Cycling Okinawa’s Ryukyu Kingdom

Trip Code: SGOK

Version:

CYCLE	SELF-GUIDED	MODERATE
		5



HIGHLIGHTS

- Cycle along Okinawa’s scenic coastlines and through lush mountain forests
- Discover the legacy of the Ryukyu Kingdom at Shuri Castle, a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Enjoy moments of stillness and reflection at sacred sites rooted in Okinawan beliefs
- Learn of Okinawa’s cultural fusions through your taste buds
- Peel back the layers of Okinawa's post war history

AT A GLANCE

- 5 days guided & supported cycling and sightseeing
- 2 free days
- Standard bike hire included
- Daily departures
- Suitable for 2+ travellers
- Join at / End in Naha City

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE

Introduction

The southern- and westernmost prefecture of Japan, Okinawa is a collection of subtropical islands at the crossroads of pan-Asian maritime trade routes, with a long and turbulent history spanning millennia. Once an independent nation, known as the Ryukyu Kingdom, the islands flourished through trade with neighbouring China, Thailand, Korea, the Philippines and mainland Japan. Subsequent annexation by Japan and occupation by the USA following World War II have all left their influence on this island, leading to a distinctive culture and unique set of traditions, dialect and cuisine that is unlike the rest of Japan.

Boasting a pristine nature, white sand beaches with crystal-clear waters of the brightest blue, Okinawa is a popular holiday destination for domestic travellers and neighbouring nations alike. However, it is still little known outside of South East Asia - this is your opportunity discover this stunning part of Japan ahead of the masses. On this unique hybrid holiday, you will embark on a privately-guided and supported cycling tour around the main island of Okinawa, with some free days interspersed for you to enjoy self-guided discovery, on or off the bike as you wish. Cycling at your own pace with your local guide, you can gain an unparalleled insight into the history and heritage of Okinawa, and experience its inimitable sense of identity. As you journey around the island, you can embrace the slower pace of life in rural Japan, immerse yourself into the diverse environs and soak in the pure nature antidote to the frenetic buzz of cities like Tokyo.

Is this holiday for you?

This holiday is perfect for an active cyclist who loves to discover new cultures and cuisines, and enjoys the freedom of riding independently while having the ease of holiday planning and logistics all taken care of.

On this holiday you will undertake a tour of Okinawa on two wheels; over 5 days of guided cycling you will be fully supported with a private guide and support vehicle. Cycling with your private guide, you have the freedom to pedal at the pace that suits you, without having to match your pace to a group.

You should be comfortable with riding multiple days of around 50km a day, with a couple of longer days that could be between 70km up to 100+km. The cycling will be on sealed roads on terrain that varies

from relatively flat to hilly and undulating, particularly in the rolling hills of Yanbaru in the north. Many roads in Okinawa are paved with Ryukyu limestone (coral reef rock), which can be slippery during rain or high humidity so extra caution should be taken on these surfaces. The route involves travelling through some sections of tunnels - your hire bike will be fitted with lights for this purpose.

Road bike upgrades are available and e-bike upgrades are also available if you would like the extra pedal power.

Itinerary

Version:

Holiday Information

What's Included

- All accommodation as described
- Meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Entrance fee and guided tour of Shuri Castle on Day 2
- Guided cycling on Days 2, 3, 5, 6, 8 of the itinerary as described
- Support vehicle on guided cycling days
- Bike hire from Day 2 to Day 8
- GPS travel app

What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Bike insurance (theft or damage)
- Travel to/from Naha City
- Visas (if applicable)
- Some meals as described in the Meal Plan,
- Tips for cycling guide and support team
- Any entrance fees or transport costs on self-guided days
- Personal equipment
- Bike helmet
- Any e-bike upgrades
- Any additional activities/excursions indicated as optional

GPS Travel App

This holiday is supplemented with a GPS navigation app that contains all your cycle routes along with some suggestions for points of interest along the way such as cultural sights, restaurants, or shopping areas in the vicinity.

Downloaded to your personal smartphone device, the app uses your phone's GPS positioning and you can use it to follow your route on your guided cycling days. Also loaded in your app are some suggested self-guided walking and cycling routes for your free days exploring independently. The app can work offline to navigate you on these pre-loaded routes.

You may wish to bring a handlebar mount for your bike that is compatible with your own smartphone. A local SIM card (or an eSIM) to give you data connectivity is also useful for accessing the internet in order to use online navigation such as Google Maps.

While the travel app is running, your phone battery charge can be consumed faster than normal, so we strongly recommend that you pack a power bank with you just in case you require it.

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The trip starts and ends at your hotel in Naha City, Okinawa. All of our self-guided holidays are sold on a Land Only basis allowing you the flexibility to choose the travel method which best suits you. The nearest airport for this trip is Naha International Airport with numerous domestic connections to many airports in Japan. Naha International Airport is also accessible with direct flights from Taiwan, South Korea, China, Hong Kong, Thailand, and Malaysia.

A monorail offers a convenient link from Naha Airport to many locations in Naha City. Trains depart frequently and it takes around 20 minutes to reach Asato Station, the most convenient stop for our usual hotels in the district of 2-chōme. Taxis are also readily available from the airport.

Meal Plan

On this holiday, some accommodations are self-catering, some offer bed & breakfast and some half board meals. Five breakfasts, five lunches and five dinners are included in this holiday. Please refer to the day-by-day itinerary and the accommodation description for more details.

Some included meals can be simple, light convenience meals and snacks commonly found all over Japan; such as bento boxes, instant ramen or microwave meals.

The concept of eating until one is 80% full - '*hara hachi bu*' - is rooted in Okinawan tradition and is associated with mindful eating. If you prefer to be more fuelled up for your rides, you might like to supplement your meals with additional snacks.

Special Diets

Whilst we can cater for vegetarians, albeit sometimes with a more limited choice, we cannot always provide for special diets. Due to the nature of some of the trips that we operate and the countries in which we operate them, it can be very hard (and sometimes impossible) to cater for a wide range of dietary choices and you may have to supplement your meals with food/snacks from home. If you have specific dietary requirements please do speak to our sales team and they will be able to advise you whether or not we will be able to offer your specific choice. Please note that we are unable to provide separate menus and cannot accept liability for any problems arising from special dietary requirements or intolerances.

Food & Water

Water from the taps is perfectly drinkable on this holiday - please use this to fill your personal bottles for your daily activities. We do not encourage the purchase of single-use plastic bottles.

Traditionally, Okinawans teach their children to eat something from the land and the sea every day, commonly utilising fresh ingredients distinctive to the island, including green bitter melon (*goya*) and purple sweet potato (*imo*). This diet, rich in antioxidants and healthy fish oil, is said to be a factor in the exceptionally long life expectancy of the population of Okinawa, giving rise to the concept of 'Blue Zones' – regions in the world where people are said to live longer and healthier lives.

One dish that epitomises Okinawan culture is *champuru* - a stir-fried dish of mixed ingredients (*champuru* simply means 'something mixed' and is derived from the Malay word 'campur'). *Champuru* comes in many combinations and each person or restaurant will have their own special recipe. For example, the popular dish *goya champuru* is with tofu, egg, bitter melon and pork belly. You may also be slightly surprised to discover that Spam is common in Okinawa, having been introduced to the island during the American occupation, and since assimilated into daily cuisine. You will no doubt find Spam used in *champuru* dishes, and in the cultural fusion that is Spam *musubi* (grilled Spam sandwiched in sushi rice and wrapped in a sheet of nori – a take on the more traditional *onigiri*!).

Born from the intersection of Okinawan and American cultures and originating in Kin Town, taco rice is a flavourful east-meets-west melding of Tex-Mex taco meat served on a bed of rice (rather than a corn taco), garnished with cheese, lettuce and tomatoes.

Okinawan beans and rice - *aka kashinichi* – is commonly eaten during lunch or dinner; a simple dish of subtle nutty flavour, comprising of glutinous rice with kidney beans and black beans. Other staples brimming with health benefits include tofu, lotus root, pickled vegetables, miso soup, rice, noodles, mushrooms, and luffa (part of the gourd and squash family). Interestingly, carrots from the island are normally yellow or white. Purple sweet potato is used in all forms, including in dessert dishes like tarts and ice cream – no visit to Okinawa is complete without sampling this unique sweet treat.

A particular Okinawan delicacy is sea grapes - *umi-budo* - also known as green caviar. This seaweed is best fresh and you would be hard-pressed to find such good quality outside of the islands. Usually served simply with a light ponzu sauce, each bite delivers a crisp texture and a refreshing pop of brine – a delicious taste of the sea!

The rice liquor *awamori* is integral to the cultural history of Okinawans, used for centuries for rituals and celebrations. Made with Thai long grain rice (a legacy of the island's rich trading history with their Asian neighbours), fermented with black *koji* mould and aged, this liquor has a distinctive aroma that differs from *sake* which is made from short grain Japanese rice.

Accommodation

On this holiday, you will stay in an eclectic mix of accommodations that give you a taste of the diverse and inimitable character of Japan and Okinawa in particular. All accommodations are on a double or twin sharing basis, always with private bathrooms. Single rooms are also available at a supplementary cost. All locations offer Wi-Fi connectivity.

Accommodations can be subject to change depending on availability, but here we have described the usual accommodations to illustrate the variety you can experience on this trip.

Arriving in Naha, you will stay at a central city hotel easily accessible from Naha International Airport by monorail, with many conveniences, restaurants and the main tourist sights of the city within walking distance. Breakfast is not included but is available at the hotel at additional cost, with Japanese and international options on offer. Alternatively, you also have the flexibility to choose your own café locally, or source a takeaway breakfast from the many *konbini* (convenience shops) nearby.

At the Uruma peninsula on the east of the island, you will stay one night at a quirky hotel on the isthmus of the peninsula, with vibes reminiscent of the famed capsule hotels of Japan. This self-catering hotel is certainly unusual as its rooms are made of converted shipping containers, but it has all the amenities you would need for one transient night. Compact and simple, all rooms have air conditioning and an en-suite bathroom, and come equipped with fridge, kettle and microwave. The hotel offers complimentary snacks and light meals that can be heated up in your microwave, as well as vending machines stocked with soft drinks, canned coffee and beer. There are shops, cafes and restaurants within walking distance.

In Kin, you will stay two nights at a modern hotel just a stone's throw from the east-facing sandy beach, perfect for sumptuous dawn views. This hotel boasts large gender-segregated *onsen* for you to experience this communal Japanese bathing ritual, ideal for soothing your muscles and unwinding at the end of your day. Breakfast is included here, in the form of a bento box with international influences. For example, your breakfast bento may contain a filled croissant, a yoghurt, and a selection of local fruit and vegetables. The hotel has an in-house fine dining restaurant, serving stylish French cuisine with a Ryukyu twist.

Approaching the Yanbaru National Park in the northern tip of Okinawa, depending on availability in this remote part of the island, your accommodation for one night (day 5 of the itinerary) can either be in Higashi or further north in Ada.

In Higashi, your stay will be in a unique style of self-service hotel, embracing Japan's love of technological automation. The cosy self-catering holiday cabins are located between the edge of the Yanbaru forest and the ocean, with a sandy beach just a short hop away. Each compact en-suite lodge has air conditioning and a small outside terrace, and is equipped with a fridge and a kettle. There is a common lodge with drinks-making facilities, a communal microwave and a mini grill. Breakfast is simple, typically consisting of a croissant and butter. Weather permitting; you may like to enjoy a picnic on the beach or on your terrace. You might like to stock up on some supplies in advance.

If your stay is in Ada on this night, you will be in a secluded hotel surrounded by the peaceful forests of the Yanbaru National Park. The hotel has a Japanese restaurant (advance reservations recommended, you can reserve a table through your guide). A traditional Japanese breakfast is included here. There are also a number of vending machines on site.

Reaching Nago on the west coast, you will stay two nights at a resort-style hotel facing the sea, a great base from which to explore the Motobu peninsula and well located for the conveniences of the city. This

hotel is modern and comfortable, with a restaurant serving varied Okinawan, Japanese and international cuisines.

Returning to Naha at the end of your tour, you can enjoy a touch of luxury and end your holiday on a high at an upmarket resort hotel in the city.

Guidance on Tipping

Tipping is not customary in Japan. In Japanese culture, good service is provided as standard for all service-related industries like hotels, taxis, restaurants and bars, and tips are not expected.

You may like to tip your cycling guide and support team to say thank you. As a guide, £2-£3 per person per day (in Japanese Yen) would be appropriate. Additionally, a small, considered gift from the heart, for example a token from your hometown, shows a personal touch in the expression of gratitude.

Any tips should be in clean bills in an envelope – cash envelopes with attractive designs are available locally, have a look in stationery shops, convenience stores or 100 Yen shops for these – and presented with both hands with a small bow.

Bike Hire

Hybrid bike hire is included as standard on this holiday, from Day 2 through Day 8 of the itinerary. Hybrid bikes have flat handlebars, wider tyres, and an upright riding position.

If you would prefer to ride a faster and lighter bike, road bikes with drop handlebars and narrow tyres are available on this holiday at a supplement of £95 - please request this upgrade option from our Sales Team at the time of booking.

All bikes come equipped with flat pedals, front light, rear light or reflector, a bottle cage, and bike lock. If you would like to bring your own saddle and/or pedals and have them fitted to your hire bike, please just inform our Sales Team in advance.

We strongly recommend that you bring your own helmet with you for the best comfort. We also recommend packing a gel seat for extra comfort or a pair of padded cycling shorts as, whilst you will be riding at your own pace and there are plenty of opportunities to stop and explore, it is always nice to have some padding for a more comfortable ride.

When booking, please inform our Sales Team of your height (along with any bike upgrades required) so that the appropriate hire bike can be reserved for you.

Upgrade to an E-bike

If you are looking for an extra boost whilst in the saddle, you can upgrade to an e-bike to make your ride more leisurely. Equipped with a battery and motor, these electric bikes give you a helping hand whilst you are pedalling, making it easier to climb hills and travel further with less effort and more comfort.

E-bikes are available on this holiday for a supplement of £295 for the 7 days' hire - please request this upgrade option from our Sales Team at the time of booking.

Vehicle Support

You will have a local cycling guide and full vehicle support for all guided cycling days. The support team is on hand to assist with basic roadside mechanical issues, such as flat tyres and gear adjustments.

The support vehicle has space to pick up one or two participants in the event of fatigue or illness, however if any more of the group wish to skip a cycling day, any additional costs involved for a transfer ahead to the next destination (e.g. by taxi) would be payable locally.

Vehicle support is not included on Days 4 and 7 when you are free to explore independently or cycle self-guided.

Baggage Allowance

For this holiday you should take one piece of luggage and a small day pack for your daily essentials. Luggage with wheels may be useful for this holiday. For ease of transport, we recommend a soft-sided bag, such as a duffle bag with wheels. Your luggage will be transported in the support vehicle that accompanies you on this trip.

For international flights, please check your baggage allowance with your airline.

General Information

Passport & Visas

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders.

A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required**,** and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

For other nationalities, please refer to your own Government website for the latest information.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents including vaccinations and health certificates *(see Health & Vaccinations below),* **and visas for your holiday.** Please ensure that you check the FCDO for the latest advice for **each country visited** before travel.

Visa Japan

UK and USA passport holders do not require a visa for short stays.

Health & Vaccinations

Vaccinations:

You should be up to date with the routine vaccinations recommended in the UK for overseas travel.

You must also contact your doctor or travel clinic to check if there are specific vaccinations or other preventive measures that you need for the area you are visiting, in good time before you are due to depart.

Please ensure you are looking at the recommendations for all countries visited on your holiday plus recommendations for any borders you cross.

On holidays to more remote areas you should also have a dental check-up.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents including vaccinations and health certificates.

Please check the FCDO and Travel Health Pro. For all of your intended destinations for up-to-date advice.

Severe Allergies:

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips.

Currency

The unit of currency in Japan is the Japanese Yen.

Preparing for your Holiday

Featuring an amalgamation of privately guided, fully supported cycling with self-guided elements, the advantage of this holiday is that you decide the pace; there is no pressure to maintain a pace set by a group. However, getting some additional exercise and time in the saddle before coming on an active cycling holiday would be a good idea. You should be comfortable with cycling on average 70km a day on undulating terrain, though some days can be longer. We would recommend you head off on a few rides before your holiday; after all the more bike-fit you are the more enjoyable your cycling will be.

Climate

Okinawa has a subtropical climate. The island experiences a long summer season when is very hot and humid - May is usually a rainy time of the year and there is a chance of typhoons from June to September. The spring months (March to April) bring pleasantly warm weather, lush landscapes and fewer tourists. During the autumn months (October to November), you can expect clear skies, cooler temperatures, vibrant nature, and more stable weather conditions.

We recommend this holiday during the early spring and autumn periods, when temperatures are milder and weather conditions are generally more stable, making these times more suitable for a cycling tour.

Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's **'Travel Aware'** campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that before travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at travelaware.campaign.gov.uk and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. All other nationalities should check their government websites for relevant information.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates directly from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

Books

Bradt Japan: Okinawa & Japan's Southwest Islands Guidebook

Okinawa: The History of an Island People - George Kerr

Etiquette Guide to Japan - Boye Lafayette De Mente / Geoff Botting

Rice, Noodle, Fish: Deep Travels Through Japan's Food Culture - Matt Goulding

Abroad in Japan - Chris Broad

Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our Travel Insurance page for further information and to get a quote.

Equipment Information

Equipment List

- Cycling shorts
- Cycle helmet
- Functional base layer
- T-shirts
- Lightweight travel trousers/shorts
- Lightweight loose-fitting shirt / shawl to cover shoulders for temple visits
- Scarf / neck buff
- Hat

- Windproof jacket
- Fleece / extra layer
- Rain protection
- Rucksack (approx. 20 l)
- Small first aid kit for your rucksack
- Sunscreen
- Water bottle or hydration pack (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic)
- Camera (batteries/memory card)
- Mobile Phone (if you plan to purchase a pre-paid SIM card, ensure your phone is not locked to your network provider)
- Handlebar mount that is compatible with your smartphone
- Power bank
- Sun glasses
- Personal wash kit
- Hand sanitiser
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping to avoid the use of plastic bags
- Sandals
- Insect repellent

Land Only Information

Please note our 'from price' listed is based on 4 persons in double or twin occupancy, however this trip is suitable for groups of 2 or more travellers, contact our sales team for a quote.

When considering your travel dates, you might like to investigate any seasonal opening times of attractions and points of interest.

All of our self-guided holidays are sold on a Land Only basis allowing you the flexibility to choose the travel method which best suits you. You may even wish to make this holiday part of a bigger adventure or pair it with one of our other holidays. We can arrange additional nights accommodation in Naha City before or after your self-guided trip, please ask our sales team for more details.

Please DO NOT book your flights before you have received your booking confirmation and your deposit has been taken.

Our Sales Team will also be happy to provide you a quote for scheduled flights from your nearest regional airport (where possible). Flight prices are subject to change depending on availability and seasonality. Flight prices will only be confirmed to you when all services have been arranged and confirmed for your requested dates.

Why Choose KE

Why KE

Exclusive to KE, this privately-guided cycling holiday has been carefully designed to give you a special insight into the unique culture, history and rich nature of Okinawa ahead of the crowds.Standard bike hire is included in the price of your holiday. Plus, road bike or e-bike upgrades are also available.

Please Note This document was downloaded on 23/11/2026 and the trip is subject to change