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# TOP5 NAHA SHOPPING SPOTS



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# TOP5 NAHA Shopping spots



Issue 19



The holidays are upon us, and you know what that means: parties, baking, and yes, shopping. In our cover story, we show you the best places in Naha to do your gift shopping. Also, don't miss "Derby Girls", about the sport that has found quite a following on island. We also have a review of the new shop Ha Ha Ha Cupcakes. Plus, we've got the latest dive report

and newest edition of Weird & Wonderful.



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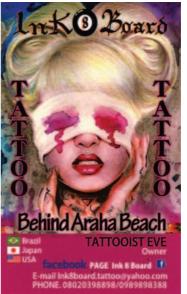
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## 9 FEATURE TOP 5 NAHA SHOPPING SPOTS

Derby Girls	4
Dive Report	6
Top 5 Naha Shop Spots	9
Weird & Wonderful	13
Ha Ha Ha Cupcakes	17







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by Melissa Nazario

# **Derby Girls**

Think you've got what it takes to be a part of derby? Actually, you do.

There's a saying in the roller derby world: "Give your wife her life back. Let her join roller derby." Roller derby, an all-women, full-contact sport on roller skates, has claimed the hearts of many females, in Okinawa and around the world. Go to a match, called a "bout", and you'll see why: these girls are gutsy. They whip down the track, careen around corners, push each other to get their jammer (the girl with the star on her helmet)



through the pack to score points, while blocking the other team. It's intense,

strategic, but fun, too. They have funny-yet-fierce derby names like "Tashya-Over," "The Lexicutioner," and "Knocka Hoedown." And, bouts often have a theme, like "Skeletons vs. Zombies," where teammates, coaches, and even the audience dress up in related costumes, tutus, and makeup. It's no wonder so many have caught the derby bug.

DDDD Photo: Jamie Snider

#### 5

KRD Photo: Frederick King

We Want You. . . to Join the Derby Family

Surprisingly, many of the women who effortlessly glide around the track hadn't skated for years, or had never skated before derby. Everyone who joins one of the two leagues on Okinawa, the Kokeshi Roller Dolls (KRD) and the Devil Dog Derby Dames (DDDD), has to undergo beginner training, where experienced skaters teach and support newbies until they can pass the minimum skills test. From there, they're drafted to one of the league's teams, with whom they start



KRD Photo: Frederick King

practicing for upcoming bouts.

Because of the flux of families moving on and off Okinawa, both leagues are constantly recruiting, not just for players, but also for (male and female) volunteer medics, skating and non-skating officials, and sponsors. But the turnover isn't all bad; it also means a possible influx of experienced players, and more opportunities to get involved here than elsewhere.

#### Making a Difference, One Bout at a Time

And that, after all, is what the sport is about. For all the bruises and bumps, the über-tough exteriors, derby really is about community. It's having your derby sisters' backs, on and off the track. It's building each other up, helping mates see that they have within themselves the strength and the guts to accomplish more than they ever thought they could. And it's about outreach—most times, the leagues put on bouts in partnership with local organizations, and all proceeds go to that organization's cause. With that kind of positive impact in the community, why wouldn't you get involved?



DDDD Photo: Jamie Snider

For more info, search "Devil Dog Derby Dames" & "Kokeshi Roller Dolls" on Facebook

4

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# to

# **Dive Update**

# **Cooler Months, Cooler Dives**

The final few breaths of the 2013 dive season are now upon us. Time to reflect on the great dives you had this year and continue enjoying the season as it progresses. Diving in the winter months as the ocean cools is still amazing. It's time to invest in a



thicker wetsuit or add a hooded vest to your summer suit and get back in the water. The winter season offers some of the best diving that Okinawa has and enjoying the cooler waters and unique sea life should be high on every diver's list.

Our most unique dives will be coming up in January and February as they do every year. Starting the first of the year, humpback whales will be making their way into the waters

surrounding Okinawa, and the schools of hammerhead sharks will be making their annual migration to Yonaguni island. Reef Encounters offers you the unique opportunity to swim with these gentle giants of the deep. The annual swim with whales tours will be starting in January and our first off island trip of the new year will be to dive with the hammerhead sharks and explore the ancient ruins of Yonaguni. Reservations and deposits for the Yonaguni trips are due soon so contact Reef Encounters now to ensure you have a seat on one of these once in a lifetime expeditions.

This is also a great time of year to increase your training level or even look at pursuing that professional level training that you have been thinking about. Reef Encounters will be offering specials on both Intro to Technical courses and all professional level courses to include Divemaster, Assistant Instructor and Instructor. Start your training now so you can be ready to teach your love of the ocean to new divers by the spring. Instructor training courses will be offered in February and March and contract instructors are needed for the upcoming season, so get your training started now.

Also our daily dives to the Kerama Islands and the surrounding dive sites of Okinawa continue year round so contact Reef Encounters for diving trips and boat dives to explore the underwater wonder of Okinawa.

Contact us now to schedule your course or trip at info@reefencounters.org!

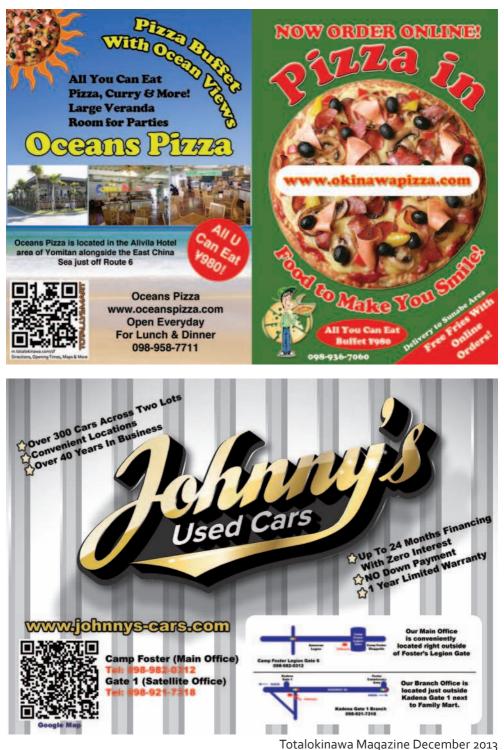
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# TOP5 NAHA SHOPPING SPOTS

'Tis the season for gift giving, holiday parties, and thankfully, cooler temperatures. It's also the perfect time to take a day trip and explore the island. Why not do some sight seeing *and* cross off a few names from your holiday shopping list?

We've selected the top spots for a shopping excursion in downtown Naha--all within walking distance of each other. So throw on your most comfortable walking shoes, and bring a camera, yen, and your shopaholic friends, because there's lots to see and buy in this unique urban landscape. It's easy to get to these Naha shopping hot spots. Just take 58 south and follow the signs for Kokusai--you can turn on Route 42 and park at an underground paid parking garage. Upstairs is Kokusai Street (Route 39) on the left and Palette Kumoji across the street. Our list follows the route we took when we went exploring--we hope you enjoy it as much as we did!



PALETTEKUMOJI If you only have time for one shopping center near Kokusai, Palette Kumoji, with a Ryubo department store, is it, with a variety of cute, modern gift ideas. As you walk in, the smell of melted chocolate and freshly baked pastries wafts through the 1st floor. Check out impeccably decorated confectionaries here--in Okinawan and Japanese culture, they're customary to give when invited to someone's house party.

> In the upstairs levels, lots of shops offer unique gifts, many at reasonable prices. Snatch up a leather handbag for less than ¥4000, or get that girly girl in



your life a bright, kawaii cosmetic pouch from AMA boutique. Don't miss the 7th floor, filled with booths of Okinawan arts and crafts, kimono, and artisans at work.

KOKUSAIDORI

Kokusai Dori, literally "International Street," is Okinawa's most famous boulevard, and unlike any other in the world. The street's 1.6 kilometers are filled with vibrantly colored shops, restaurants, bars, and crowds of people. This is the place to find shisa figurines, treats made with pineapple and ben-imo, Okinawa's purple potato, plus island and surf wear, t-shirts for



your dog, and lots, lots more. Be sure to have your camera ready--there are photo ops everywhere you turn.

**MITSUKOSHIMALL** Find Mitsukoshi Mall about halfway down Kokusai. It's smaller than Ryubo, but there are designer goods on the 1st floor, like Gucci sunglasses, Coach purses, and Shiseido products. Most floors offer clothing styled for women, not juniors. Worth checking out: the home goods and kimono displays on the 6th floor, and bingata and woven fabric, Ryukyu glass, jewelry, and other Okinawan crafts on the 7th floor.



## **HEIWA**DORI

On the southeast side of Kokusai Dori, just across from Mitsukoshi, there are three large, covered shopping alleys, or "arcades." Heiwa Dori, literally "Peace Street," is the largest and most interesting of the three. Expect to see lots of traditional Okinawan souvenirs, like habu sake, awamori, Ryukyu glass, and even gift packs of Orion beer. There are also clothes, glass figurines, precious stones and jewelry, and lots more. We



scored a pretty bracelet made from howlite and a bead of blue Okinawan sea glass.



And, don't miss out on trying the unique Yukisio salt ice cream shop, near the entrance of Heiwadori. Choose a cup or cone of vanilla soft serve, then sprinkle one of six flavored salts, including black sesame, wasabi, chili pepper, and green tea. Pitchers of water are available, but you might want to keep your water bottle handy.

## **TSUBOYA**DISTRICT

As you browse along Heiwadori, be sure to keep to the left of the alleyway, and soon you'll come out to a road that leads directly to the



I that leads directly to the Tsuboya Pottery District. Even if you're not in the market for ceramics, you don't want to miss Tsuboya. With its traditional tile roof houses, cobble stone roads, and displays



of glazed earthenware, this is a great place to take pictures, or just stroll around, taking

in the charming scenery.

It's hard to believe this quiet neighborhood is just a short walk from modern, bustling Kokusai.

Before you go, check out the locations of all the shopping areas on our Naha Shopping Google Map here:







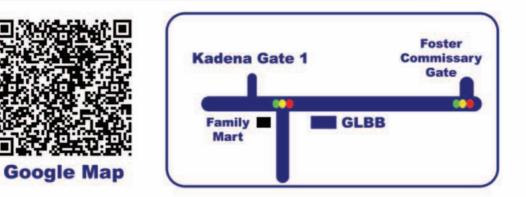
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# Weird and Won<mark>derful Japan</mark>

#### Another Kennedy Makes History

Caroline Kennedy, daughter of late President John F. Kennedy, is the first woman to be named the U.S. ambassador to Japan. The Japanese government hopes her ties with President Obama will help them tackle pressing U.S.-Japan issues. Her connection to Obama dates to 2008, when she endorsed him in the Democratic primaries, instead of thenfavorite Hillary Clinton.

#### **High-Tech Medicine**

Japanese medics are able to assess the health of Typhoon Haiyan victims in the Philippines, using newly developed mobile X-ray kits. This is the first time in history such technology has been used in a disaster zone. Created shortly after the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami hit Japan in March 2011, these kits can instantly look inside patients, and even enlarge on a touchscreen using iPad-like gestures.

#### Don't Touch That Cream Puff!



A 6o-year old female teacher in Osaka faces charges for lacing a cream puff pastry with a strong sedative and giving it to a colleague, a 4o-year old female music teacher.

After eating the pastry, the woman fell ill, became unconscious, and was taken to the hospital. Police report that the suspect admitted she felt the way the other teacher conducted her music lessons was all wrong, and thought that it'd be great if she were no longer at the school.

#### And the Winner Is. . .

Japan is giving celebrities awards for all kinds of things these days. Pop singer Rino Sashihara and actor Yusuke Yamamoto recently received the Best Smile of the Year Awards 2013, to coincide with Good Teeth Day on November 8th. And, the Japan Nailist Association recently announced the winners of their "Nail Queens 2013" awards, given to celebrities with the best nail art.

#### Females can be bullies, too

Two girls were taken into custody in Fukuoka for beating up and robbing a 12-year old girl. The young girl told police that the two older girls, aged 14 and 15, grabbed her hair and kicked her violently, then stole the money from her purse, a mere ¥2500. The two girls face charges of assault, battery, and larceny.

#### **Ex-Wrestler Faces Penalties**

Lawmaker and former Japanese pro wrestler Antonio Inoki faces disciplinary action, including a 50-day suspension, for visiting North Korea in November. Although Inoki visited the country several times during his wrestling career, as a lawmaker he needs to obtain permission from the Diet to make overseas visits.

#### Fake Autographs Fraud Thousands Police in Chiba arrested a 51-year-old man, his ex-wife her daughter for forging signatures of 8 pop groups onto about 3,700 pieces of merchandise. Police became suspicious when they saw the 20-year old daughter's bank account had 3,300 transactions in 10 months. The trio scammed fans out of about ¥6,700,000!





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15

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FOR RENT

# **Restaurant Review**



## Ha Ha Ha Cupcakes

#### Pretty cupcakes in a petite shop. But how do they taste? Read on!

Okinawa's commercial landscape is dotted with neighborhood bakeries and patisseries, offering an array of beautifully decorated pastries for different tastes. So a business focusing only on cupcakes is a novelty, and a risk. Is there enough selection to appease those who like super-sweet, and those who prefer the subtlety of Okinawan donuts?

Just south of the Ginowan bypass on 58, one sweet shop has replaced another—the large bee sign for the Okinawan honey store is now adorned



with a monkey holding a pink cupcake. The name: "Ha Ha Ha" It's a sweet time with Cupcakes! The *kawaii* style is repeated in the cupcake shaped entrance, and inside the little shop, from pastel walls and cupcake accessories for purchase (cupcake displays, paper liners, and plush cupcakes), to brightly frosted cupcakes on display and little pink carriers for transport. Two small tables sit off to the side.

Though 10 or so varieties of cupcakes, with mounds of rich buttercream, looked almost too cute to eat, it's important to note that there are only two kinds of cake: vanilla and chocolate. These cupcakes are not moist and fluffy, nor very sweet or strongly flavored, but instead dense and dry, almost like bread. If that's not what you want in a cupcake, you're better off saving the ¥250 to ¥350 per cupcake to make your own recipe.

From the chocolate or vanilla cake base, Ha Ha Ha Ha then jazzes them up with different flavors of colored buttercream and toppings. The strawberry shortcake had a sweet ribbon of berry syrup over the pile of white frosting, and the chunks of shortbread cookie sprinkled on top were moist, not crispy, no doubt from sitting in frosting. The peanut butter flavor, again, is a dense vanilla cake, topped with peanut butter frosting, a drizzle of caramel, and some peanut chunks. The signature Ha Ha Ha cupcake uses the vanilla cake and tops it with pink strawberry flavored frosting, star shaped sprinkles, and a mini Oreo cookie.

The chocolate mocha cupcake was most surprising. A thick layer of espresso powder hits the tastebuds first—bitter, then sour, before the buttercream's sweetness comes through. Coffee bean shaped chocolates on top mostly just add more sweetness. The dark cake below was dry, slightly dense, and not very sweet, almost like an Oreo cookie.

Because the cupcakes are topped with so much sweet frosting, we imagine Ha Ha Ha created their barely flavored cake more as a contrast, or even as a vehicle for the frosting. Perhaps like sandwich bread, it's not supposed to steal the show. Also available are hot and iced coffee, and fruit smoothies that are more slushy than creamy; at ¥600, though, the smoothies are quite pricey for what you get.



more photos : www.totalokinawa.com

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Italian Sausage M ¥1800 L ¥2700 Four Cheese M ¥1200 L ¥2000 Pepperoni M ¥1100 L ¥1800 Margherita M ¥1300 L ¥2200

#### Pizza Size M-29cm L-36cm

Mexican M ¥1500 L ¥2300 Hawaiian M ¥1300 L ¥2200 Spicy Sausage M ¥1300 L ¥2200

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teak Sandwich

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**Bacon Cheese** 

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#### **Two Pancakes & Hot** Coffee Sets:

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