

Yoron Island Board of Education's
International Information Exchange Website
for High School Students.

"AGUNCHA" IN YORON



(Sketch from the Yoron Junior High School Art Club May 2014)

“Aguncha” means friend in English and this is very important for the people of Yoron. Aguncha is also the reason why we wrote this short information booklet about Yoron. It contains some facts about Yoron culture, things to do as well as some interesting places to visit. We hope this book will help to create an international exchange between Yoron Junior High School and other countries in the world. We also hope that high school students from around the world will enjoy reading about life on Yoron and want to visit here one day.



About Yoron=

The island of Yoron is very small, around 20.8 square kilometers and is in the prefecture of Kagoshima, 600km south of Kagoshima City. We can see the main island of Okinawa 23km to the south. The island is surrounded by coral reef and has beautiful beaches to visit. Around 5,000 people live in Yoron. Summers in Yoron are very warm and winters are mild. The average yearly temperature is around 23 degrees.

YORON ISLAND MAP

① Location beacon

- ① SABICHIRA HALL
- ② INTEGRATION GRAND
- ③ B&G SWIMMING POOL
- ④ INSIDE OF A HOUSE TENNIS COURT



The island is also important for agriculture and farming. A variety of different vegetables and fruits are grown. Sugarcane is an important crop with fields scattered all over the island. Tourism is also very important for Yoron. Many visitors come to the island and the hotels here are very comfortable. Yoron is a great place to visit and relax. People can travel by ferry and airplane from Kagoshima and Okinawa. The ferry trip takes 4 hours from Naha, Okinawa and 23 hours from Kagoshima. The airplane takes 1 hour 30 minutes from Kagoshima and about 30 minutes from Okinawa.

=Yoron Legend=

One day, many years ago two mythical gods went fishing in the sea. Their names were Amamiku (goddess of cultivation) and Siniguku (god of rice and grain). It was a peaceful day for them, but suddenly they ran into some trouble. The rudder of their boat became caught in the sea. They tried to move, but the tide slowly went away. Then they noticed that they had made an island. They named the place where the rudder was caught "Hazibiki Panta". In the Yoron language, "hazi" means rudder and "panta" means hill. The two mythical gods lived on the island for many years and the island prospered. They had many children and Yoron's population grew. Now Yoron has over 5,000 people and many people on the island know about this mythical story.



(Sketch of the mythical gods Siniguku and Amamiku with their family from the Yoron Junior High School Art Club May 2014)

=Please visit Yoron=

Yoron is the smallest of the Amami islands. The island has some of the most beautiful beaches in Japan. The sand is pure white and the water crystal clear. If you like diving and snorkeling, Yoron has many tropical fish to see, including the famous white and orange “Clownfish” seen in “Finding Nemo”. There is also an underwater artificial shipwreck for high level divers to explore. Some beautiful coral reef surrounds the island just waiting to be seen and explored.

YURIGAHAMA SAND BAR



On the east side of the island, you can see the famous Yurigahama (a long white sand bar) at low tide, 1.5km from the shore. The beach on the shore has a campsite for people who enjoy camping.

There are several tourist companies that offer great water sports and boat trips for visitors. Fishing, diving, windsurfing, jet skiing and canoeing are all available with these companies. Visitors can also go on boat trips or just enjoy walking along the beaches and relaxing. And don't forget that Yoron has some cultural and historical places of interest!



SOUTHERN CROSS CENTER



At one of the highest points in Yoron (about 97 meters above sea level) is the Yoron Museum, Southern Cross Center. At this museum you can learn many things about Yoron's history and culture. On the first floor is a display of the Amami Islands. You can learn about the history of each island and the relationship between them. This floor also has costumes from Yoron's festivals, including the Jyu-Go-Ya (Full Moon Festival).

The second floor has historical pictures about Yoron. You can see pictures that show Yoron's fishing and farming life. There are also pictures of school life and the different festivals on the island. On this floor there is an excellent display of the shells, fish, insects and flowers that can be found on the island. Here, you can see the beautiful "Star Sand" which is very famous because of its shape. On the top floor is a 360-degree panoramic view of the island.

From this point you can easily see Chabana Town, the airport, Yoron Junior High School and Okinawa. On clear days you can see Iheya-jima and Izena-jima. At night, the outside lookout is a great place to see the stars in the sky and the lights of Yoron Town.

=Yoron Minzokumura(Folk Village)=

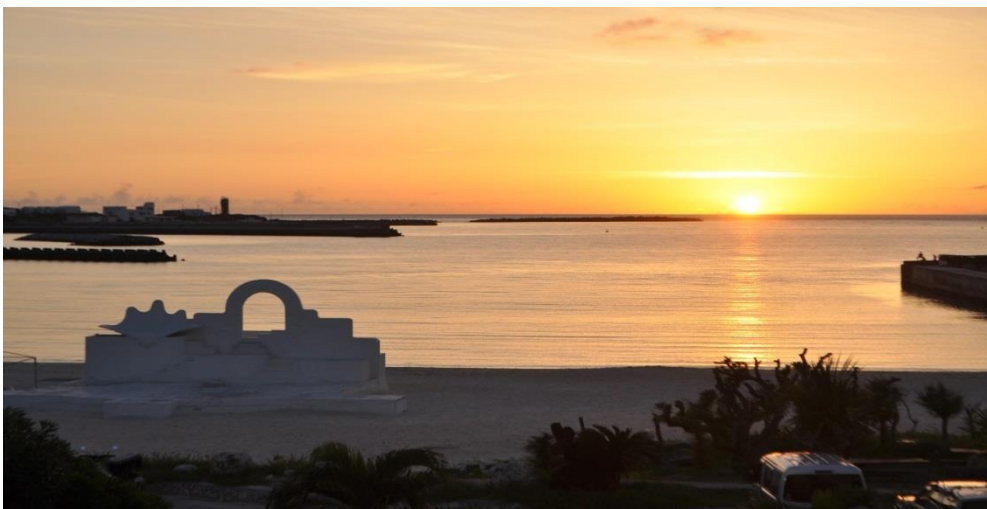
Yoron has a wonderful traditional village to visit. Here visitors can see farming tools and household items that were used in the old days. For example, “Warazouri” is a sandal made of straw. There are also wooden vases that were used to store food. The staff explains about each item and about how people in Yoron used to live. You can experience fabric making and color dyeing (Kusakizome), and learn about making brown sugar from sugarcane. You can enjoy some old-style food, such as cookies, brown sugar candy and tea.



=Places to see the sun=



Yoron has some of the best places in the world to watch a sunset. The beautiful red sun seems so close you can touch it. The sunset spots are quiet places scattered all over the island. You can visit the sunset by car or bicycle. The sun sets over the ocean and you have the best view. If you like taking photos then the sunset spots are the perfect places for you. Many of Yoron's beaches also offer a great view. On the opposite side of the island in Ooganeku is a great place to see the sunrise. A short drive along a track leads to the perfect place to see the sunrise. But you have to get up early!



=Yoron's Train Platform=



Yoron has a train platform near the airport. Of course, there are no trains on this small island, but our platform is an interesting place to visit. It's a great place to take a family photo. But if you are waiting for a train, you will be waiting forever! To the left of the train platform are steps that take you along a cliff walk track. You have an excellent view of the coastline and beautiful clear water. If you are lucky, you can see two or three turtles that live and swim in the water there. They swim quite close to the shore. Between January and March you may be able to see whales in the distance. They often make water spouts that can be seen from afar.

= Other places of interest =

Yoron has a beautiful botanical garden called the Yunnu Rakuen. "Yunnu" is the name of the island in its original language and "Rakuen" is the Japanese word for paradise. Here you can see a variety of plants and see traditional huts that people in old times used.

At Yoron Junior High School there is a paruyadui near the school gate. A paruyadu is a very small house usually found in a field. Many years ago people did not have cars, so they could save time by having lunch in the paruyadu. People could cook and sleep inside and then work in the fields. Some even had tatami mats and a kitchen. Of course there are many other places of interest to visit on the island. So please come and see for yourselves! *(Sketch of a paruyadu from the Yoron Junior High School Art Club April 2014)*



=Yoron Dialect=

The island has a unique dialect called Yunnu Futuba and Yoron Junior High School has an interesting school event each year to celebrate it - the “Yoron Dialect Recital”. Students use Yunnu Futuba in songs, speeches, plays and in general conversation. It is good practice for the students and helps to preserve the language. The dialect has a basic grammar similar to the Japanese language, but Yunnu Futuba has a larger range of sounds and a stricter system of hierarchy for speech. Here are some words that you can use on the island;

<i>Hello (hugamayabiran)</i>	<i>Thank you (toutudo, toutuganashi)</i> <i>(misshiku toutuganashi)</i>
<i>You're welcome (ganchigadi)</i>	<i>pleasant (ichariti)</i>
<i>fun (mijirashai)</i>	<i>delicious (masai)</i>
<i>beautiful (churasai)</i>	<i>surprised (uduruchi)</i>
<i>like, love (haminshai)</i>	<i>I don't know(wakaraji)</i>

=Jyu-go-ya Odori (Full Moon Festival)=

Yoron's most traditional festival is Jyu-go-ya. The festival is held three times a year in March, August and October. The people of Yoron pray for peace, safety and a good harvest. Jyu-go-ya means “full moon”, so the festival is held on the fifteenth of the lunar month.

There are two kinds of dance that celebrate the festival that date back to 1561- the Ryukyu (Okinawan) style and the main land (Kagoshima) style. In the Ryukyu dance, the performers wear a black robe and a black hood. In the Kagoshima dance, the dancers wear a white robe. At the festival you can enjoy dancing, a tug-of-war, and eating delicious food. There is also the “Shisa” dance - the dance of the lion that protects one's home. At the final festival in October, you can watch sumo matches. Many students from Yoron's schools participate.

=Tunga Tunga=

Tunga-tunga is a fun event held once a year in Yoron. We celebrate Tunga-tunga on the fifteenth day of the lunar month in August. On this day we dance and pray for peace, safety and a good harvest.

After the sun sets, we cook dumplings and place them in front of our homes as an offering to the full moon. Children come to the houses at night and take them. It is like Halloween! The children visit many houses and receive many dumplings. Recently, children can get other treats such as cake, candy and ice cream.

=Sango Matsuri (Coral Festival) =

Yoron is surrounded by coral reef and coral is an important part of Yoron culture with shops selling coral products. To celebrate this, a festival is held every August on the island called Sango Matsuri (Coral Festival). The whole island celebrates and there is a real feeling of togetherness. There are parades and many children dress up in marching costumes with their classmates. The town of Chabana comes alive with the sound of families and friends. There are many food stores selling delicious local foods and children can play different arcade games like "Catch a Goldfish". The sounds of music like the Okinawan "Eisa" can be heard everywhere and there are music concerts to enjoy.

= The Yoron Marathon=

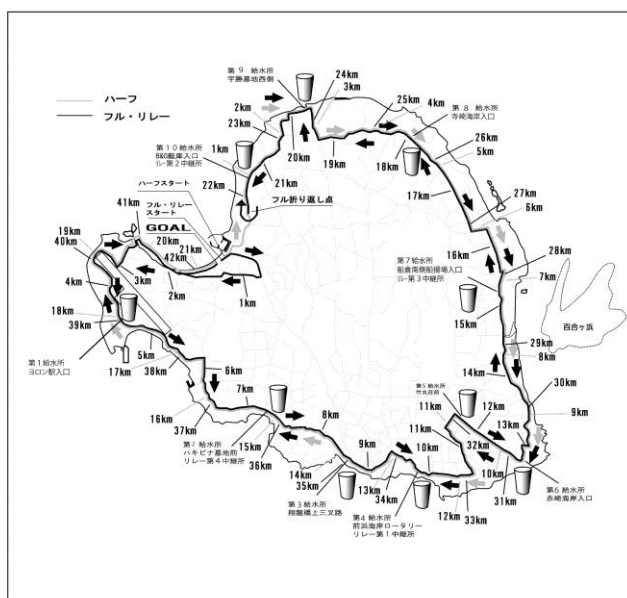
Every year in March, Yoron holds one of the best Marathons in Japan. Many runners come to the island to participate. The island has a circumference of about 22.8 kilometers, so this means that runners have to run twice around the island to complete the course. There is also a half marathon for people who prefer running shorter distances. The winner in 2014 finished in 2 hours and 34 minutes. The race also attracts runners from other countries, usually from the American military bases in Okinawa.

Why not come and run one day?



YORON MARATHON 2014

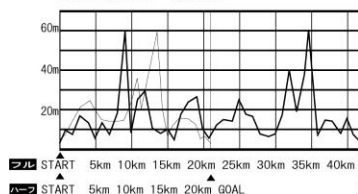
ヨロンマラソンコース図・給水所配置図



リレーマラソン中継点

区	間	給水	距離 (km)
1区	スタート 前浜ロータリー	第4給水所	9.8
2区	前浜ロータリー B&C船庫入口	第10給水所	11.5
3区	折り返し地点経由 船倉南側船庫場入口	第7給水所	7.6
4区	船倉南側船庫場入口 ハキビナ基地前	第2給水所	7.4
5区	ハキビナ基地前 ゴール		5.895

ヨロンマラソンコース高低差



=Conclusion=

High school students from around the world can learn from one another. We all love the places where we live and want to share this with other people. Yoron Island is a little jewel that should be shared with the entire world. We hope that this booklet gave you a taste of life here and hope that one day you can come and visit. Please email us if you have any questions.

Misshiku toutuganashi (thank you) from Yoron!