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April & May 2014



EXPLORE THE NORTH



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Explore The North

totalokinawa CONTENTS APRIL & MAY 2014

Issue 21



As the warmer weather brought back some of your wanderlust? Get out and see what the north side of Okinawa Island has to offer, from the popular, to not-so-popular spots. Or, get off island completely: don't miss our guide on a quick trip to Kyoto. Also in this issue, we

review Kramp Coffee in Awase, Fuu Cafe and Yaedake bakery. Plus, check out the latest dive report and newest edition of Weird & Wonderful. You can view the magazine online at: www. totalokinawa.com



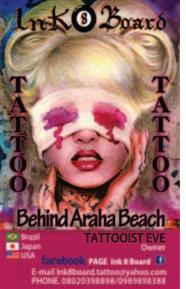
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by Melissa Nazario

Quick Trip: Kyoto

Japan's old capital city merges urban modernity and traditional beauty



Traveling from Okinawa to Kyoto has become more affordabe than ever, thanks to Peach Airlines. You can easily find round trip tickets to Kansai Airport in Osaka, the closest international airport to Osaka, for less than ¥10,000. Sign up for their email alerts, and you'll find that prices can dip as low as ¥2,000, oneway.

From Kansai to Kyoto

At Kansai Airport, you'll have to find transportation to Kyoto. There are trains at the airport that you can take to Osaka

Fushimi InariTaisha

There are trains at the airport that you can take to Osaka station, from which you can transfer to Kyoto. There are also buses

to take you directly to Kyoto station. As Kyoto's about 2 hours away from Kansai, a taxi is not recommended. Beware if you take a late flight into Osaka; by 11:30 pm, all buses and trains will have left for the night, and you could be stranded in Osaka until the next day.

What to See

On a short trip, there's not enough time to see all the traditional shrines in Kyoto, so visit ones that will make a lasting impression. *Fushimi Inari Taisha* tops the list, boasting thousands of red *torii* gates of different sizes throughout winding stairs. It's free to enter and only a few stops away from Kyoto train station. *Kinkaku-ji*, the golden pavilion in the middle of a lake, is also gorgeous, but there's a fee to get in. Also impressive is the celebrated *Kiyo-mizudera*, a huge compound with shrines, shops and its main tourist attraction, a fountain believed to grant wishes if you drink from one of its



Arashiyama Bamboo Forest



streams. It also has a fee.

Besides checking out shrines, don't miss walking through the bamboo forest in the charming *Arashiyama* district--the fresh smell and sound of bamboo leaves shirring in the wind are the epitome of peacefulness. We'd also be remiss if we didn't mention a visit to *Gion*, the traditional district known for *geisha* and traditional tea houses.

One final tip: souvenirs are both expensive and typical of what you'd find in Okinawa, so save your money for tours and meals, or keep it and just load up on photos!

4 Geisha





Dive Update

Humpbacks & hammerheads are here

The weather is warming up and the dive season in Okinawa is about to get into full swing. It's time to clean the dust off that dive gear and get back in the water. For those



of us that have been braving the chilly winter waters of Okinawa it's time to put those hoods and thick wetsuits away and dig those shorties and rash guards out of the dive locker. As the water warms up the crowds will be flocking back to the most popular spots on Okinawa. Remember that if you have taken a few months off from diving, to take it slow, or better yet contact one of the pros at Reef Encounters to schedule a refresher course to make sure you can plan those dives correctly and still recall all those emergency procedures. For those divers

switching to summer weight wetsuits remember to adjust those weights belts accordingly. As divers come on back to the usual haunts of Maeda Misaki and Sunabe Seawall make 2014 your year to explore. Okinawa has hundreds of dive sites both on the East and West coast and many more as you take boat dives out to the surrounding islands. Your exploration of the underwater world of Okinawa should includes such sites as Rukan Atoll, Yonguni, Aka-jima, Kume, Tokashiki, Ie, Ikei and the many other spots that divers do not visit on a regular basis. Join the Reef Encounters Dive Team on Facebook to keep up to date on scheduled trips or contact us to schedule a private tour of any of the surrounding islands or dive spots.

Also if your gear has been sitting in storage for a few months make sure you check things over before jumping in. Check fin and mask straps for wear and change if necessary, blow up your BC and ensure it holds air, ensure power inflators operate smoothly without sticking, check hoses on regulators for cracking or dry rot, make sure you check under those hose protectors, inspect mouthpieces for tears and pinholes and make sure regulators are not free flowing and that they are breathing smoothly. If you have any doubts about your gear bring it in to get professionally inspected.

As the water warms up it's also a great time to get certified to dive if you have not already, sign up now to avoid the summer rush. Classes start daily at Reef Encounters- contact us now to start your class today!

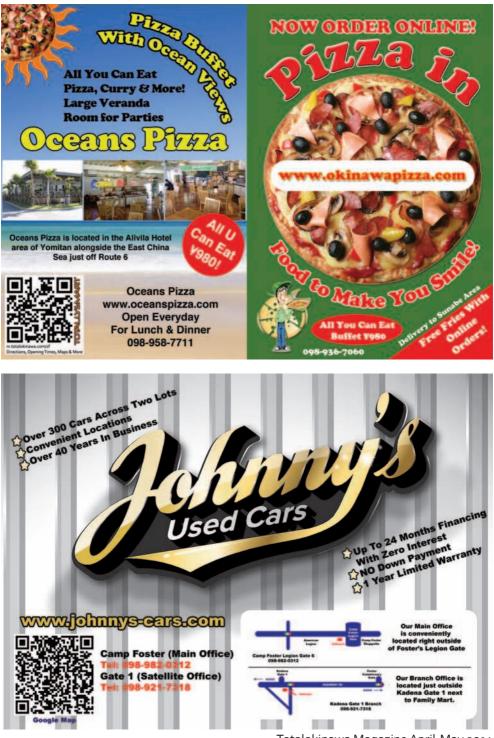
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Restaurant Review

Fuu Cafe

Natural organic cafe nestled on Sesoko Island

A lthough not a patch on the pace of life on the mainland and back home, sometimes central Okinawa can get a bit overwhelming, the crush

of 58 during rush hour and seemingly more and more concrete buildings every day. If this sounds familiar then taking a trip up North may be the answer, where the scenery rapidly changes and once you get past Nago the traffic eases off.



Nestled amongst the greenery on the tiny island of Sesoko with a population of only around goo people is the delightful Fuu Cafe. It prides itself on it's natural organic ingredients used in the menu with many items coming directly from the garden next to the cafe. It's simply decorated inside with lots of wood, a veranda outside and a large garden with parasols and a



children's play area.

The menu is varied with sandwiches, soups, pizza and daily specials. We had the homemade smoked porked pizza which really surprised us with both the freshness and the smooth, smoky taste of the pork. We just wished there was more of it! There's also freshly made cakes if you have room afterwards.

Whatever the time of day, the coffee here

makes a great accompaniment to your meal as they roast their own beans producing a blend that is smooth without any bitter overtones.

Just down the road is a beautiful natural beach as long as you keep facing towards the sea. Why facing? Because the massive abandoned Sesoko Beach Resort hotel remains as a concrete monument to the financial crash that hit in 2008.

There's an English menu so ordering isn't a problem. It can get very busy in Summer so be prepared to wait for a table at peak times. Hours: 11am to sundown. Food is served from 11.30 to 4pm. Closed on Wednesdays and Thursdays



http://tiny.cc/fuucafe

Sesoko Island

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EXPLORE THE NORTH

CHURAUMI AQUARIUM

Every guide to northern Okinawa would be incomplete without the Churaumi Aquarium. Home to a dolphin show with Okinawa touches, plus manatees, turtles, sharks, sting rays and whale sharks, it's no wonder the aquarium is Okinawa's most famous attraction. There's also a huge playground of nets for kids and large topiary animals. We recommend bringing lunch and grabbing it from the car when you get hungry, as the food vendors are limited.

PINEAPPLE PARK

If you'd rather explore while indoors, enjoy a mostly-indoor park dedicated to Okinawa's favorite fruit--the pineapple. The entrance fee includes an educational tour via pineapple car of the compound's crops and gardens (in English), a large seashell exhibit, and lots of gift shops and samples, including pineapple-flavored wine, chocolate, cakes and fresh fruit.

BIOS ON THE HILL

Part botanical garden, part cultural center, this park features stunning flowers and plants grown in subtropical Okinawa, plus goats and water buffalo. Play on the wooden swings, jungle gyms, or try out traditional Japanese toys, including stilts. Unless your Japanese comprehension is good, skip the boat tour, which is an additional fee. Bring yen for admission, lunch or snacks, and any purchases in the gift shop or nursery, which includes gorgeous orchids, vanilla and more.



Springtime in Okinawa provides plenty of temperate weather, perfect for getting outside and exploring. The northern side of Okinawa offers much to see and do, from outdoor parks to cute cafés and restaurants. Check out our list of favorite places to visit on the northside, including must-see tourist spots and off-the-beaten-path places to tell your friends about.

YAE MOUNTAIN

Mt. Yae is famous for the cherry blossom or "Sakura" that appears every spring time on the trees that line the winding road taking you higher and higher to the summit. When it's not cherry blossom season Mt. Yae is still worth a trip both for the views across to the sea from the top as well as to see a wilder part of Okinawa and get a good lungful of clean air. Work up an appetite then check out Yaedake bakery!





BAKERY YAEDAKE

If you're tired of the artificial white breads that are common in most of the central Okinawan supermarkets then on your trip up North you must stop in at Yaedake bakery to sample their wholemeal breads. With no added junk, up to 80% wheat flour and natural ingredients such as olive oil, nuts and dried fruits it makes a delicious, healthy stop on your journey. The view's not bad as well!

SESOKO ISLAND CAFE

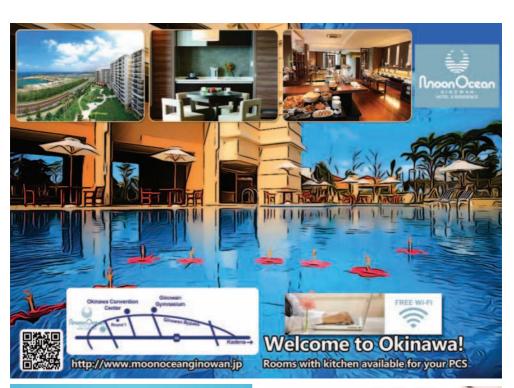


Nestled amongst the lush greenery on the tiny island of Sesoko is Fuu Cafe. A popular choice with both locals and tourists the cafe serves up simple tasty dishes, often using locally grown ingredients in a beautiful natural setting. If it's not too hot

there's a covered veranda with chairs and tables as well as a children's play area. The coffee's really the star here as they roast their own beans making it a good excuse for coffee lovers.



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

Wakata becomes first space station commander from Japan

Japanese astronaut Koichi Wakata made history March 9 when he became the first Japanese astronaut to assume command of the International Space Station. His fourth space mission, Wakata will oversee a space crew of six members until May.

Lawson raises base pay

Convenience store Lawson recently announced it would raise the base pay



for employees by approximately 1%, the first time in 12 years. The announcement comes on the heels of labor negotiations. While certainly a victory for employees,

it's also a bit sad to know that their pay hasn't changed for more than a decade.

Seven students face charges over classmate suicide

An 18-year old from Fukuoka prefecture wrote a letter on his phone, identifying seven students who bullied him at a private school, and later jumped off a building to his death. His message ended with "I will never forgive them." Police used this letter and a complaint made by the student's parents to summon the seven named students, who allegedly beat him and shoved a still-boiling egg into his mouth. Perhaps punitive measures will alert other would-be bullies that their actions will not be tolerated. Economy slows as tax hike looms

The figures are not looking good for Japan's economy, which grew just 0.2% in the quarter ending December 2013, much slower than expected. Many fear that with the new sales tax hike, which will help decrease the deficit, will also decrease consumer spending and have a detrimental effect on the nation's recovery.

Murder suspect wanted to create his own version of the 9/11 attack A 24-year old man arrested for allegedly stabbing one man and wounding three others in Chiba prefecture March 10 admitted he wanted to hijack a plane from Haneda and fly it into Tokyo Skytree to avenge society. Fortunately, police detained him before he could attempt such a feat. Even more creepy: when police found him in his apartment with the bloody knife, he allegedly said, "Checkmate."

Airline uniform raises eyebrows,

concern

Japanese budget airline Skymark recently unveiled an unusual tactic to attract new customers: mini-skirts for female flight attendants. The cabin crew labor union complained that the uniform, which barely covered employees' thighs, was a problem, not only because it would lead to sexual harassment, but also because it treated women like a commodity. Skymark president Shinishi Nishikubo back-pedaled in response, saying that no employee would be required to wear it if she refused.



Restaurant Review

Yaedake Bakery

Freshly baked REAL bread on a mountain!

f you're committed to eating healthily while in Okinawa or maybe that New Years' resolution is still holding firm, then finding good quality food with known ingredients can be something of a challenge in Okinawa. There's a lot of tasty food on the island,



but knowing what you are eating and making informed decisions can be hard.

Whatever your views on whether carbs are good or bad in your diet, there's a world of difference between the wholemeal bread you'll find at Yaedake bakery and the fat laden bread in the local supermarket.

Yaedake

bakery has been in existence since 1977 and is perched almost atop Mt. Yae in the Motobu area of Okinawa, famous for the cherry blossom trees. There's nothing else around but once you walk inside not only does the amazing smell hit you but also the scale of the bakery. They sell their baked goods all over Okinawa and on one side of the building is the bakery and on the right is the packing room.



Racks of fresh baked bread

The reason you're here though is for the racks of fresly baked

bread right in front of you as you open the door. Everything is good, but probably their signature breads are the rolls and loafs made from mostly wheat flour. They have breads with up to 80% whole wheat flour with no added junk as well as fruit and nut breads with 50% whole wheat, all freshly baked.

They had fresh wholemeal apple turnovers when we visited and apart from the delicious taste, you can kid yourself that you're at least being



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part healthy as they're wholemeal and not bleached flour!

We strongly reccomend you use a GPS and the pin we dropped in the Google map below as this isn't the easiest place to find on your first visit!

Hours: Sunday - Friday 10:00 - 17:00 (Closed Saturday) Best time for fresh bread around 12:00



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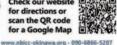
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FOR RENT

Restaurant Review

by Chris Mabry

Kramp Coffee

Enjoy coffee and more in a relaxed setting in Awase.

When life gets busy, sometimes it's important to set aside time to disengage and re-center. Finding calm amid the chaos of working daily, raising children and pursuing our goals is certainly no easy task, but having the right atmosphere and good vibes can certainly be a good start. Kramp Coffee store in Awase is one of the few places in Okinawa that can be said to have both of these features, in addition to great food and excellent service.

This charming treasure, tucked away in the tranquil neighborhood of Awase, is certainly a place that anyone seeking

a little solace would be delighted to find. The moment you enter, Kramp's comfortable and open aesthetics make you feel as if you've left your troubles outside.

The owners and staff are amiable and quick to deliver your order. Kramp offers a much needed divergence from the over-crowded atmosphere and unimaginative and repetitive, bland menus of chain coffee stores. Their menu features a wide variety of familiar coffees, lattés, and other coffeerelated drinks, all done with a unique twist that gives each cup a distinct and bold flavor.

More than just coffee

Coffee is not the only thing that Kramp has to offer. Much of the menu consists of different smoothies and assorted beverages that have seldom been seen on the menus of other coffee stores.

Kramp's food is delightfully simple, yet remarkably flavorful and satisfying. The store features breakfast and lunch menus, each offering some old favorites and some new tastes to discover. The breakfast platter has eggs and bacon but also includes potato salad and a several other items.

Kramp's breakfast also has what may be the best French toast in all of Okinawa. The French toast comes with whipped cream, maple syrup and a scoop of vanilla ice cream. Additionally, the sautéed pork and rice makes a great afternoon meal that is sure to satisfy.

If ever you need to get out of the house for some rest and relaxation,

or are simply looking for a nice place to stop for a bite to eat, be sure to check out Kramp Coffee store in Awase.







Video review and photos at www.totalokinawa.com

Coupons



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