

SCHILLING COMMUNITY CENTER

Hiking Guide to Okinawa

Are you looking for a new adventure on Okinawa? If hiking and exploring the outdoors is your idea of a good time, then this guide is for you. The REACH Center and some friends discovered some of Okinawa's hidden trails with the help of Yoshi Higa from the Okinawa Mountaineering Club. Follow this guide as we explore both the Pacific and East China Sea side of Okinawa. Don't forget to bring your compass and mosquito repellent.

#1. Historical Yamada stone bridge and observatory **45 min. Long, but not hard**

Head north from Kadena on Hwy. 58 past the turn for Hwy. 6 and the Ryu-Kyu Mura Village. Before coming to the Ramada Renaissance Hotel there is an ESSO gas station on your right. Go to the first light past the gas station and turn right. You will see a concrete bank on the left and a very narrow paved ramp leading up the hill. This road has a white guard rail along the right side. Go up this. There is a place to park on your left at the top of the ramp. Follow the arrow to the left. The next sign you come to points to a well that was used to bath newborn children. Continue following the main path noting a shrine on the right nestled in a bamboo forest. At the top of the hill is a house which is occupied by an American family. The trail to the right takes about 30 min. to hike and goes to the observatory for a spectacular view of the East China Sea and Pacific Ocean. There are three turns to be aware of going to the observatory. Begin by going down a small hill. Note the entrance to a cave on your right. The road splits into 3 paths, take the second or middle path to the right which goes slightly up hill. At the next fork you come to, go right. Note a wooden sign on your left with a red triangle painted on it. When you are almost at the observatory (30 min. later) the path T's, go left. There is a sign nailed to a tree to your left that says "La Luge". The view is worth the climb. The trail to the left takes you down some stairs to an old stone bridge. The sign at the bridge tells how the bridge was once broken and how the government repaired it in 1989 for its historical preservation.

#2. Nakadomori Historical Shell Mounds and Road **30 min. Easy trail**

Take the first right past the Ramada Renaissance across from the SeaSide Chapel. Do not go far! The trail begins just around the corner from the concrete wall on your right. A stone trail leads up the shell mound and at the top you will find a pavilion. The trail doesn't end here, continue to the back side of the rest stop. The stone road to the left of the trail leads to several caves and dates back over 2000 years to the time of the RyuKu Kingdom. The caves were used as shelters during the stone age. The mound is composed of shells which were said to have been left by ancient Okinawans that lived off mussels. This land mark is a very important part of Okinawan History. If you look at the map, the circles represent caves and the square is a pavilion at the top. In 1975 the Japanese Government approved this area as a historical place and it is now protected.

#3 Ishikawa People's Park (Cinderella Park)

There are many long trails to choose from, but they are not too hard.

Continue North on 58 taking a left on Hwy. 73 which curves right towards Ishikawa. After going under the Okinawa Expressway there will be a junkyard/car garage on your left, turn left on the next small street (this will be a very sharp turn). Continue on this small road approximately 4 km until you reach the parking lot of the park. There are many trails leading up the mountain just past the castle.

#4 Nago Mountain

2 hr. Medium trails. There are many trails to choose from.

Go back to Hwy. 58 and continue north to Nago. As you approach the city, turn right at McDonald's. Continue 0.8 km on this road to the first main intersection and turn right. Note the gas station on the left. Then take the first left and continue until running into a large banyan tree in the center of the road. Drive around the tree and take the immediate right. Go approximately 0.8 km to a large Torii gate. There is a gravel parking area and toilet to the left. Beyond the gate is a long set of steps leading up the mountain. Begin climbing here. At the top of the steps there will be a paved road. Turn left and continue north on it. Take the second road to the right and follow it to a two story youth hostel. There is a camping area to the right of this building. Walk through this field. The trail begins on the back side of the camp site. The camping area is the last rest stop and toilet before beginning the climb up Nago Mt. There is a beautiful view of Okinawa from the top.

#5. Mt Tamatsuji via the Fukuji Dam

45 min. Medium to Hard trails

Continue North on 58 through Nago. Just north of Nago at Hisashi Village turn right on Hwy. 9 Shioya Bay will be on your left after turning. The road is very curvy. Go until you see a sign for Hwy. 331 and turn right. Follow 331 to Hwy. 70 and turn left you are on the Pacific side now. Go until you see a sign for the Fukuchi Dam turn left here. Driving up hill you will notice three mountain tops. The first one is Tamatsuji Mt, the second Iyu Mt., and the third Yonaha Mt. Note a rest area on the right. Steps lead up a small ridge. This is a camping site. No camp fires are allowed; but feel free to bring a BBQ grill. Trails lead from the back side of the camp site to the Fukuji Dam (I have spelled the name of the dam two ways because the signs appear this way). Continuing down the hill past the rest stop note the Fukuji Dam Museum is on the right. This is a nice stop. Walk up the steps to the museum which is open Tue - Sun 0900-1700. Continuing across the dam turn at the first gray gravel road to the right just around the corner from the dam. Park here. The trail is at the end of the gravel road and takes about 1 hour to reach the top of Tamatsuji Mt. For the advanced hiker you can continue to the top of Iyu Mt. This will take 4 hours and is about 10 km in distance. For the extremely determined and well trained hiker you can continue to the top of Yonaha Mt. which will take approximately 8 hours. The trails are very faint and narrow. Go back to Hwy. 70 for the next trail. You can turn right out of gravel road and go down hill keeping left. There is a small park with trail on the right. At the stop sign make a sharp left, this leads back to Hwy. 70. Turn left to continue north on Hwy. 70.

#6 Yonaha Mountain
5 hrs. Hard trail. For the experienced hiker.

Continue north on Hwy. 70. You will pass the National Center for Seeds and Seedlings on the right. Continue, passing a "Speed Down!" sign on the left at the bottom of the hill Fukuji Dam is on your left. Stop and admire the view. Continue across the red and green bridge. Turn right approximately 4 km from the bridge. There is a beautiful two story house with red tile roof on your right just before the turn and just PAST the turn a small store on the right. Also note six 2 story apartment houses as you turn on the left. Three of them are painted yellow and the others are white with red roofs. Continue winding through the mountains at about 2 km you will pass a river and a look out on the right. You will go up hill and down hill passing many yield signs. You have now gone about 4 km there is a gray gravel trail on the right. Hidden in the tall grass on the right is an old white sign saying "Protect our forest" by the Okinawa District Forest Office. This is the only gravel road to the right also note a mirror in the curve. At the end of the gravel road you will find a trail leading to the top of Mt.

#7 Scenic Arakawa and Aha Dam
15 min. each. Easy

While you are in the area you may want to stop at Arakawa Dam. Continue on Hwy. 70 passing the little store on the right about 2 km turn right at dam sign. There is a nice park here. Continuing on Hwy. 70 passing N.T.A. military training area about 10 km you will see a sign for Aha Dam, turn left keeping right at fork.

#8 Determined Fisherman Trail
20 min. Medium hike. Not for families

If you are an avid fisherman and you are looking for one of the "supposed" best spots on Okinawa, this next trail is for you. Continue north on Hwy. 70 through fields of pineapple. On the right (look closely) there is a blue hose hanging from a water point. turn right. The road ends in red clay lot. Go to the end of the lot up the ridge and to the right. You will see the trail. This trail is blocked by a fence, jump over it (don't worry this fence is just to keep out wild boars). The trail is very narrow and steep. Push yourself through the thick vegetation. when the trail ends, climb down the rocky cliff to the ocean. This trail is too rough for any fishing I'm going to do.

#9 Ibe Mountain.
45 min. Medium hike.

Go back to Hwy. 70 and continue north passing a yellow school on your left. Hwy. 70 curves to the left crossing two small bridges look for a sign that says Tanagagumuino and Plant Managers Village if you were to turn left here you could hike Aha falls. Continue on 70 towards Cape Hedo. You can take a left at Yona for a scenic view of Tanagagumuino dam. Back to 70 you will see a large metal building on the left enclosed in a fence with large JA letters painted on the front. Park in the gravel area off the shoulder of Hwy. 70. The trail is to the left of JA building.

#10 Kauchibanta
30 Min. Medium to Hard hike

Continuing about 10 km on Hwy. 70. Look to your left at a large mountain, this is the next hike. To get there, turn left at Hedo Cape and Kauchibanta sign. At double mirrors on your right, turn left. Go past farm and turn right at the third road. You will be at a four corner crossing. A narrow gravel road dead ends. The trail is to your left. A white sign marks the trail. This is a sacred place and many Okinawans come here to pray. It may only take about a 30 minute hike, but it is 800 ft. above sea level. Please respect this area and the 2 temples at the top. (of course, this trail may be reached by going straight up 58)

#11 Benoki Dam
Long, but not difficult

Go back to the double mirrors and take a left. There is a park with toilets on the right. Stop and admire the beautiful view. Continue past the park down the mountain to Hwy. 58 and turn left. Just north of Okuma is the turn for Benoki Dam. This is a nice place to stop. There is a paved road that goes around the dam. You can drive or walk it, but walking takes about 2 1/2 hours.

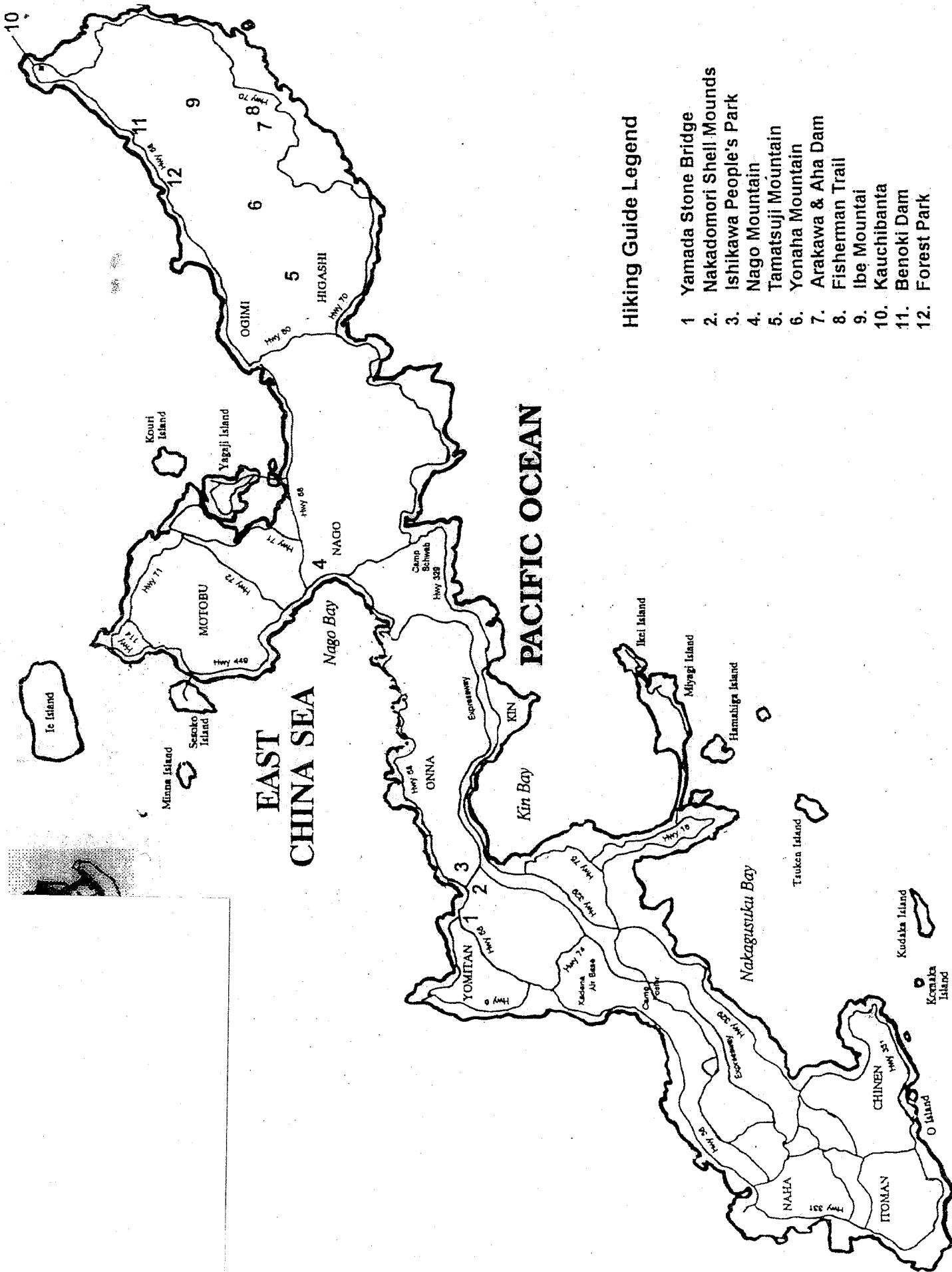
#12 Forest Park
There are many nature trails. Easy

Continuing from above directions, heading south on 58, you will come out of the Yona tunnel, the 3rd tunnel, and take a left at Forest Park sign. At the Y keep left, there is a red arrow on a white sign indicating this turn. Continue up the mountain. Note a small playground and parking lot to your left. This park has beautiful nature trails and camping platforms. The nature trails begin north of the playground on the left side of the road. This is a great place to enjoy nature, but beware of Habu here. If you are traveling north, Yona tunnel is the first tunnel north of Okuma.

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634-4625/4626 Mon-Fri 0730-1730 & Sat 0800-1530



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