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lfate Night: Okinawan-Style

The "newness" of 2016 has worn off. Resolutions have been made, and perhaps broken. Are you back to your same-old, same-old routine? Need some ideas on what to do to get out and enjoy the island? In this issue, we've compiled a list of our favorite date night ideas, and the "date" part is optional! We also break down all the details of those "love hotels" you've heard about, so you know what to expect. And, sometimes you just need a new restaurant to try. Be sure to read our reviews on Ayurveda and Green River Cafe. And don't miss our dive report from Reef Encounters as well as Weird & Wonderful. You can view the magazine online at:

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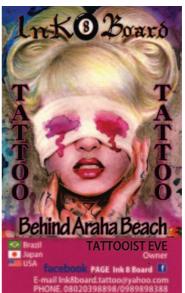
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## **Restaurant Review**

by Louise Dupuy

## Ayurveda

Authentic Indian cuisine in the Koza area



Ayurveda is a small restaurant located just opposite Koza Music town. It's been open about three months and, being a lover of Indian cuisine, I thought I'd go along and try it out. I was not disappointed.

When I say I love Indian food, I mean it's my favourite thing to eat, so I'm always eager to try new places. Ayurveda is owned and run by a very nice Indian gentleman, and the food they serve is simply wonderful. It's small, I'd say it seats less than 30, but don't let this put you off. It's clean, bright and welcoming. Upon arrival the owner himself greeted and seated, which is a nice, personal touch.

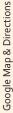
Now, down to the good stuff: the food. The selection isn't

vast, as they are new, but it's varied enough to accommodate everyone, including the vegetarian in your party. You can choose from one of the set meals, or choose your own curries and sides. I

was particularly hungry, so I went with a chicken curry and a lentil dish, as well as rice and naan. A choice of spice level is available on each dish too, which is something I've never seen at other Indian restaurants. The curries were as I hoped, right level of spice for my taste, but with emphasis on variety of flavour. Everything is freshly cooked, and the taste dances on your tongue. Sublime. They have a variety of soft drinks and alcohol, as well as lassi (a traditional Indian drink made with yogurt; I highly recommend the mango!) and chai served hot or cold (another Indian drink, a tea mixed with masala spices, which is also worth a try if you haven't already).

Price is fair; you get what you pay for. It isn't a cheap dinner out, but it won't break the bank either. It would be a great place to head for a special occasion, like a birthday or anniversary.







https://goo.gl/maps/rF57mAcdWFm









## **Dive Update**

### The return of the gentle giants

Pebruary brings the giants of the Pacific into Okinawan waters. Humpback whale season is in full swing with mothers and calves frolicking in the waters of the Keramas and surrounding islands of Okinawa. These gentle giants will be gracing our waters for the next 2 months at least as the mothers come to the warm waters of the Keramas to give birth



and have the calves fatten up before heading back to the cooler waters north of mainland Japan and beyond. Night diving is also a special treat this time of year as the singing of the male humpback whales can be heard resonating throughout the dive sites in Okinawa. The purpose of these songs is not known, but it is believed that they may be used to attract a mate or maybe just like many people they just have to sing! Although songs can be heard during the day, the best time to hear these distinct haunting melodies is on calm nights at dive sites such as Zampa Misaki and Maeda Misaki, where they can be clearly heard.

In other exciting dive news, Reef Encounters shop is receiving a full makeover and will be totally outfitted with all your diving needs, from regulators to wetsuits. Reef Encounters will be stocking the full line up of Dive Rite gear, Shearwater computers, selected fins and masks from Gull, wetsuits, booties, Fantasea cameras and housing, and for those wanting a little bit more out of their underwater shooting, the full line of Nauticam housings and ports. We will be supporting both the tech and recreational diver and also have a full line of sidemount gear to complete your gear lineup. Please stop in and see our gear lineup and talk to our professional staff to get you outfitted with the best gear available.

Also coming this month are training classes for decompression techniques, divemaster, and instructor courses. For those wanting to teach diving this summer, now is the time to get your professional level training completed. For those divers looking to increase their training specials on classes and training, packages are available.

www.reefencounters.org

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Vate Night. Einawan Styl

Date night is often a mainstay for many happy relationships. Why not show that special person in your life a date never to be forgotten? Check out our picks of what Okinawa has to offer. We've also included prices and a link to a map to make planning your special day super easy.



## Love Hotels

Price: varies by hotel and length of stay

Love hotels are a great way to connect on a one-on-one level, and with so many to choose from (approximately 120 on Okinawa), you are spoilt for choice. Go with Water Hotel Ry for ultimate luxury and complete anonymity. See our article on love hotels for more info.

## Moon Beach Resort

Price: from ¥1500 for entrance, parking and day pass (activities are extra). Rooms start from ¥9720.

Private beach, hotel, great food, shops and activities, need I say more? Treat your sweetie to a day or a whole weekend, and soak up all it has to offer. Located in Onna.



Lily Festival



Price: Free. but to access you need to take the ferry from Motobu port. Round trip is ¥1370 yen per adult.

Why not take in a traditional Okinawan festival? The lily festival on le island is seasonal: late April to early May. One million lilies blanket 86,000 square metres in a stunning display of colour. Why not stay in a local hotel and make a weekend of it?

## Shuri lastle

Price: ¥600 per adult, Discounts for students and large groups available. Children under 5 are free.

Take a trip into the past at the stunning Shuri Castle. Discover life as royalty in the 14th century Ryukyu Kingdom. It's also amazing to see at night all lit up.



## Yotsudake Hinner Show

Price: From \(\frac{1}{3675}\) for 12 dishes, up to \(\frac{1}{36400}\) for an 18-dish set

Foodies, look no further. Enjoy traditional Okinawan cuisine and Ryukyu dancers in a stunning setting and convenient location. It's open year-round for dinner shows at 6:30 and 8:30 pm.



Price: ¥600 yen per adult, including Jeep tour

Here's another quirky date idea: why not take in Nago Pineapple Park? Learn how one of Okinawa's biggest exports is grown, then indulge yourself in one (or several) of the many pineapple-themed samples. I recommend the pineapple wine and cake! Price: 600 yen per adult, including Jeep tour.

for a map to all these locations. go to <a href="http://tiny.cc/DateSpotsOki">http://tiny.cc/DateSpotsOki</a> or simply scan this QR code with a QR reader app on your smart phone:







# Weird and Wonderful Japan

#### How about Fred?

A team of Japanese scientists recently earned the right to name an element on the periodic table they developed, a first for Asian scientists. I guess "element 113" is a bit too generic.

### Kohaku's ratings down

The once-popular New Year's singing show reached an all-time low in ratings this year, capturing just 39.2% of viewership. Producers are optimistic that more surprises and ingenuity can recapture audiences, others call it a "sign of the times" that people have more interesting things to do on New Year's.

#### The search for Sumire

More than 20 zoo staff in Shizuoka can breathe a sigh of relief, after finding their missing red panda Sumire in a bamboo tree near the zoo, munching on leaves. Perhaps she just wanted some fresh air and fresh food!

### Take a number, MyNumber

The governments use of it's new social security number system has begun, despite worries over security after cyber attacks against the Japan Pension Service led to leaks of personal information of more than 100,000 records in May. Perhaps one day governments will learn to put enough safeguards in place well before implementing a program.



## (to) Business Review

by Louise Dupuy

## **Love Hotels**

Enjoy a mini stay-cation and an experience you're unlikely to forget!

Oulity time with your significant other can be hard to come by in today's fast-paced lifestyle.

This rings especially true in Japan, where often families coexist in one- or two-room dwellings. What's the answer? Love hotels. This is a godsend to those wanting a few hours of time away without breaking the bank. Let me tell you how.

#### What is a love hotel?

It's simply a place to rent a room hourly or for a set time. In Okinawa, there are roughly 120 of them, so they are quite popular. They range from 500 yen an hour for a really basic room to 8,000 yen for a few hours in an upscale one.

#### How do they work?

In general, you park either in an enclosed parking lot and enter the hotel, or in a single garage, and enter the room without passing through reception. Smaller hotels use the garage system, great for privacy and anonymity (two things Japanese people crave in this type of establishment). Larger hotels use private lots (usually because they're multi-story), and have more room choices. Generally, the reception desk is unmanned, but staff can be called. A kiosk with screen will show pictures of rooms that are lit if available. Clicking an image shows details and prices, and once you select a room, some kiosks print tickets. Note the room number and floor, and off you go. Rooms are unlocked automatically; there are no keys. Leave your shoes in the small entrance of the room (this also has a machine to pay after your stay, with yen or credit card). In the smaller, garage-style hotels, simply park, use the button on the wall to close the garage door (sometimes they're automatic), and wait for the room door to be unlocked. There's a phone on the wall to call for assistance, but prices are displayed on posters. Again, remove shoes at the door before you enter. In these, there will be another door at the opposite end of the room with a small hatch to pay at the end of your stay. My advice is to always have yen, and if you aren't fluent in Japanese, to possibly bring a dictionary, or expect to muddle through with staff, as many aren't well-versed in English.

#### What can I expect?

Facilities vary, but most have a big bed, seating area with TV, bathroom, as well as hygiene products, bathrobes, pay-per-view shows (mostly adult), prophylactics, and what we will politely call "marital aids." Those are in a little cabinet, locked, that you feed yen to open, like a vending machine. Rooms are clean, quiet and private, and most have shutters or heavy drapes over windows. Some even have themed rooms, so you can indulge your imagination! There aren't many rules, but you are expected to behave in such a manner so as not to disturb other guests.

#### Where can I find one?

All over! But for the most part, your best bet if you are looking for a cheap night and lots of choice, is route 22 through Awase. This road is known as Love Hotel Alley, and at night is a sea of neon. Once you've been to one, you start noticing them all over the place. They are quite distinct!

I think these are a truly wonderful idea, they give people whose time and privacy is at a minimum the chance to unwind and enjoy quality time, far removed from daily life. Make date night an adventure!



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## **Restaurant Review**

by Louise Dupuy

### Green River Café

A diamond in the rough



Green River Café can be found nestled behind Naka hospital in Kadena town. It's a quaint, sweet little building with a modest car park and a peaceful location. After getting past the entry, you're greeted immediately by a bar and a very cheerful staff member (maybe even the owners, who are equally as cheerful). I chose to sit outside, as it was a lovely, mild evening, but did note inside seating looked comfy, clean and I particularly liked the music that played throughout.

Outside was beautifully lit up with pretty fairy lights, and each table got their own personal lanterns by which to read the

menu or gaze into their date's or friends' eyes. During the day you get a view of the river that runs alongside, so feel free to share your meal (or just your time), with the wildlife that inhabits it. On to the food. They serve a mix of Japanese, American and Filipino food. There's a good assortment of starters (I went with the cheese sticks and sautéed garlic mushroom, both delicious), mains, and if you aren't stuffed, desserts. I went with grilled chicken in tomato sauce, and opted for fries (there is a choice) as my side dish. My companion went with the cheese hamburger steak, and opted for rice. The food came out well presented and smelt great. Tasted

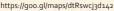
even better, the sauce was freshly made and the portions were ample. We skipped dessert, but I did spy the dessert chiller as we entered earlier, and it was glistening with what looked like some very fine cakes and sweet treats.

Drinks-wise, they had a pretty extensive list. The bar is well stocked, serving beers, wines, spirits, and cocktails. Soft drinks and fruit juices are also available for non-drinkers, kids, or designated drivers.

Let's talk price. It's not a cheap eats place, but you get what you pay for, which is good quality food. I would put it at midrange, and ideal for a romantic meal with your sweetie-pie. It has a lovely, laid back atmosphere, so it would suit a group of friends, work colleagues or a business meeting too. Live music is

a prominent feature here, so make an entire evening out of it with a meal before dancing the night away (and singing along, too, after 2 or 3 glasses of wine!).







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