



Okinawa Shopping Guide

The 150 islands that make up tropical Okinawa provide plenty of opportunities to shop, especially in the capital Naha. Here you'll find a variety of different stores, from traditional markets to trendy boutiques and from luxury designer shops to mega malls. You'll be able to score discounts on tax-free brand names and take home handmade local artisan products as well.

Shopping Districts

Toyosaki, Tomigusuku-City Area

This area, about a 15-minute drive from the airport, is known for stores selling handicrafts and souvenirs, and of course for the Ashibina Outlet Mall. Here you can visit a number of high-end and luxury retailers, including international brands such as Gucci, Marc Jacobs, and sports brands like Nike and Adidas. In this area, you'll also find hotels, restaurants, and a pretty man-made beach.

Kokusai Street

Arguably Okinawa's most famous shopping street, Kokusai Street—also known as the Miracle Mile as it was nicknamed after the war because of its rapid regeneration—is a bustling and busy commercial district. Here you can find artisans selling handmade crafts and souvenirs next door to large department stores. Just off Kokusai, you'll find true bargains and cheap souvenirs on Heiwa Dori.

Shintoshin

Shintoshin is a fairly new development of former U.S. military homes near Omoromachi Station, and has quickly become a popular and fashionable shopping destination. You can shop for luxury skincare, cosmetics, wine, and more duty-free products at T GALLERIA BY DFS; or shop for Japanese fashions at the San-A Naha Main Place mall, a charming smaller shopping center. Other malls in this area include Saion Square and the department store Ryubo, as well as the more specialized outlet, Pineapple House.

Nakagami District

Located about a 45-minute drive from Naha, Chatan in the Nakagami district is the home of Depot Island at the American Village. This entertainment complex includes hotels, restaurants, shops, cafes, a beach, and a movie theater. The American Village is like a colorful theme park complete with a Ferris wheel and plenty of classic American food favorites like hamburgers and hotdogs. You'll also find another huge mall here, the Aeon Mall Okinawa Rycom, and the older but still popular Plaza House Shopping Center.

Kanagusuku

Visitors to Okinawa usually arrive and depart from the Naha airport and can take a quick detour through Kanagusuku before they cross the Kokuba River on their way to the Naha downtown core. Before your flight home, stop in at Aeon Naha Shopping Center to stock up on Awamori and last-minute purchases.

Nago

Nago is a city in the north of the main island, just over an hour from Naha airport. It is famous for being the first spot in Japan to see cherry blossoms and for its beautiful beaches. Those who want to shop in Nago should go to the Aeon Nago Shopping Center, which features a range of shops, restaurants, and cafes.

Okinawa Specialties

Okinawa is a tropical paradise and quite unlike most other parts of Japan. It's not surprising then that it has its own special and unique souvenirs.

Salt

The ocean is an important part of life here on the islands, so it's easy to see why Okinawan sea salt, packed with minerals, is a popular and tasty reminder of your time here. Many people claim it is the best in the world and return to Okinawa regularly to stock up.

Shisa Statues

For a really traditional gift, try to pick up a pair of Shisa statues. This creature from Okinawan mythology is depicted as a friendly looking cross between a dog and a lion. Statues are placed in pairs at entrances to homes to protect the inhabitants from evil.

Chinsuko Cookies

Bring home some Chinsuko cookies, a traditional Okinawan sweet. They come in interesting flavors including purple yam, cinnamon, sesame salt, and honey ginger.

Ryukyu Glassware

Ryukyu glassware is a very popular item to buy while in Okinawa. Artisans began the tradition as a way to repurpose Coca Cola bottles left behind at American military bases. Ryukyu glassware makes the perfect souvenir in which to enjoy some awamori sake, another Okinawan specialty.

Textiles

Textiles make beautiful—but sometimes costly—reminders of your time in Okinawa. The Kumejima Tsumugi, in particular, is a dyed and woven textile made from silk from the silkworm and has been designated a traditional craft and an important intangible cultural property by the Japanese government.

Karate Gear

Okinawa was the birthplace of karate, and as such is a great place to pick up karate uniforms, equipment, or other souvenirs of the martial art.

Okinawa Shopping Tips

Finally, a few tips before you hit the Okinawa shops: ● If you want to enjoy tax-free shopping, remember to bring your passport with you, look out for signs that the store is duty-free, and check out enjoy.taxfree.jp. ● If you intend to explore local markets and small boutiques, remember that they may not accept credit cards and you should come with cash. ● You may need to take public transit to get to some of the shops. To prepare, make sure to carry 1,000 yen bills and coins for the bus. ● If you take a taxi, remember that tipping is not customary; simply saying “arigato” (thank you) is appreciated though. ● Even if you have been at the beach all day, it is required and expected that you will put a shirt back on before entering any shops, businesses, or restaurants.