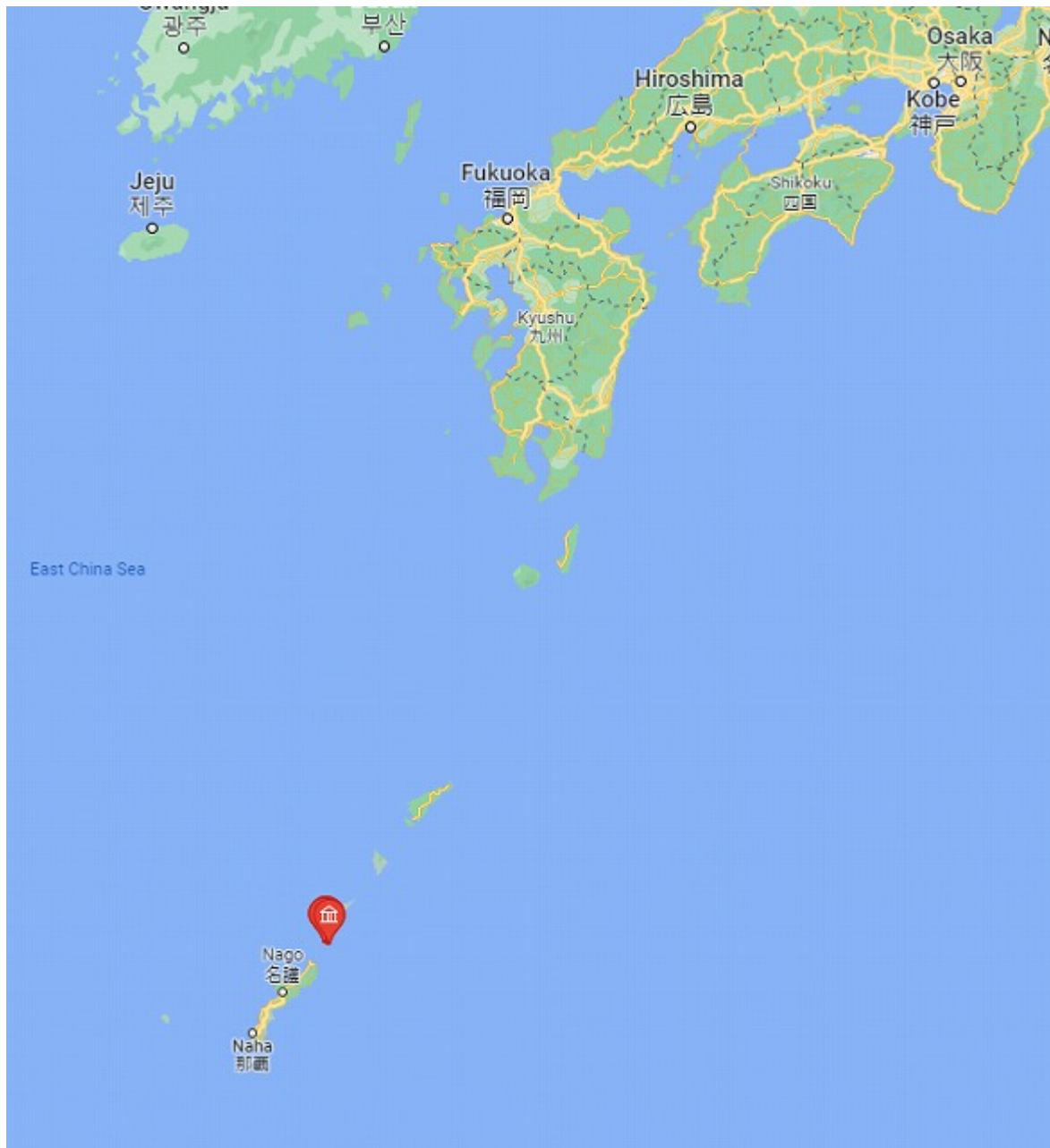


A unique cultural experience at the resort ~Yoron jugoya festival





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
 鹿児島県大島郡大島町

Access: About 10 minutes by car from Yoron Airport. It takes less than two hours to fly from Kagoshima Airport to Yoron. From Okinawa, it takes about 40 minutes by plane. There are also ferries.

To beaches with blue sea and white sand

Maldives, Hawaii, Seychelles, Fiji. The blue sea, the white clouds, and if possible, the white sand beach would be great. The scenery with the beautiful sea has always been a dream of mankind, and many people would like to go there someday. There is such a place in Japan. That's Okinawa. There are many Japanese who can't go to New Caledonia or Phuket, but would like to go to Okinawa. Yoron Island, introduced today, is in Kagoshima Prefecture, but its location is almost Okinawan. A number of outlying islands lie to the south of Kagoshima Prefecture, the southernmost part of the Japanese archipelago.

Half of them are in Kagoshima and the other half in Okinawa. And Okinawa was once an independent kingdom. Its name is Ryukyu. It flourished through trade between China and Japan. However, it was invaded by the Shimazu clan in Kagoshima in the 17 century and became a vassal state, leaving only its name.

So, a hybrid culture has grown up in Yoron, which borders such Okinawa and is also Kagoshima. The two cultures – Okinawan, with its strong Chinese influence, and Japanese – merged on the island to create something that is not simply a cross between the two, but something unique and strange to the island.

Yoron jugoya festival

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.

Ryukyu style dance

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.

With their faces completely covered by cloth, they look as if their ancestors have risen from the land of the dead as spirits.



No.2 group

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

Yamato (main land) style

One is Yamato style. Yamato means the Japanese mainland. In other words, it means mainland style. Indeed, it is in the form of a play based on Kyogen. The relationship between daimyo and servants is truly a Kyogen.

However, even a single mask is quite different from the original kyogen. Whereas the original kyogen used masks carved out of wood, here they use ones made of bamboo and paper.

The original masks are like works of art, painstakingly made by craftsmen. In contrast, the masks here are simple and sometimes look like a joke. This gives them an originality that can only be seen here.



No.1 group

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

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://matsurito.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 Suehirogali4,” 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/ryukyu/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 is no longer even a mask. It is in the wrong position and the face is too big. 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 second show, which only wears a headdress, is 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://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/>