresh seafood is one of the main draws of this market, and you will see rows of tanks filled with spindly crabs and spiny lobsters, or bulging fish eyes poking out from

mounds of ice. Just looking at the variety of sea creatures on display is a marvel in itself. One thing that's popular as well is to pick out your favorite seafood, and then have it brought to the restaurants upstairs for a small fee, where your catch is freshly prepared for you. Besides seafood, there's also meat - pork in particular. Okinawan's are famous for eating practically all parts of the pig, which can also be found here, as well as seasonal local vegetable produce.

The second level is filled with restaurants of various sizes serving up all manner of local cuisine. It is a great place to rest your legs and grab some sustenance after a tiring day walking through the markets. Many of these restaurants are tourist friendly with English or Chinese translations on their menu, or conveniently have pictures for you to point at.

I could not leave the market without having a sashimi set lunch that came with a neatly plated array of super fresh fish, shellfish and prawns that were probably

procured from the market place below, one of the best meals I had in Okinawa. Take the time to try out the different stores. One of the more unusual things I tried here was Helios Goya Dry, a beer produced in Naha that is tinged with its famous bittergourd-like Goya. Beer is bitter to begin with, so the distinctly Goya aftertaste was not too strange. It was here that I also sampled Hirayachi, a flat pancake-like side dish that I had with my beer.



Live crabs and lobsters in tanks for sale.



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Burger joint known for quality beef reopens



STORY AND PHOTOS BY FRANK ANDREWS,
STARS AND STRIPES
Published: October 28, 2022

Thank goodness, because I found a luxury burger spot – the Ishigaki Island Kitchen Bin in Chatan town – that rekindled its griddle in July after 2½ years of COVID-19 closure.

This burger shop is special because its beef and other ingredients are sourced from Ishigaki, a small island south of Okinawa that is famous worldwide for its premium-quality beef, or “tokusen Ishigaki gyū” in Japanese.

Ishigaki beef comes from fattened black cattle bred in Okinawa. It’s a higher-grade meat with marbled fat that gives you a melt-in-your-mouth kind of experience.

The Island Kitchen has three burgers to choose from: bacon, avocado and mozzarella. Each costs about 1,430 yen (about \$9.90). Make it a double for another 550 yen; add a side of fries, onion rings or homemade potato chips and a drink for 480 yen.

I ordered at the counter, sat at a table in the back and within five minutes my double bacon cheeseburger meal set had arrived. The meat and melted cheese were perfect. The cheese and buns are homemade, and you can taste the freshness with each bite.

There is self-serve soft ice cream made with ginger and imported from Hokkaido, Japan’s northernmost island. The self-serve drink bar has tea, coffee, juices; bottled

Ishigaki Island Kitchen Bin

LOCATION: 11-21, Chatan 1-Chome Chatan, Nakagami-gun, Okinawa Prefecture

DIRECTIONS: Just outside Camp Foster’s Gate No. 2 and across from Araha Beach. Head toward the beach along the road that runs parallel with the water. Look for the big yellow building.

HOURS: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Sunday 10:30 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday 10:30 a.m. – 7 p.m. Closed Tuesday.

DRESS: Casual

PHONE: 098-936-7587

Phone orders and takeaway are available.

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beers are available on request.

The restaurant has inside seating at four tables that each seat four. More seating is available outside.

The burger shop is a father-and-son operation that they named for their home island. The son, Eito Arashiro, 33, graduated from high school on Ishigaki and moved with his father to Chatan, where they opened the burger place in 2007.

Most of the customers are Japanese tourists followed by Americans on Okinawa with the U.S. military. A few locals patronize the shop, too, he said.

Be prepared to get your hands messy. These burgers are tall and ooze with toppings.

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STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPES OKINAWA

Kin Town, the host municipality of Camp Hansen, is sometimes talked about in the past tense. It is true that the town's prosperity as a "military town" peaked in the 60s and 70s, during the time of the Vietnam War. Now, the shine of the town may no longer be what it once was. However, the town continues to rally and attract people, if not in the same way as it once did. Visiting the town offers opportunities to see the town's attractions both burgeoning and passed down from the past.



Underground Kin, a bar in Shinkaichi.



Rock America, a rock theme bar in Shinkaichi.

Shinkaichi

It was in 1957 that Camp Hansen was installed in Kin Town. Right across a street from Gate 1, **Shinkaichi** was developed as an amusement area catering to the military community.

Restaurants, bars, clubs, and tattoo shops housed in old buildings line the streets, providing a glimpse into the past. When visited at night, colorful neon signs welcome visitors, hence the "sleepless town" moniker.

During daytime, colorful graffiti-clad buildings present a pop-art like view from the past. Although doors are closed for many bars while the sun is still up, people come looking for food such as tacos, hamburgers and hotdogs. The smell of **BBQ** hangs in the air, tickling people's appetites.

Long-running restaurants like **King Tacos** and **Gate 1** continue to be popular. **The taco rice**, fried rice, or cheeseburgers that they serve up to exceptional volumes attract many hungry minds.

Kin Town is especially known as a town of taco rice. In 2010, a Guinness Record was set when a giant taco rice which weighed more than 1,600 pounds was made. The extra-large foods mentioned well represent the taste of the town.

There are also new places like **Ricamocha Café**. This cozy looking café on Route 329 is crowded Friday evenings and Saturday and Sunday mornings, according to Kazumi Shigehisa, a staffer. Their featured menu item is murutaam, a cold sweet served up with taimo or taamu, a type of potato, along with milk-flavored shaved ice and tapioca.

The unique streets inspired creative minds as well. Movies and music videos have been shot there. In **"A Sign Days/Via Okinawa"**, a movie from 1989, the town played a background to depict the rise and fall of a local rock band. In **"Boling Point"**, a movie by decorated director Takeshi Kitano, protagonists visit the town before their last stand against gangs. Or in a music video titled **"Kata Omoi Diary"**, a Japanese girls' band ran around and shot fireworks in the old streets.



File photo

Shinkaichi



Kin Town keeps on k

Gate 1



Ricamocha Café



"Murutaamu", a cold sweet served up at Ricamocha Café near Camp Hansen.

East side of Camp Hansen

Located about a five-minute walk to the east from Gate 1 of Camp Hansen is a temple called **Kannonji**. According to the town's website, the temple was first built in the 16th century by a prestigious monk from mainland Japan. At one corner of the site, there is a limestone cave called **Nisshuudo**. This is thought to be a sacred site. Legend has it that the monk persuaded a giant snake to pay penance in the cave for damages it caused to locals. Although the deepest part of cave is now off-limits, visitors can take stairs and see spots for worship such as a large limestone called **"Buddha's Big Parasol."**



Zero Tattoo Kin, a tattoo shop near Camp Hansen.





Town keepin' on

Kin Town Map



Oranda Mui

located on a small hill that overlooks the east coast, **Oranda Mui Ryokuchi Koen** is believed to be the location where Commodore Mathew Perry camped out when they explored the island in 1853, according to Kin Town. By taking a stone-paved promenade, visitors can go up the hill. This place used to be called “Uranda Mui” because locals back then commonly called westerners “Uranda.” “Uranda” is an Okinawan way of pronouncing “Oranda,” which means “Dutch” in Japanese. Uranda means “Dutch.” This follows a rule of Okinawan dialect that a word can be converted to the subject of an action by prolonging the last vowel of the word, much just like English converts some verbs into nouns by adding “er” at the end.

Coastal Area

The easiest way to get to Camp Hansen is to take the expressway and get off at exit No. 8. Heading north on Route 329 with **Kin Bay** to the right takes drivers to neighboring areas of the military facility. Along the way, a unique collection of shacks and tents come into view on the left. One of them is a farmer’s market called **Ishija Yuntaku Ichiba**. This local market has all sorts of items. Starting with local produce and canned foods, items range from used books and clothes, to military items such as **MREs**.

Route 329 has a bypass that runs along the coast. If drivers take the bypass and head north, they will come by a fishing port called **Hamada Gyokou**, which presents a good view of the Kin Bay. This port is known as a good fishing spot. Anglers can be seen seeking rabbitfish and black sea bream according to Okinawa Tsuru, a website dedicated to fishing in Okinawa. The Kin Fishery Association noted that fishing is prohibited on a dock, but it is OK to do so on tetrapod, holding fishing rods toward outside of the port on tetrapod.

There are a couple of beaches along the coast that can be accessed by going south on Route 329. **Igei**



Kin Sunrise Beach

Kaihinkouen (Seaside Park) and **Yaka Beach** have a long stretch of sandy shore and peaceful water, that presents a nice secluded atmosphere.

Kin Sunrise Beach Kaihin Koen, which debuted in September and is on the east coast of Kin Town, boasts a 800-meter long white sandy shore. This location used to be part of a U.S. military training range for field battles and the launching and landing of helicopters. Since its reversion in 2011, it went through redevelopment, and is now home to water activities such as banana boating and jet-skiing. A bathroom, shower, and pavilions are available at the beach.

See TOWN on page 8

TOWN: Old and new attractions

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

Rural Zone

Going further north on the coastal road leads to a vast flatland where paddy fields of **taimo** spread wide. The view presents a look much different from other parts of the island where sugarcane fields or hilly jungles are most typically seen.

Located at the east end of the land is **Nature Mirai Kan**, a facility with cottages, camping ground, and pavilions for grilling. On **Okukubi Gawa**, a river that runs by the facility, people can enjoy kayaking or stand-up paddle boarding. According to manager Kenji Nakama, the facility is popular among tourists, Okinawans, and Americans. Reservations are highly recommended, especially over the weekend.

A five-minute walk from the facility, a boardwalk runs along the river, providing a good view of people on kayaks or surfboards. There's also

a cattle shed by the river where **buffaloes** are kept.

About a five-minute drive further north is **Kin-cho Baseball Stadium** and **Kin-cho Football Center**. Pro teams from mainland Japan and South Korea hold spring training here, drawing people to this normally quiet area.

Located near the sports complex, **Kin Dam** offers a nice spot to take a break. From an observatory, which is located right by the facility, water can be seen splashing down its huge wall. The dam is connected to the **Okukubi Gawa** at the bottom.

Kin Town may look humble compared to locations with large resorts or commercial facilities on the west coast. Clearly, the times have changed here.



A paddy field in western Kin Town. Wild birds can often be seen there.

However, tourists, Okinawans, and Americans keep coming looking for something that only this town has to offer. The town's attractions, both old and new, don't stop tickling people's curiosity.

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Nature Mirai-kan



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STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPE OKINAWA

Yagaji Beach is located by Route 110, which connects the northwest coast of Okinawa's main island and Yagaji Island. I passed by this beach when I toured the Motobu Peninsula by bike back in February. Its peaceful waters looked beautiful and soothing.

Several months after that, the view still lingered on my mind. So, I decided to go back there. According to the beach's website, people can enjoy camping, BBQ, and kayaking there. For me, BBQ was the top priority because it had been a while since I enjoyed grilling on the beach.

Because I don't own a grill, I made a reservation to rent one on-site. I also pre-ordered food (beef, sausage, chicken on a stick, and vegetables) so I could just go there without too much preparation.

Renting a grill set cost me 3,000 yen (approx. \$20), and a total of 2,200 yen was charged for food. Plus, I rented a pop-up shade for 1,000 yen.

Paying 500 yen for the admission fee at the entrance, I drove into a camping site, which was a long stretch of lawn that ran along the coast. The lush green area was well maintained and comfortable. I pulled into a spot facing a small islet that floats not far from the shore.

The barbecue grill I rented was compact and easy to handle. As soon as I lit the charcoal, my appetite began to grow. I decided to cook up the vegetables first. I am sure there are proper ways to grill vegetables, but every time I barbecue, that curiosity doesn't last long because of my appetite for beef. And this day was no exception. As soon as the

edge of cabbages and onions turned brown, I took them off the grill to make room for the main dish.

Sizzling on the grill under the hot sun, the red beef looked even more appetizing than usual. As I grilled the beef and sausages, the aroma kept me tipsy, even without alcohol.

When I was done with grilling, it was around 12:30 p.m. I seated myself on a log with a plate full of grilled food in my hands, facing the ocean and the islet. I certainly felt tired after cooking in the strong sunshine. Still, with one bite of the beef, the fatigue was off my mind. While enjoying the grilled food and ocean view, I thought back to my childhood when my family camped out by the ocean and enjoyed the same food.

Once my stomach was full, I was ready to explore the ocean, which looked very enticing.

It was around 1 p.m. The tide was low, and a line of sand was exposed above the water, connecting the shore to that islet. According to the beach's staff, this natural bridge is commonly called "pure road" and is believed to bring happiness if visitors cross it to the small island. If

they happen to be couples, the trip can bring romance, at least that's what the beach's website says. Although I was alone on that day, a walk on the sandy bridge to the islet seemed like the thing to do, even if it didn't bring some luck for love.

The distance to the islet was about 150 meters. The sandy road felt a little bumpy under my beach sandals. Up close, the islet looked enormous.

Just like many other rocks and islets around Okinawa, this one has a skinny bottom, making it look like a giant mushroom. The top was covered with shrubs and trees. The huge structure was composed of two parts: one big rock and a small one lining up horizontally to the shore. There was a gap between the two, through which I could see two more islets floating in the distance. There were a few people around those islets. They must have walked through the low tide to get there. So, I decided to follow their steps.

As I left the first islet and headed to the second, the water remained shallow. At times the surface of water reached my thighs, but it soon subsided back to

below my knees. Here and there, small fish were swimming by. There were also sea cucumbers lying at the bottom.

After going more than 200 meters, I came close to the second islet. There was also another one about 50 meters away. The one close to me had a cave that ran from the front to its back. Out of curiosity and also looking for some shade, I decided to explore the cave.

Inside, the grotto was low-lit by the sunlight bounced off some puddles of water. In the dusky space, I could see several crabs hiding themselves in between cracks on the rocks. I was not sure what other creatures were lurking, but I didn't feel any danger.

I just sat there for several minutes, enjoying the view of the shore through the mouth of the cave. The waters around the islet cast blue light into the cave, creating a relaxing atmosphere.

When I left the islet with a cave after 10 minutes or so, I spotted a possible danger for the first time. As was I walking to the other islet, there was something transparent floating on the surface of the water and less than a meter from me. It took me several seconds to realize it was a jellyfish. Although I was not sure if it was a box jellyfish, the idea of encountering potentially dangerous life forms made me nervous.

Recently I heard several news reports where locals or tourists were stung by this marine creature with toxic venom. So, I quickly left the area. Fortunately, the waters remained shallow and posed no difficulties. The last islet I visited looked similar to the first one. As I walked around, I spotted another jellyfish waiting for me. Taking it as a sign of a point of no return, I decided to head back.

By the time I was back on the shore, the tide was getting high. I spent some time just watching the natural bridge gradually disappear.

In total, I probably walked about 1 kilometer in the water. Exploring such a distance in the ocean without swimming was something I had never experienced in Okinawa. I felt tired for sure, but also very much satisfied with my time on Yagaji Beach.

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com



ADMISSION (single day trip) 500 yen for 12 years old and above, 300 yen for between 11 and three years of age

*During Golden Week, the above fees are adjusted to 750 yen and 450 yen respectively.

Hours: 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. (for a day trip)

*You can also spend the night camping or staying at an on-site lodge. In that case, the admission fees will be 1,000 yen for 12 years old and above, 600 yen for between 11 and three years of age.

*Reservation required.

*For more information, contact Yagaji Beach Office at 0980-52-8123 or info@yagaji-beach.com

*The beach's office says their swimming season ended on Oct 23. It will be at your own responsibility to get in the water during winter time. You can enjoy BBQ there with no problem.



WEBSITE



GPS COORDINATES

The rise, fall and comeback of batting cages in Japan

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPES OKINAWA

In 2011, Kitashirakawa Batting Center in Kyoto, was closed for good, calling an end to its more than four decades of batting cage glory. It was a very popular spot when I was a college student about 20 years ago. When Fridays came around, the place was packed with people looking to relieve stress by taking cuts at 90 mph fastballs, or young couples flirting over 60 mph balls before moving onto other amusement available at the same location.

Batting cages may be an amusement whose heyday has long passed. According to Weekly Playboy, a Japanese magazine unrelated to the American magazine of the same name, the first batting cage debuted in Tokyo in 1965, and was followed by many other facilities in the late 60s and 70s. According to the report, the popularity of the amusement held in the 80s, leading to the launch of a ground breaking system in the 90s which made it possible to throw various pitches including breaking balls by using two rotatable discs. In the early 2000s, many of these facilities closed. Declines in birth rate and popularity of baseball, or increase of diversity in amusement were cited as the

reasons for the downfall.

The closure of the batting cage in Kyoto, which opened in 1970, would attest to the rise and fall of the amusement.

"The popularity of batting cage was at the highest when our company started, back in 1966. I would assume now they are down to about 700," Mr. Yamamoto of Kinki Kresco, a long-established maker of batting cage equipment says.

It's hard to track the precise number of batting cages, as they are not officially registered, but the decline looks evident. Weekly Playboy quoted a survey that indicated there were 541 batting cages in Japan as of 2014, showing a decrease of 269 from 2001. However, it is still too early to say that the batting cage is dead, as it has been making somewhat of a comeback in the Japanese pop-culture scene lately.

Masashi Yoshioka, a famous batting cage enthusiast who has visited more than 800 batting cages in Japan, was recently featured in several TV and radio shows, talking about the rise of unique batting cages; ones where you can swing at 142 mph fastballs, or earn prize money for home runs, or even practice fielding.

Plus, in a TV show called "Real Yakuyu Ban (Real Baseball Pinball)," a pitching machine was used to let professional

players virtually face a pitcher on a monitor controlled by TV talents. The way the pros were fooled by the virtual pitcher drew much attention and contributed to the popularity of the show. Nikkan Sports, a Japanese sports journal, reported in November of 2015 that then Manager Yoshinobu Takahashi of the Tokyo Yomiuri Giants, decided to introduce the machine to the team's training, as he was impressed with the quality and variety of the pitches it can throw. According to Mr. Yamamoto of Kinki Cresco, the maker of the system, the virtual pitching machine is now a very popular system at batting cages in Japan.

Here on Okinawa, there are several batting cages facilities still running. Although they may not provide fastballs with ridiculous velocities, some of them have unique features. There is a batting cage facility that introduced a "strikeout game" to let customers try their skills of locating pitches by throwing at targets in the strike zone. Others host home run competitions where you can earn gift cards.

Even though some of them look retro, like the now-closed amusement complex in Kyoto, batting cages continue to stay relevant on this southern island.

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Where to take your cuts on Okinawa

CHATAN SPORTS CENTER

- GPS Coordinates: N 26.324864, E 127.763463 (South of Kadena Air Base)
- Hours: 8 a.m. – 11 p.m.
- Tel: (098) 936-7011
- Web: <https://chatan-spc.com/batting/>
- Notes: A sports complex. 30 pitches for 200 yen. Velocity ranges from 80 to 140 kmph (approx. 50 to 87 mph.)



AMEKU SPORTS LAND

- GPS Coordinates: N 26.236235, E 127.684055
- Hours: 10 a.m. – 10 p.m.
- Website: <https://www.amekufamilysports.com/>
- Notes: An amusement complex with pool tables, video games, darts, ping-pong. Velocity ranges from 70 – 145kmph (approx. 43 to 90 mph). 10 plates. 25 pitches for 200 yen. Home run competitions take place periodically.



ROUND ONE

- GPS Coordinates: N 26.275824, E 127.731014
- Hours (10 a.m. – 6 a.m. (subject to change)
- Website: <https://www.round1.co.jp/shop/tenpo/okinawa-ginowan.html>
- Tel: 098-870-2110



- Notes: There are batting cages as part of Spo-cha service. 90 minutes for 2,090 yen (2,190 yen on Sat. Sun. holidays)



ENAGIC SPORTS WORLD SOUTHERN HILLS

- GPS Coordinates: N 26.20808, E 127.72836
- Hours: 1 – 10 p.m. (weekdays), 9 a.m. – 10 p.m. (Sat, Sun, and holidays)
- Website: <https://www.southern-hill.com/live/battingcage/>
- Notes: An amusement/sports complex with skate rink, bowling alley, ping-pong etc. 200 yen for 25 pitches. Velocity ranges from 70 – 130 kmph (approx. 43 – 81 mph). 10 plates



Kevin Vega, from Kadena Air Base, swings at a fastball at Chatan Sports center.

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Stripes Sports Trivia

A member of MLB's 3,000 hit club, Ichiro has more total hits in his career than Pete Rose, if you include his time playing in Japan. The longtime Mariners outfielder racked up 1,278 of his 4,300+ hits while playing for which Nippon Professional Baseball team in Japan?

Answer

Orix Blue Wave (Buffaloes)

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DID YOU KNOW?



Okinawa's famous Naha Tug of War used to take place after dark. Bonfires, or "te," were used to illuminate the event back then. Today, the event is hosted at around 4 p.m., drawing quite the crowd. Though the bonfire tradition may be over, the battle flag the competitors carry can still be lit on fire at the top— an homage to the event's nocturnal beginnings.

Kanji of the week

本

Hon (Book)

Language Lesson

I'm sorry.

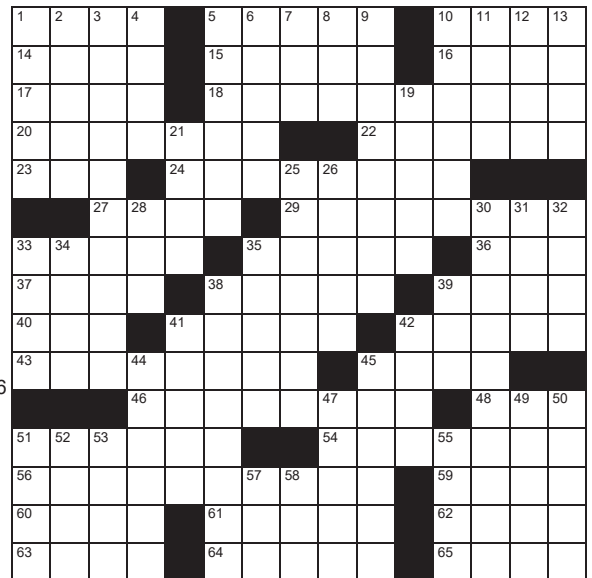
Gomennasai.

Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

- 1 Light pats
- 5 Take place
- 10 Rush job notation
- 14 Bryce Canyon locale
- 15 Wake up
- 16 Napa Valley sight
- 17 Flat-topped hill
- 18 Senior diplomat
- 20 Fragrant rice
- 22 Inventor's quest
- 23 Shocked letters
- 24 Soda since 1886
- 27 Anagram for "ruse"
- 29 Distinction
- 33 Blubbered
- 35 Far from poetic
- 36 Tissue layer
- 37 Loathe
- 38 It may be slippery
- 39 Cowboy wear
- 40 Period in history
- 41 Meager
- 42 Abstain from
- 43 Fierceness
- 45 Mr. Peanut prop
- 46 Seasoning for lamb
- 48 Heathcliff, e.g.
- 51 Changes
- 54 Danger for small boats
- 56 Type of test
- 59 Narrow margin
- 60 Prefix with phobia
- 61 Repulsive insect
- 62 Elementary particle
- 63 Despicable
- 64 Shopping binge
- 65 Capone nemesis



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- 5 Man of many words
- 6 Stand-up guy
- 7 Windy City athlete
- 8 Beach Boys song, "Surfin' "
- 9 "You're welcome," for one
- 10 Online image
- 11 A or B, on a 45
- 12 Auth. unknown
- 13 Smart-alecky
- 19 Like most chips
- 21 Got a perfect score
- 25 BOLO or YOLO, e.g.
- 26 Take as one's own
- 28 "Savvy?"
- 30 Increase in value
- 31 Slimy garden pest
- 32 Beginner
- 33 White hat wearer
- 34 In short supply

- 35 Word with hot or home
- 38 Tailor's tool
- 39 Bart, to Homer
- 41 Disdain
- 42 Warren's "Bonnie and Clyde" co-star
- 44 Crater Lake's state
- 45 Nativity scene
- 47 Lewis Carroll heroine
- 49 Felipe's farewell
- 50 Contract details
- 51 Eden dweller
- 52 Tiny parasites
- 53 Former skater Lipinski
- 55 Larger-life link
- 57 Absorb, with "up"
- 58 Roof stuff

Answers to Previous Crossword:

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

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

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

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Healthy Living

A medical guide for military community members visiting South Korea

November 2022

■ Busan Wellness
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- PAGE 2

■ Suncheon Bay
International
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- PAGE 3

■ Special medical
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- PAGE 4



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— Bonita Hunter,
U.S. DOD civilian

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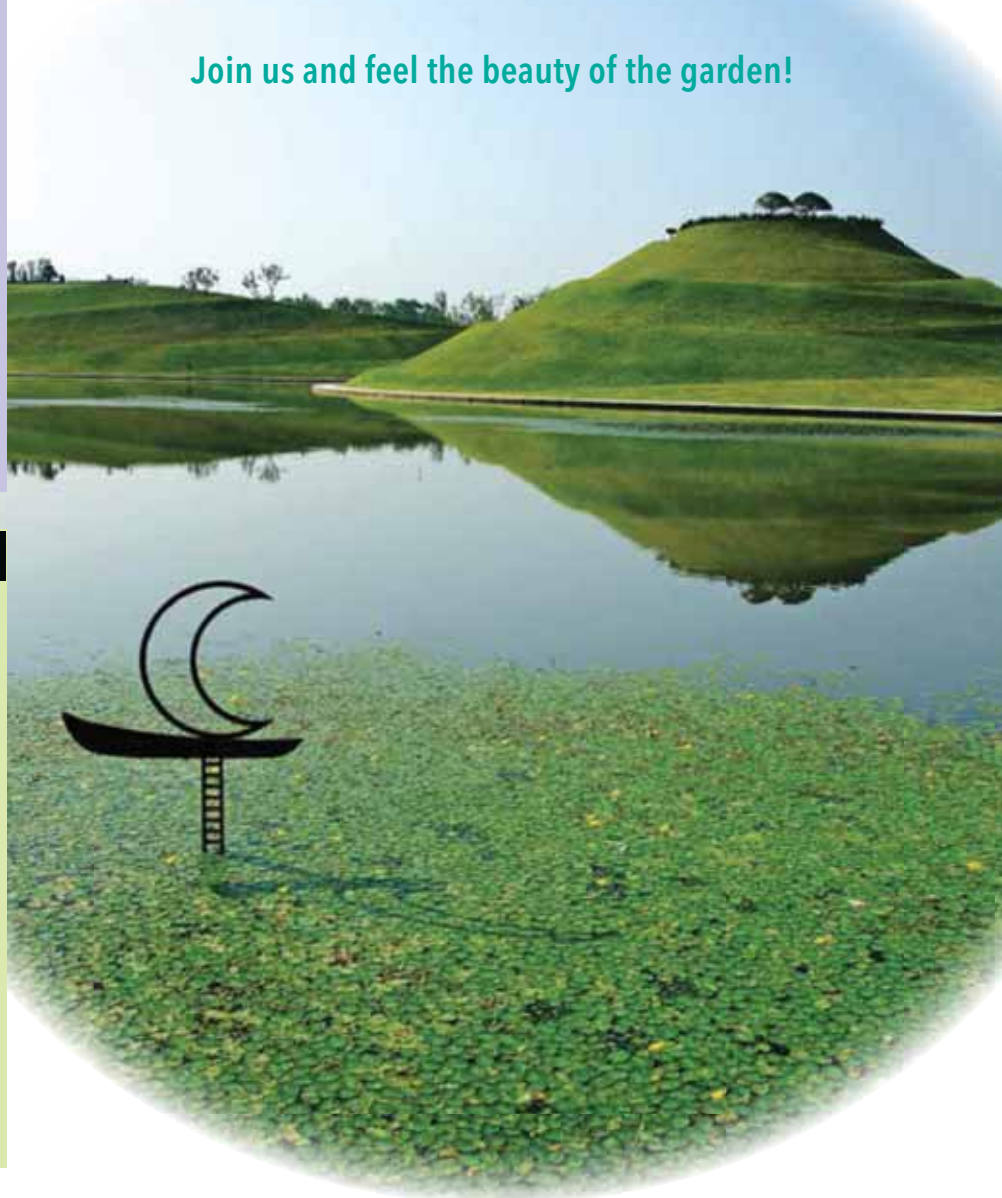
Suncheon Bay International Garden Expo

April 1- Oct. 31, 2023

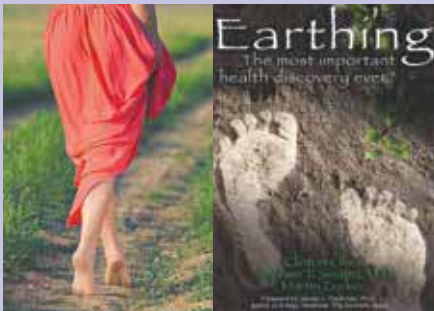
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The International Garden Expo returns to Suncheon Bay for the first time in 10 years. This 6-month event focuses on green technology development such as solar energy, sustainable garden development and electronic transportation. It showcases green technologies, international garden exhibits, and wetland conservation.

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ENJOY



Suncheon Bay National Garden

This beautiful oasis features a detention pond, three gardens and seven trails that allow you to be one with nature. Enjoy walking barefoot to feel the earth underneath you on our 3.8 kilometers of paths.

RELAX



Hwasun Unjusa Temple Stay

This program allows you to relax your tired body and mind through meditation and self-exploration in a peaceful setting.

VIEW



Yeosu Night View

Throughout the city of Yeosu in the evenings, colorful lights illuminate sea. And feel the atmosphere of the night at the Odongdo Music Fountain.

WELLNESS



Oriental Experience Center

Located in the Suncheon Bay National Garden, the center features a carbonated foot bath, oriental flower tea sommelier, herbal tea tasting, free oriental medicine treatment and much more. This is a wonderful place to rejuvenate.

TASTY



Suncheon Han Set Meal

Enjoy all the flavors of the season in Suncheon. The area is known for its healthy and tasty agricultural and fishery products.



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- After checkup, medical staff will conduct consultation.
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Women: Cervical cancer, vaginitis

Optional Checkup List (Additional costs)

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- Thyroid + Breast Ultrasound
- Upper Abdominal Ultrasound
- Breast Ultrasound ■ Thyroid Ultrasound
- Carotid Ultrasound ■ Echocardiography
- Prostate Ultrasound ■ HPV test
- Genetic Analysis (8 Types)



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