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June & July 2013

S.O.S. (SAVE ON SECOND 13 Insider Tips to Make the Most of Your Secul Trip



S.O.S. -SAVE ON SEOUL The Seoul Travel Issue

totalokinawa CONTENTS JUNE & JULY 2013

Issue 16



f you've been looking for a vacation spot away from Okinawa, Seoul may just be the place for you. We've got several insider tips on how to save money and frustration on your trip.

If you want a taste of Korea but can't get off island, we've got a review of local Korean

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restaurant Kan Nichi Kan. We've also included restaurant reviews on Tapioca World and Climax Coffee . There's also our regular dive report and issue of Weird & Wonderful. Also view the magazine online at:www.totalokinawa.com



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Climax Coffee
Dive Report
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Restaurant Review

by Melissa Nazario

Climax Coffee

With reasonable prices and a large menu selection of drinks and tasty food, Climax gives that other famous coffee shop a run for its money.



The Japanese café chain Climax Coffee has been serving Okinawa since 2007, and with its focus on atmosphere and customer satisfaction, it's no wonder that more shops are cropping up on island, including American Village. **Drinks**

Expect to find all the typical café drinks, including lattes, espresso, and chai, and new twists on old favorites. The coconut chocolate latte (left) was delicious, though more like a liquid dessert with all the whip cream and drizzled chocolate, while the earl grey latte was creamy and full of earl grey flavor.

Pancakes & Pastries

While the muffins and baked treats on display are tempting, many like to indulge in Climax's pancakes. They offer plain pancakes

or "American" style with eggs and bacon, plus five kinds of "dessert" pancakes loaded with whip cream, fruit, and other goodies. We recommend the milky macadamia pancakes or, for a Japanese twist, try the green tea pancakes with sweet mung beans and brown sugar syrup (below right).

Food

Climax's lunch and dinner menu outshines most other coffee shops' limited selection. Choose from small snacks like fries, sweet cream cheese-filled soft pretzels, or one of four paninis, or one of their fresh burgers (we love the avocado cheeseburger). In their more established Araha Beach location, there's also pasta, omelets, carrot soup, and Japanese curry.

Atmosphere

The investment in the atmosphere of Climax's establishments is evident. Modern design with plenty of indoor and outdoor seating and open floor plans attract lots of customers through its doors. Combined with its many delicious menu items, Climax's cafés are great spots to meet friends for a meal, or stay awhile and get a lot of work done on your laptop.



American Village: 9 am - 10 pm Chatan: 8 am - 10 pm

¥, \$, and credit card







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Dive Update

Summer Diving

As the summer kicks into full swing the diving just keeps getting better. The warm waters of the summer bring lots of marine life to Okinawa and the surrounding islands. The summer weather also allows for plenty of diving opportunities. As the beach



dives of Sunabe Seawall and Maeda Point are crowded with the summer tourist divers, it means it's time to explore the less dove sites around the islands. For beach dives you could head south to Channel Crevaces and Gushikami Castle, both great sites seldom visited by tourists. You can also head north to Onna to explore its many locations or even further north to Hedo point. These sites are less visited than the standard locations around the middle of the island and offer great diving. In addition, the calm waters of the summer allow most divers to safely explore them.

However, to truly escape the crowds it's boat diving for sure! The summer allows boats to roam further and explore seldom dove sites including Aka-jima, Tonaki and others. This is also a perfect season for Rukan Atoll and other southern sites. The warm water is also a great time to increase that dive knowledge with a class or two. Contact the professional staff at Reef Encounters to get that advanced license, drift dive specialty or move on up to the professional ranks with a divemaster or instructor class. Technical diving is finally making its way to Okinawa and Reef Encounters staff can teach you the ins and outs of decompression or sidemount diving to further enhance your enjoyment of the underwater world.

As always when exploring new spots caution is key. The sites on the north and south of the island can have currents and conditions that can change quickly so check the weather forecast and plan accordingly. Look for days with minimal tide changes, low wind and waves to explore new sites. If possible talk to others that have dove the site or bring a guide with you. We hope to see out exploring the ocean this summer!! Contact us now to schedule your course or trip at info@reefencounters.org!

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Weird and Won<mark>derful Japan</mark>

Three days in the toilet...

* A woman has been rescued from a toilet in Hiroshima after being stuck for three days. The 70 year old woman became ill after entering the cubicle and couldn't then move. Luckily, although weakened by the ordeal there shouldn't be any long term effects.

Senkaku island dispute ongoing

* Despite things appearing to calm down since the demonstrations and diplomatic confrontations, stand offs continue between Chinese government ships and the Japanese coastguard. Frequent incursions by Chinese ships into the disputed waters around the Senkaku islands are still continuing.

Okinawa not Japanese

* The Senkaku islands may not be in the news as much, but a senior Chinese military officer announced that the Ryukyu islands which include Okinawa "do not belong to Japan". Analysts believe the comments are aimed at pressuring Japan to make concessions over the Senkaku islands.

Bear shot in school

* After several bear sightings around a school in Kanazawa, a male bear, around a 1 meter tall entered a school in the area. The bear was then subsequently shot by a local hunting association after the school was evacuated.

Asia's biggest company is...

* Toyota has overtaken South Korea's Samsung to be Asia's biggest company by market value. Toyota was capitalised at 21.89 trillion yen and Samsung was worth the equivalent of 20.26 trillion yen.

Okinawa anniversary

* Okinawa marked the anniversary of it's return to Japan on May 15th. There were no official ceremonies in Okinawa although protests were planned in Tokyo.

McDonald's robbery

* Three men robbed a McDonald's in Shizuoka prefecture of approximately 2 million yen. They threatened the staff with knives and made off with money from the cash registers and safe.

Woman hit by bullet train

* In a weird accident or failed suicide attempt, a woman was hit by a bullet train as it arrived at Sendai station. She was knocked unconscious when part of her body came into contact with the arriving train. Police are still trying to work out how that happened.

Creepy crime

* Highlighting another good reason for not leaving your doors unlocked, a man has been arrested in Saitama for allegedly sneaking into unlocked apartments and cutting the clothes off female occupants as they slept!

Not only did he cut off clothes from at least five victims he also stole money from the apartments.

Yo-yo yen

* After years of a high yen, it's come back to 100 yen to the US dollar for the first time in years, giving respite to Japan's exporters and local businesses.



What to eat

Be daring! Sample street food like yakimandu (gyoza-like dumplings). Try Korean barbecue, bimbimbap (a pot of rice topped with meat, egg, and veggies, below), beef bulgogie, and if you can handle it, spicy kim chi (pickled cabbage).



If you drink, a kettle of flavored soju, Korea's famous grain alcohol, is a must taste.

S.O.S. ~ SAVE ON SEOUL! 13 tips to make the most of your trip

• • • by Melissa Nazario

What to bring

- A large reusable bag. It's handy (and hands free) when you have lots of plastic shopping bags. Make sure there's plenty of suitcase room for purchases, or that you'll have time to ship it back home (though FedEx is expensive).
- Hand sanitizer and extra tissues when exploring the city. Some busy markets didn't have toilet paper or soap in the bathrooms.

Lots of walking means comfortable shoes are a must!

Travel

- Don't get stranded: subways
 - close by midnight on the weekend, and by 11 pm weekdays.
- Jin Air currently offers five direct flights every week to



- Seoul from Okinawa (Sunday Friday). The flight is just over 2 hours, and lunch is included!
- Be assertive hailing taxis. Don't get overcharged
- because you're foreign and unaware. You
- shouldn't pay more than 25,000 won (about \$25 US) from one edge of the city to the other. Most cab rides are cheaper—between 4,000 and 10,000 won (about \$4-\$10).

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Looking for a quick getaway off island? Seoul is a cultural hotspot for sightseeing, tasty cuisine, and of course, incredible shopping. Here are 13 insider tips to help you save money and sanity in the South Korean capital.

Shopping Savvy



Double check items you're actually purchasing. An item might be different than what's on display, or even worse, there could be a defect even the seller is unaware of. If it's in plastic packaging, remove it and give it a good once over before leaving the vendor.

Cultural Notes

Bartering is okay in the big open markets (not retail

shopping centers). If you ask, you may get about 10% off the asking price (and actual price tags on goods are rare—you have to ask).

Dongdaemun's fashionable late night market consists of wholesalers who mostly sell to retailers buying in bulk. Because of this, fitting rooms are nonexistent (nor can you try on over clothes), and quite a few shops require that you buy 2 or more of an item.

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Korea has a different sizing system for shoes and clothing, including kids' clothes, and women's shoes (see left). Make sure you research and print out a size converter to prevent having to "guesstimate."

Don't spend all your time shopping--there are lots of amazing sights to see, like Seoul Tower, Jogye Buddhist Temple, and the Royal Changing of the Guard ceremony at Gyeongbokgung Palace (right).



Personal space is tiny. In crowded areas, you may be lightly pushed if you're in the way. This is the norm—don't get offended.

KORE

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Plan where you're going and maneuver through foot traffic to get there. If you wait for someone to let you pass, you'll be standing around (and in the way) for a while.





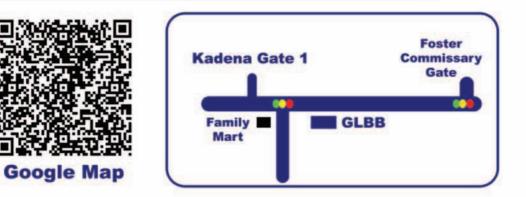
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Restaurant Review

Tapioca World

40 kinds of crepes and 39 different bubble tea drinks make the newest addition to American Village worth trying!

Although popular in Asia and cities worldwide, bubble tea or "boba" "pearls" bring to mind that awful pudding with bits too small to chew. The tapioca pearls in boba, however, are much bigger. They take on some of the flavor and sweetness of the drink they're added to, and are sucked up a big straw. The pearls are meant to be chewed on between sips, and their texture is not unlike gummy bears.



by Melissa Nazario

Tough Competition

American Village's newest kid on the block, Tapioca World, recently opened next to Partyland (formerly Yogurtland), a spot that has seen several restaurants come and go. With its focus only on bubble tea and crepes, can it compete against AV staples Partyland and Blue Seal, especially since Blue Seal also serves bubble tea and crepes alongside its famous ice cream?

Good value

Here's what we liked about Tapioca World: first, the prices are lower than Blue Seal's. Bubble tea at Blue Seal costs around ¥400 to ¥500, comes in one size, and some of the flavors taste, well, unappetizing—overly sour or somehow "off"—not a good value if you have to keep trying different flavors to find what you like. The few boba drinks we tried at Tapioca World were quite good. The caramel almond and ben-imo drinks still tasted like tea (as they should), and the peach smoothie (more like a fruit slush) was really refreshing on a hot day—we want to try the mango next. They come in regular or large sizes, and, overall, are a good value. We also liked that we could choose colored tapioca pearls instead of the dark brown ones.



Crepes

We tried the strawberry banana ice cream crepe, and again, liked that it was a bit cheaper than at Blue Seal. But it was just okay there was a lot of crepe pancake for the amount of filling, and the ice cream was so-so—Blue Seal definitely has an advantage here. It didn't much matter to us that they used tapioca flour, either. Still, at under ¥400, it was a novel treat to try at a decent price. They're also thinking of rolling out some açai berry menu items.

Like many Okinawan businesses, Tapioca World offers a point card, for discounts on future visits.

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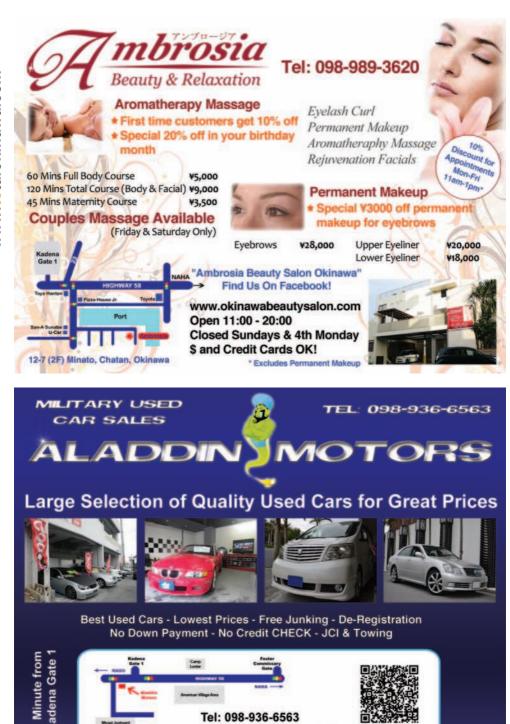
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Restaurant Review

by Melissa Nazario

Kan Nichi Kan

You don't have to travel off island to taste Korean cuisine—Okinawa has Korean barbecue and a few homestyle Korean restaurants to check out.

Kan Nichi Kan in Awase blends the barbecue-at-your-table experience with some authentic dishes, at a slightly better rate than some other yakiniku places.

Open from 3 to 11, Kan Nichi Kan's menu features about 15 different meats and a veggie plate to choose from, plus soups, rice, noodle salad, and bimbimbap, a mixed rice dish with fried egg, carrots, onions, seaweed, sesame, and spicy chili sauce. While tasty, we were a bit disappointed it came in a regular serving dish, and not the more customary sizzling cast iron bowl to crisp up the rice. Drinks and salad, pasta salad, and three kinds of kim chi were all self-serve and unlimited.

Know the Rules

Like other all you can eat restaurants, there are some rules. There's a

90 minute time limit on dinner (though they didn't hurry us along when we went over), and signs state they will charge extra if there are any leftovers. This makes trying more "exotic" meats, like pork tongue and tripe (pig intestine), a bit of a gamble, but we did enjoy all of the "safer" choices.

What We Liked

We do recommend the soft beef calbee, already soaked in its own marinade, and imagine the pork calbee would be just as tasty (we were too stuffed to try). The sirloin was also full of flavor, though a bit on the chewy side. The chicken was juicy and tender, especially in the savory soy dipping sauce provided. However, it took quite a while for the thick chunks to cook, probably the main reason we stayed for more than 90 minutes. All of the veggie plate, including the cabbage,



carrots, eggplant, and onion, were sweet and delicious after a few minutes on the grill.

¥ only

For ¥1800 a person, we certainly got our fill, and overall, the food was pretty good. As it's in Awase, just across from Sam's by the Sea, there are likely other Korean barbecue places near you that are just as good, if not better. However, if you're craving some of the more authentically Korean dishes, like kim chi and bimbimbap, then Kan Nichi Kan may be worth the trip.

40-13 Awase 1-Chome



Google Map & Directions

http://tiny.cc/kan-nichi





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