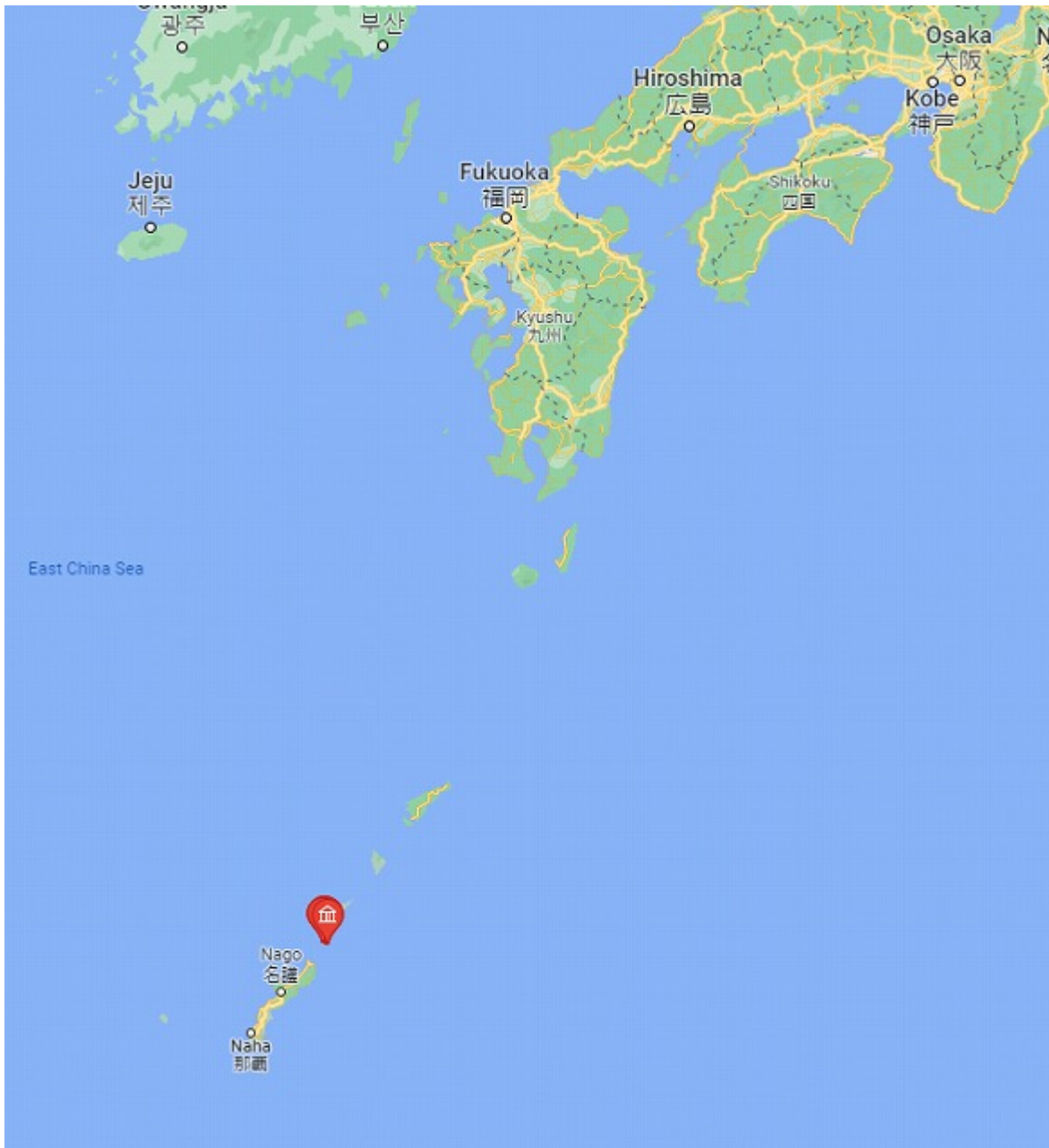


# Yoron jugoya festival





**Date:** The 15th day of March, August, and October in the lunar calendar (about one month later in the new calendar)

**Location:** Gusuku, Yoron-town, Oshima-gun, Kagoshima prefecture  
 〒890-0000

**Access:** About 10 minutes by car from Yoron Airport

This time the setting is Yoron Island 与論島, Kagoshima Prefecture. This Yoron Island is in Kagoshima Prefecture, but right next to it is the main island of Okinawa. Therefore, the island is strongly influenced by Okinawa. Long ago, Okinawa Prefecture existed as a completely independent country called the Ryukyu Kingdom. As a vassal state of China and Japan, the kingdom prospered through trade and established a unique culture that blended the cultures of both countries. In the 17th century, the feudal lord Shimazu, who ruled what is now Kagoshima Prefecture, decided to bring the Ryukyus under his control. So he dispatched 3,000 troops, and the Ryukyu Kingdom finally became Shimazu's territory while retaining its name. The Shimazu clan was treated as a virtual enemy by the regime. Because it had joined the anti-Tokugawa side in the Sekigahara\* war that triggered the Tokugawa clan regime known

as the Edo period. However, they were far from Edo (present-day Tokyo) and superficially obedient, so the Tokugawa could not defeat them. This allowed the Shimazu clan to proceed with trade with mainland China, which had been officially prohibited under the cover of the regime.

For this reason, a mixed culture has developed here on Yoron Island, sandwiched between the Ryukyu Kingdom and Satsuma (the former name of Kagoshima Prefecture).

Because of this history, this Jugoya 十五夜 (Fifteenth Night Festival) will be divided into two major groups to put on the performing arts.

The first group performs Japanese mainland-style theater and the second group performs Ryukyu-style dance.

\*Sekigahara war→The biggest battle in Japanese history, fought at Sekigahara in present-day Gifu Prefecture in 1600. In this battle, the eastern army mobilized by the Tokugawa clan and the western army mobilized by the anti-Tokugawa clan clashed, each mobilizing more than 100,000 soldiers. In addition, most of the powerful busho (Japanese military commanders) of the time participated in this battle, and the later political system was decided. The Tokugawa clan then maintained power for more than 260 years.



**No.1 group**

<https://www.yorontou.info/topics/e000349.html>



**No.2 group**

<https://www2.ntj.jac.go.jp/dglib/contents/learn/edc27/genre/ryuky/culture/arts01.html>

Ryukyu-style dancers perform various dances wearing shuppa and hoods. One is a rain dance, and it has been said that it always rains at that time.

However, all the performers speak old dialects, so it may be a little difficult to understand without prior knowledge. Therefore, this website introduces some representative performances.

## Sanbasu



<https://maturito.jp/matsuri/yoron/index.html>



<https://www.kagoshima-kankou.com/event/12270>

To use in ceremonies, the daimyo made Taro buy something called Suehirogali (a fan). But Taro doesn't know what it is. On the way, he meets an umbrella seller, who says, "This is the Suehirogali," and makes him buy a torn umbrella. The daimyo gets angry at Taro, who returned home without knowing that he had been deceived. However, Taro delighted the daimyo with the songs and dances he learned from the umbrella vendor, and the daimyo forgave him.

### ***Okumagawa***

Okumagawa Genzaemon, whose father was killed, plots to kill 1,000 people. Yamabushi (a mountain priest) appears there and accompanies him, chanting a Buddhist memorial service. Eventually, as Genzaemon tells the story of how his father was killed, he discovers that the Yamabushi himself is actually the avenger. However, Genzaemon was admonished by the Yamabushi that slaying a man would not help him in any way, and he became a disciple of Yamabushi.



<https://www2.ntj.jac.go.jp/dglib/contents/learn/edc27/genre/ryukyuu/culture/arts01.html>



<https://bewave.jp/yoron/spot/southerncross.html>

So here is the Genzaemon. He does not look like a great avenger, but he is a representative mask of Yoron here. It has been used as the cover of a photo book and as a souvenir. As you can see this, the masks here are generally laid back. There is a worldview unique to this place. In fact, the two shows that only wear masks are more mysterious.



<https://xn--jhg467avu8a.com/souvenir-yoron-gum/>



<https://www.yanaihiroyuki.net/works?lightbox=dataItem-jkx3aj6u>





<https://amamishimbun.co.jp/2020/10/02/27542/>



<https://www.kagoshima-kankou.com/event/12270>

Originally, only the second group of dances were on the island. However, one day, someone brought the Kyogen (satirical plays) back from the Yamato mainland. Therefore, laughter is the main part of 1st groupe. So the masks are also laid back.

The festival is held three times a year, but the one in August (actually September) is the most spectacular. The lion dance is performed only at this time. Lions are different from those on the mainland and are more Okinawan. They put palmlike plants called shuro on their bodies and gnaw on the heads of islanders.

Everyone dances at the end of the festival. This night is called Jugoya 15 Nights and is said to be the most beautiful moon of the year. Listening to the sound of the waves, dancing, and admiring the moon, the festival continues, forgetting that it is late at night.



[https://amami-time.com/cat\\_topic/cat\\_koto/5038/](https://amami-time.com/cat_topic/cat_koto/5038/)



[https://activityjapan.com/blog/ajblog\\_tourist\\_attractions\\_kago\\_shima\\_yoronto/](https://activityjapan.com/blog/ajblog_tourist_attractions_kago_shima_yoronto/)



Yoron Island, near Okinawa, is one of the most beautiful

places in Japan for its sea. Transportation is by bus with about 5 buses a day. Others are cabs, car rentals, and bicycle rentals. Recently, it seems that kickboard rentals have started. There are many other ways to enjoy the island, such as marine sports. There are many facilities where you can experience diving, snorkeling, sup and windsurfing. A festival where you can admire the ocean and interact with the islanders is highly recommended.

cf. <https://www.yorontou.info/en/>