

石垣市 ガイド図鑑

THE ISHIGAKI FIELD GUIDE



2026



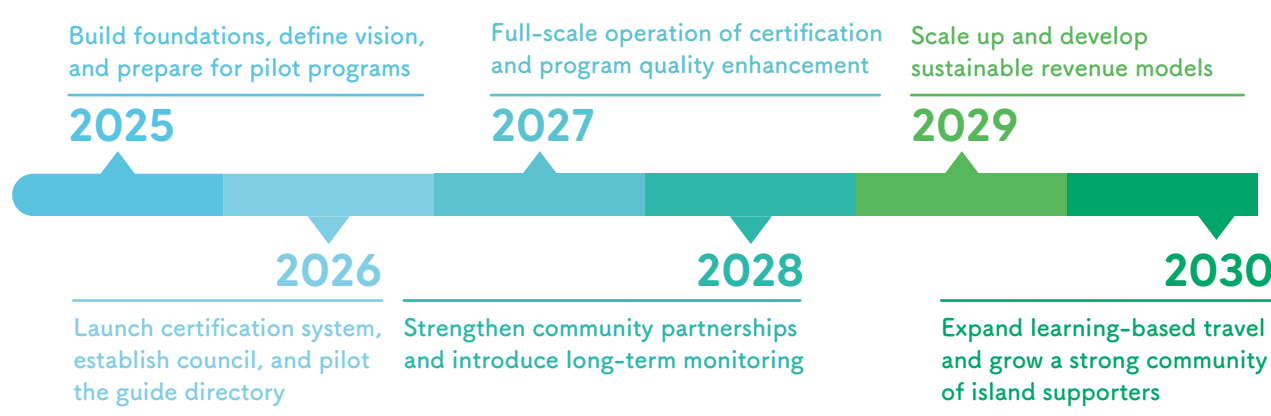


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The "Ishigaki Island Field Interpreter" Certification Program launches!

Coming Soon: The Ishigaki Island Field Interpreter Certification. Ishigaki City is launching a new program to certify professional guides, ensuring top-quality storytelling and safety for your adventures on the island.



See the next page for details. 

※Images are for illustrative purposes only.

はじめに

Interpretation is the practice of communicating the meaning and value of nature, culture, and history in ways that are easy to understand and emotionally engaging. Rather than simply providing facts or guidance, interpretation aims to create understanding and empathy through meaningful experiences.

Field Interpreters connect travelers with the heart of Ishigaki through a deep understanding of its nature and culture. By protecting the environment and empowering local communities, the island aims to grow as a sustainable destination for the future.

We believe that the quality of tourism depends on the quality of guides. In addition to core skills, guides are expected to help enhance the value of the region.

Guides who meet these four principles, sustainability, community involvement and local circulation, high-quality learning and experiences, and safety and ethics, will be officially recognized and certified as "Ishigaki Field Interpreters." The program also aims to strengthen the brand of this certification and provide ongoing support to connect certified guides with travelers.



About Ishigaki Island Field Interpreters

What is an Ishigaki Island Field Interpreter?

Ishigaki Island Field Interpreters connect visitors with the hidden stories behind the island's landscapes. They share the deeper meanings of nature and culture, to help travelers truly understand and care for Ishigaki. By inspiring emotion and connection, they turn sightseeing into meaningful experiences. People from many professions can serve as Field Interpreters, each sharing the island's stories from their own perspective.

< Examples of Ishigaki Island Field Interpreters >

Specialist Guides	Tour Guides	Interpreter Guides	Marine Activity Guides
Eco-Tour Guides	Stargazing Guides	Bus Guides	Taxi Drivers
Cultural Guides	Beach Clean Guides	Facility Guides	Hotel Tour Desk Staff
Pottery & Weaving Instructors	Wedding Guides	Photographers	Gastronomy Guides



How to Become an Ishigaki Island Field Interpreter



From 2026, the "Ishigaki Island Field Interpreter Directory & Matching Platform" will launch to connect travelers with certified local guides. Available in Japanese and English, it will help visitors find experiences that match their interests. By supporting skilled guides and promoting deeper understanding of Ishigaki's nature and culture, the platform will contribute to the island's sustainable tourism and future growth.

Ishigaki Island Field Interpreter Certification System

✓ Concept of the Certification System

This certification system will support the development of high-quality local guides to help Ishigaki grow as a sustainable tourism destination. Guides will be evaluated based on knowledge, skills, and ethics, including understanding of local nature and culture, safety, communication, and environmental responsibility. Evaluation methods will be developed in the future.



✓ Certification Branding Levels (Draft)



✓ Proposed Certification System

The program will be operated by a newly formed Ishigaki Island Field Interpreter Certification Council, in collaboration with the Ishigaki City Tourism Association, marine leisure groups, government agencies, and other local organizations. The system will be based on existing professional qualifications, combined with new training such as the Touristship program, and designed to allow step-by-step skill development. Technical skills and professional mindset will both be evaluated, with details to be finalized by the council.



Marine Activities

The Island's Most Popular Activities

Blessed with crystal-clear seas and vast coral reef areas, Ishigaki Island is a premier destination for marine activities and a vibrant blue world of life. Together with its starry skies and rich nature, marine experiences form one of the island's main attractions.

Diving

Renowned for crystal-clear waters and the vast Sekisei Lagoon coral reef, Ishigaki's sea is a dream destination for divers seeking vibrant marine life. With frequent manta ray encounters and tours ranging from

beginner programs to advanced and underwater photography-focused experiences, there is a diving style to match every level and passion.



Snorkeling

Easy and accessible with a mask and life jacket, snorkeling is perfect even for those less confident in swimming, allowing

everyone to quickly feel comfortable in the sea. From beach entry to boat tours, a wide range of options is available, with popular spots such as Phantom Island, the Blue Cave, and Taketomi Island making each experience easy to customize.



Canoe & Kayak

Paddling across clear, emerald waters offers a unique sense of freedom, with many plans also combined with snorkeling. After a land-based briefing, tours are held mainly in calm waters such as Kabira Bay and Nagura Bay,

making them ideal for beginners. Mangrove river tours, including routes on the Miyara and Fukidugawa Rivers, are another popular way to enjoy Ishigaki's nature.



SUP

Easy to learn with a simple lesson, SUP lets beginners enjoy the sensation of gliding across the water as if walking on its surface. From sunrise and sunset sessions to tours under the night

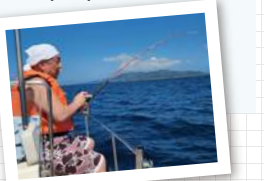
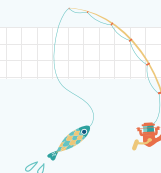
sky, a variety of time slots are available. In addition to ocean routes, mangrove river tours provide another refreshing way to explore Ishigaki's natural beauty.



Fishing

Blessed with a warm subtropical climate, Ishigaki Island offers fishing conditions where even beginners can enjoy good results. From half-day, hands-free fishing experiences for families to full-scale charter

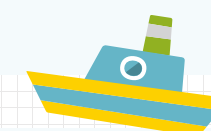
trips targeting big catches, a wide range of plans is available. Many shops include rods and bait in the price, and some even offer services to have your catch prepared at partner local restaurants.



Island Hopping

Along with regular ferry trips to islands like Iriomote and Taketomi, island-hopping tours also explore remote, uninhabited islands rarely visited by scheduled services. From Phantom Island (Hamajima) and tide-shaped

Barasu Island to rabbit-inhabited Kayama Island, many tours include snorkeling, offering a deeper and more immersive island-hopping experience.



Other Marine Activities

Beyond the classics, Ishigaki Island features a diverse lineup of marine fun, from parasailing and sailing to wakeboarding and banana

boat rides. With options for both adventure lovers and families, you can enjoy the island's ocean your way.



Interview with a Marine Activity Guide!

Times may change, but my desire to delight our guests never does.

As a native islander, what led you into this line of work?

Simply because I've loved the sea since I was a child. I worked in marine-related jobs at a resort in Fusaki for about 3 years, and then started Sea Friends. At that time, there were still very few divers coming to Ishigaki, most people just passed through and went on to Iriomote. I wondered why, and realized that many shop owners on Iriomote were skilled in underwater photography and very good at promoting their diving. So I also began taking photos, sharing images of manta rays around Ishigaki with magazines. Winning awards and holding photo exhibitions helped spread the word, and gradually more divers started coming to Ishigaki.

Before Social Media, attracting tourists must have been different. What was it like back then?

At that time, there were 4,5 dive shops on Ishigaki. We worked together to explore new sites and even named places like "Manta Scramble." We filmed guests with 8mm cameras and made copies for them as souvenirs. We always wanted to show visitors manta rays, so we did our best within safe limits, even when the sea was rough. Times have changed, but my desire to make guests happy has never



Keisho shows magazines featuring his photos. Beside him is his son, Yoshihiko, who has taken over the business.

It may sound dramatic, but I hope this sea can change the way people see their lives.

There are surprisingly few islanders who become marine guides. What led you to choose this path?

I had always wanted to do something connected to the island. After leaving the island for a time, I returned and was deeply healed by the sea and starry skies. It reminded me how much this nature had supported me since childhood. Showing visiting friends around the island and seeing their excitement inspired me to become a guide. I returned the next year and have been guiding for 20 years.

What do you keep in mind when guiding at sea?

Safety always comes first. Beyond that, I hope guests return home with a positive change, feeling refreshed and connected to nature. So when we see sea turtles, I don't just say, "There's a turtle." I share their way of life and the environment they depend on. By sharing not only what we see, but how marine life lives and depends on its environment, I hope guests realize that everything is



Holding both First-Class and Special Small Vessel Operator licenses, Ohama knows the seas around Ishigaki inside and out.

Ishigaki Diving Service
Sea Friends / Owner

Sunagawa Keisho

<https://sea-friends.net>

Profile

A legend in the Ishigaki diving industry, he founded his shop in 1982, when Ishigaki was still in its early days as a diving destination, and has been sharing its underwater appeal ever since. He is also a renowned underwater photographer, with numerous awards to his name.



changed. I don't really think of it as hardship, it's always been fun. I was especially happy when my son, who had been working on the mainland, returned and said he would take over the shop. I've retired, but during busy seasons I still go out to sea to support him and give him a break.

What are your thoughts on the current diving industry?

Today, there are around 200 dive shops, and most follow the rules, though some occasionally do not. While we remind each other on site, it is difficult to strictly enforce regulations. There are challenges as the number of people increases, but the ocean belongs to everyone. I hope we can all follow the rules and continue to enjoy the sea together.

Snorkeling Tours
Big Beach Ishigaki / Owner

Yukihiro Ohama

<https://big-beach.info/>

Profile

A native guide from Ishigaki Island and Chairman of the Yaeyama Phantom Island Council. An expert on the island's nature, he is knowledgeable in the sea, starry skies, caves, and local wildlife, and personally guides all courses offered by his company.



connected. Witnessing that moment of realization is one of the rewards of being a guide.

Do you have a message for visitors?

Environmental issues such as marine debris and microplastics are a serious concern. Another challenge is the increase in inexperienced operators. Some shops allow untrained newcomers to guide tours, which raises safety concerns. At our company, we limit each guide to a maximum of four guests. We believe this is the highest number that still allows us to properly watch over everyone. From the outside, it can be difficult for visitors to judge whether a shop is truly reliable, so I believe it is important for us and for local authorities to communicate clearly and responsibly.

Q & A with Marine Tour Guides



Hisao Tochigi

<https://www.ocean-b.net>
oceanblue.hisao@gmail.com

Affil. / Exp. Ocean Blue / 31 years

Certs. PADI MSDT; OMSB SD; First-Class Small Vessel Operator License

A1 Our tours focus on exploring the underwater world through diving and marine observation. With marine life, shimmering light, and a feeling of weightlessness, diving offers a truly different perspective, inviting you to discover a whole new world.

A2 Depending on sea conditions, we enjoy relaxed diving around a variety of islands, including Ishigaki, Taketomi, Kohama, Kuroshima, Iriomote, and Hateruma. For first-time divers, trial diving programs offer a safe and comfortable way to experience the underwater world.

A3 Ishigaki's waters are home to Japan's largest coral reef areas, filled with colorful and healthy coral. The best season to enjoy coral is from May to October. In spring, many marine species gather to spawn, while winter is known as a great season for encounters with larger marine life.



Yoshinobu Nito

<https://nobugw.com>
[@nobusbouken](https://www.nobusbouken)

Affil. / Exp. NOBU Guide Works / 20 years

Certs. NAUI Snorkel Leader; Commercial Diver; First-Class Small Vessel Operator License, and others

A1 Our tours include Kabira Bay kayaking, Blue Cave snorkeling, and underwater photo classes at Yonehara Beach.

A2 For safety and comfort, we provide free rental rash guards or wetsuits, and our beginner-friendly tours feature easy beach entry. We offer Blue Cave exploration and in-reef snorkeling, as well as sea turtle watching tours for intermediate-level guests.

A3 In winter, private clear SUP and river trekking are especially popular. All tour photo data is provided free, making it easy to keep your memories.



Hisao Tochigi

☎ 0980-89-2191
info@umikyo.com

Affil. / Exp. Umi no Kyoshitsu / 25 years

Certs. PADI Master Instructor; EFR Instructor; First-Class Small Vessel Operator License

A1 We offer trial diving, courses, and fun diving in the northern area of Ishigaki Island, in a shop surrounded by nature. As a PADI Five Star Dive Center with highly experienced staff, guests can enjoy diving with confidence and peace of mind.

A2 A premium manta ray diving course for beginners is one of our most popular programs. With a maximum ratio of two guests per instructor, we provide a safe and carefully guided trial diving experience.

A3 Diving, snorkeling, and parasailing are all great ways to enjoy Ishigaki's clear seas, with paragliding also available in the north. For stable sea conditions and better flight prices, April, May (excluding Golden Week), and early June are ideal times to visit.



Nobuya Tamashiro

☎ 080-3374-8883 (8:00-19:00)
<https://www.painu-ishigaki.com>

Affil. / Exp. Painu Island Leisure Fishing / 7th year

Certs. First-Class Small Vessel Operator License

A1 Our fishing charter provides a relaxing way to enjoy the sea while fishing in Ishigaki's rich natural environment. Suitable for all levels, including beginners and families, we offer bait fishing and jigging to target a variety of colorful and large fish unique to Okinawa.

A2 All tours are boat-based, and rod rental and bait are included, allowing guests to join without bringing equipment. Jigging guests should bring their own gear. Your catch can be enjoyed at partner restaurants for an additional cooking fee.

A3 Sunny days are perfect for outdoor activities like fishing, diving, and kayaking. On rainy days, indoor experiences such as cave tours, glass crafts, and Shisa making are recommended.



Mami Hanashiro

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[@jellyfish644](https://www.jellyfish644.com)

Affil. / Exp. JellyFish / 20 years

Certs. OMSB Snorkel Guide; OMSB Water Rescue Officer; Okinawa Prefecture Green Tourism Instructor

A1 We offer snorkeling tours at Yonehara Beach in the national park, as well as sea kayaking tours to the Blue Cave. To ensure a safe, and enjoyable experience in Ishigaki, our tours are limited to small groups of up to six guests.

A2 We share the fascinating lives of marine creatures such as clownfish and sea turtles, while guiding tours with care for the environment. Photos, welcome drinks, and hot showers are included, helping guests return home feeling refreshed and satisfied.

A3 June to July is my favorite time of year, especially for snorkeling. The warm water brings many baby fish, making the sea feel like a lively underwater nursery. It is also a great season for enjoying fresh tropical fruits on land.



Takeshi Matuszawa

☎ 090-9242-7574
kachibai@icloud.com

Affil. / Exp. Ishigaki SUP Tour Kachibai / 40 years

Certs. Yaeyama SUP Association Certified Guide Instructor; SUPA Basic Instructor; Red Cross Water Safety & Rescue Officer

A1 We offer small-group SUP tours, selecting the best locations according to daily conditions and guest experience. Free tour photos are included, capturing smiles and scenery in Ishigaki's natural setting.

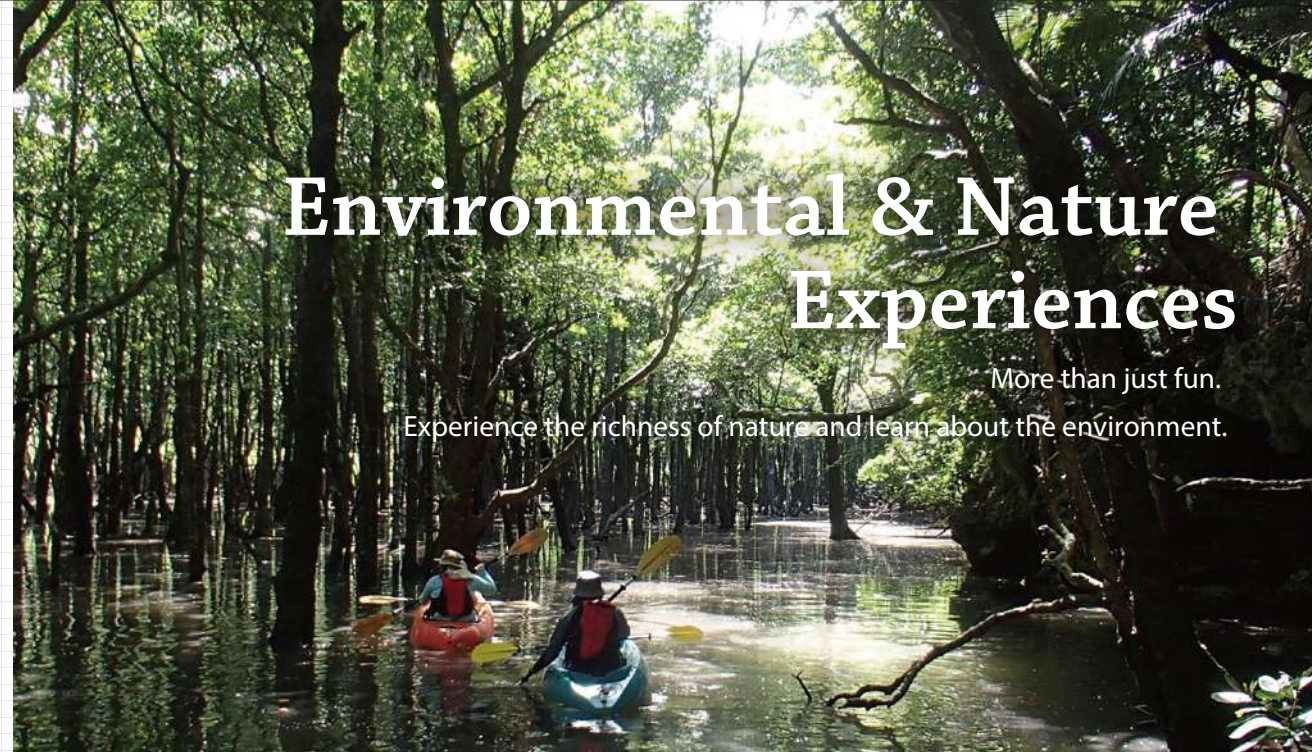
A2 We offer everything from beginner-friendly shallow beaches to reef areas for advanced SUP riders. Our long experience allows us to tailor guidance to each individual.

A3 Sunrise and sunset SUP tours are among our most popular experiences, with gentle conditions and soft light perfect for relaxing paddles. Ideal for beginners, these tours sometimes end with the magical sight of rainbows after brief tropical rains.



Environmental & Nature Experiences

More than just fun.
Experience the richness of nature and learn about the environment.



Nature Guided Tours

Enjoy hands-on nature activities suitable for all ages, including young children. Explore the sea, mangroves, and forest life while learning about the environment

from knowledgeable guides. These experiences may inspire a fresh perspective on everyday life.



Beach Clean-Up

Countless pieces of marine debris wash up on Ishigaki's beautiful beaches—many marked with foreign languages. Ocean plastic is

a global issue that cannot be solved by islands alone. What can we do to protect this precious nature? Wake up a little early, join a beach clean-up, and greet the sunrise while reflecting on the future of our planet.



Waterfalls & Trekking

The appeal of Ishigaki and Iriomote goes far beyond the sea. Ishigaki is home to Mt. Omoto, the highest mountain in Okinawa, while Iriomote boasts vast wilderness recognized as a UNESCO World

Natural Heritage site. The Yaeyama Islands offer many activities to explore waterfalls, forests, and mountains. Discover new wonders as you encounter plants and wildlife deep in the forest.



Through eco tours,
Ohori connects people with nature while nurturing
environmental awareness in their everyday lives.

What does eco tourism mean to you, Mr. Ohori?

Eco tours are, in essence, environmental education through nature experiences. Whether it's canoeing, trekking, or stargazing, people can enter in different ways. What matters is enjoying nature while building environmental awareness that guests can take back into their everyday lives. Because we work with nature, sustainability is essential. Whether at sea or in the mountains, I believe all nature-based tourism should be eco tourism.

What do you find most rewarding about this work?

The most rewarding part is building long-term relationships with returning families. Many guests come with young children, and I've had the joy of watching them grow. Seeing how nature experiences connect to their everyday lives and become part of the foundation for their future values is deeply meaningful. After COVID, many families returned after 10 or even 20 years, and it felt like confirmation that what we have been doing all along truly mattered.



What do you think is most special about Ishigaki?

What makes Ishigaki special is how the sea, mountains, and town are all close together, creating a balanced and diverse natural environment. The constantly changing scenery is a key part of its charm. Because it is easy to visit, Ishigaki also plays an important role in sharing the value of

Eco Tour Fukumimi /
Representative
Kenji Oahori
<https://2933tours.com/>

Profile

Born in Tokyo in 1966 and a graduate of Ryukyu University, he is Chairman of the Ishigaki Island Outfitter Union and a recipient of a Special Award at the 11th Ecotourism Awards. He offers family-friendly eco tours that are safe and enjoyable for guests of all ages. [Certs.] Nature Observation Instructor (Japan Nature Conservation Society) etc.



nature and environmental issues. It is a place where protection and wise use of nature can truly coexist.

What challenges do you see in Ishigaki's tourism and guiding industry?

The more we prioritize quality, the harder it becomes to increase profits, and making a living can be a real challenge. I believe there is room for both large-scale operators who handle many participants and those who focus on delivering deeper, more meaningful experiences. With support from the local government and cooperation among operators, Ishigaki's tourism can move toward a more sustainable future.



Q & A with Environmental & Nature Tour Guides



Hidenori Tanaka

<https://www.ishigakinicecleanproject.com/>
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Affil. / Exp. Jomon Planning LLC / 5 years

Certs. Elephant Handler



Ryosaburo Minami

<https://minamiproject.com>

Affil. / Exp. MinamiProject LLC / 22 years

Certs. Divemaster / Wellness Coordinator / EFR



Kunihiro Yamanaka

opa@bo.sunnyday.jp
☎ 090-6856-1429

Affil. / Exp. Ishigaki Island Eco Tour Shop Opa / Over 22 years

Certs. Certified Eco-Tour Guide Training Program (Completed) / OMSB Water Rescue Technician, etc.

A1 We plan and operate various tours focused on learning about the SDGs and building a sustainable society. Through experiences in Ishigaki, we encourage participants to think about social and environmental issues as something personal, not just global problems, but issues that connect directly to their own lives.

A2 With the vision of "Sending Nice Clean from Ishigaki to the world," we run the ISHIGAKI NICECLEAN PROJECT, an eco-friendly initiative that anyone living on or visiting the island can join. By picking up one bag of trash as a way to say thank you for your trip, travelers, locals, and the planet can all be happy. It's a new, win-win-win style of tourism experience.

A3 We recommend immersive nature experiences that go beyond simply "watching the light." By stepping into the great outdoors, you can feel a sense of unity with nature and find that you are part of its living cycle.

A1 We offer diverse tours, from cultural experiences to snorkeling, SUP, kayaking, diving, cave exploration, and night tours, in partnership with local businesses. On every tour, we also introduce guests to key environmental issues in the Yaeyama region.

A2 We create unique, memorable tours with comfortable equipment and facilities that make guests want to return again and again. We also offer private tours and media coordination to meet a wide range of needs. Our goal is to help guests truly discover the value of Ishigaki, while taking small actions, such as picking up litter during tours, to show our commitment to caring for the environment.

A3 Ishigaki is rich in nature, offering beautiful seas, mountains, and culture. Each season brings something special.

A1 Opa's eco-tours are nature-based experiences that can be enjoyed by everyone—from young children to grandparents—making them perfect for the whole family.

A2 To help you fully experience the rich natural environment of Ishigaki Island, we offer a wide variety of activities, including mangrove kayaking, river trekking, night safaris, and Yaeyama firefly watching. All tours are led by an energetic eco-tour guide with over 20 years of guiding experience.

A3 Ishigaki Island is a wonderful destination not only in summer, but throughout the entire year. Mangrove kayaking is available year-round, Yaeyama firefly watching can be enjoyed in spring, and night safaris offer opportunities to observe nocturnal wildlife and the star-filled sky. Ishigaki Island is full of exciting experiences—come and enjoy them with us!



Stargazing & Night tours

The appeal of Ishigaki at night, known for its starry skies and nature



Stargazing

In 2018, the Iriomote-Ishigaki National park area, including the Hirakubo Peninsula and Mt. Omoto, became the first ever site in Japan designated as an International Dark Sky Park by the International Dark-Sky Association. Tours

held mainly in the island's northern areas allow visitors to enjoy seasonal starry skies, from the Milky Way on clear summer nights to bright and crystal clear stars in winter.



Night Sky Photography

Alongside stargazing, night sky photography tours are highly popular. From guided photography sessions to professional shoots under the stars, visitors can choose

from many options. Recently, these tours have also become popular for wedding photos, with some offering both shooting and stargazing.



Night Wildlife Watching

With Ishigaki's rich ecosystem, it is home to many creatures active only at night. Encounters may include giant coconut crabs or even the calls of owls echoing through the

forest. Depending on the season, sea turtles may be seen nesting on quiet northern beaches, adding to the thrill of a tropical night adventure.



Firefly Watching

Ishigaki offers three main species of fireflies, which can be seen year-round, with tours featuring the Yaeyama firefly, the smallest in Japan, being especially popular from March to late May. Living in forested areas, these

fireflies glow only briefly after sunset, creating a magical scene often described as a "carpet of light" or a "natural illumination," and many night tours are held from spring to early summer.

Hearing the guests say, "It became a once in a lifetime memory" truly stays with me.

As an instructor of the Ishigaki Churaboshi Meister Training Program, what is appealing about working with the stars?

The appeal of stargazing tourism lies in its depth and expanding knowledge. Beyond simply admiring beauty, it can spark interest in the universe, the Earth, and local culture and history. That is why a guide's skills matter greatly, and why I focus on developing guides with strong knowledge, communication, and hospitality. Seeing them confidently guide others under the stars is my greatest reward.

Have you faced any challenges in running stargazing tours?

One challenge is selecting the right locations, as I am committed to finding places that best showcase Ishigaki's night sky. Another is the weather. There are nights when clouds prevent us from seeing the stars,



A premium night tour at Ishigaki Island Starry Farm where you truly feel the universe.

even though guests have planned their trip for this moment. Yet this makes clear and star-filled skies even more special. Hearing guests say "It became a once in a lifetime memory" is deeply rewarding.

Ishigaki Starry Sky Farm
President

Takahiro Ueno

<https://hoshisora.jp/>

Profile

Based in Ishigaki Island, he leads stargazing tours, lectures, and educational programs nationwide. He serves as the representative Of the Dark Sky Preservation Association (DPA), working with local governments and communities to promote dark sky protection.



What challenges does the stargazing industry face?

The greatest challenge is the gradual loss of darkness, even in rural and island areas. Although the Iriomote-Ishigaki National Park is Japan's first Dark Sky Park, lighting that lacks proper direction and color

temperature is increasing. Sharing the idea that "dark skies are a resource" and integrating night-sky protection into tourism policy and community planning is essential.



Q & A with Stargazing and Night Tour Guides



Nobunari Aragaki

☎ 090-9382-0744
<https://goattours.com>

Affil. / Exp. Nagareboshi no Oka / 9 years
Certs. Officially recognized by Kuro Community Center and Hirakubo Peninsula Community Association

A1 We offer private stargazing tours at the Hirakubo Peninsula, one of the finest locations on Ishigaki Island. Relaxing in reclining chairs on a quiet hill free from artificial lights, guests can enjoy an immersive experience surrounded by the Milky Way and countless stars.

A2 Our greatest feature is the exceptionally dark environment preserved by the local community of the Hirakubo Peninsula. We offer star commentary rooted in Yaeyama culture, along with sanshin music and professional night sky photography, creating a multisensory experience of the universe.

A3 Ishigaki Island's night sky has its best seasons, with the summer Milky Way being especially spectacular from late June to late October. From the Hirakubo Peninsula, the Milky Way is a once in a lifetime sight, and in winter even the Andromeda Galaxy can be seen with the naked eye.



Keiko Tomori

☎ 090-1947-5898
<https://ishigakijima-sunshine.net/activity/tour/>

Affil. / Exp. Utakuna Ishigaki Island / 14 years

A1 We offer the Shani-Shani Stargazing Tour in a specially designed space within the grounds of Ishigaki Island Beach Hotel Sunshine, created exclusively for stargazing. Open to non-hotel guests as well, the tour introduces stars and constellations along with unique star-related culture of the Yaeyama region.

A2 Depending on the sky conditions, telescopes or binoculars are used during the tour. An optional plan featuring live performances of Yaeyama folk songs inspired by the stars is also available.

A3 The changing beauty of the moon, shaped by the lunar calendar, is another highlight.



Jiro Amanogawa

☎ 080-1537-2766
desk@amanokawajiro.com

Affil. / Exp. Amanokawa Jiro Photo&Tours / Stargazing15 years/Firefly12years

A1 Led by photographer Amanogawa Jiro, who has been featured in numerous media for his love of the island's nature and his contribution to the Dark Sky designation, these tours and photo services offer unique night sky experiences. Tours include stargazing photography, star-themed photo shoots, and Yaeyama firefly viewing.

A2 Stargazing photos by Amanogawa Jiro use a special technique to capture both stars and people in perfect focus in a single shot. While "Stargazing Photos" are casual keepsakes, "Star Portraits" are refined sessions featuring carefully chosen locations and beautifully composed poses.

A3 While the summer night is breathtaking, being surrounded by Yaeyama fireflies is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Seasonal firefly night tours / year-round stargazing photo sessions and guidance / Special food, culture, and nature tours planned for the winter. ※Stargazing tours operate on nights with minimal moonlight, around 20 days per month.



Craft Workshops

Create a keepsake that brings travel memories back to life!



Pottery Experience

Ishigaki is known for its pottery, shaped by rich soil and local traditions. Many ceramic artists run their own studios, each with a different style. Every December, a pottery festival draws enthusiasts

from everywhere. Pottery studios across the island offer hands-on experiences, where even beginners can create authentic pieces under careful guidance, enjoying a special moment.



Minsa Weaving Experience

With a history dating back to the Ryukyu Kingdom, Yaeyama Minsa weaving is a beloved local tradition. In this hands-on experience, visitors enjoy the weaving process itself and can create items ranging from

small accessories to larger pieces which are perfect as a memorable souvenir from the travel journey.



Traditional Handcraft Experience

For generations, islanders have crafted everyday tools such as baskets and mats from local plants like adan and shell ginger. As these items require time and skill to make, they are now considered

valuable crafts. In this experience, visitors can create small items such as coasters or charms, enjoying a peaceful moment immersed in handcrafting.

Shisa Crafting & Painting etc.

Hand-shaped Shisa figurine making and Shisa painting, where visitors choose their own colors, are classic hands-on experiences enjoyed by both children and adults. With

many experiences located around the city, Ryukyu glass and Sand crafts can be enjoyed regardless of the weather.



Sharing Minsa weaving with others is both my passion and my mission.

What inspired you to enter the world of weaving, and what challenges did you face?

My inspiration was my mother, Kinue Ara, who ran a clothing shop. After the war, as Western clothing became widespread, she grew concerned that Minsa weaving—an important form of women's handcraft and identity—was disappearing. Determined to preserve it, she decided to start a weaving business around the time of Okinawa's reversion to Japan. I was living in Tokyo then, but moved back to the island, drawn by her passion, and have been involved from the very beginning.

In 1972, the Minsa Weaving Research Institute was established, and when we first recruited trainees, many applicants were women in their 60s and 70s. As more weavers joined over time, we invited masters of dyeing and weaving, while I trained in every step of the process and supported the operation behind the scenes. Thanks to those early struggles, I still understand how each part of the work came together. Looking back, the hardship was well worth it.

Weaving experiences for visitors were rare in the 80s. How did you start offering them?

At first, the Minsa Craft Center was simply a workshop with a small display of items such as pouches and wallets. Gradually, visitors began asking to purchase weaving directly from the workshop, so we added a shop and an exhibition room, and opened part of the production process to the public. To help visitors better appreciate the effort involved, we later introduced hands-on weaving experiences, which continue today.

Azamiya Minsa Craft Museum
Sales Director / Executive Managing Director

Kimie Ohama

<https://minsah.co.jp>

Profile

Inspired by her mother's passion for Minsa weaving, she began her career in textiles in her early twenties. Having mastered the entire weaving process, she now balances management roles with hands-on instruction, embodying a lifelong dedication to Minsa weaving.



In recent years, the number of international visitors has grown, and it has been very rewarding to share Minsa weaving with people from overseas. Although I am usually busy with sales, I personally gave a lecture when we first welcomed a group from Hawaii, which was very well received. Since then, we have continued to welcome many visitors from Hawaii.

What does preservation of Minsa mean to you?

There have been many challenges, but I have never considered "not being able to do it" as an option. Day and night, I have focused on how it could be done, always searching for solutions. Passing Minsa weaving on to future generations is deeply fulfilling, and I see it as my important responsibility and my mission.

Q & A with Craft Tour Guides



Haruhiko Kaneko

☎ 0980-88-8722
✉ ishigakiyaki@gmail.com

Affil. / Exp. Ishigaki-yaki Pottery Kiln LLC / Owner



Akira Hachihama

☎ 0980-83-2333
✉ isiyae@gmail.com

Affil. / Exp. Coral Blue Experience Workshop / 9 years
Certs. Certified Travel Service Supervisor, Churaboshi Meister



Michiko Ikehara

☎ 0980-86-8960
<https://yachimunkan.co.jp/>

Affil. / Exp. Yachimun-kan / Director

A1 Our pottery workshop lets visitors create plates, cups, and bowls featuring Ishigaki-yaki's signature "Ishigaki Blue," inspired by the beauty of traditional Yuteki Tenmoku. Suitable for all ages, this popular experience offers the joy of making a unique, one-of-a-kind ceramic piece.

A2 Ishigaki-yaki is known internationally for its artistic value, with works included in the British Museum collection. The kiln's unique techniques evoke the sea in a mysterious, luminous beauty found nowhere else.

A3 Thanks to the mild climate, Ishigaki offers rich natural experiences throughout the year. Located less than 15 minutes by car, from the kiln, Kabira Bay is an iconic view not to be missed.

A1 Our workshop offers experiences such as painting original Shisa figures, creating coral lamps, and making coral craft photo frames. Suitable for all ages, these popular activities can be enjoyed by both children and adults.

A2 Our paintable Shisa figures are handmade in-house and exclusive to our shop. Open year round in a convenient city location, we accept walk-ins when seats are available, and completed works can be taken home immediately.

A3 Indoor craft experiences are ideal on rainydays, and on clear nights we recommend stargazing tours available through our shop. Thanks to Ishigaki's southern location, visitors are able to see stars not visible in mainland Japan.

A1 Making shell ginger coasters, mini baskets, antsuku charms, and accessories using island seeds. Materials such as adan and ginger are mostly harvested from plants grown on-site.

A2 This experience offers more than simple crafting, inviting visitors to learn traditional skills by working directly with island plants and natural materials. Using eco-friendly materials that return to nature, it provides a rare opportunity to feel Ishigaki's natural rhythm and richness of time shared by its environment.

A3 Ishigaki's beauty lies in its rich contrast from cobalt blue seas to lush greenery of Mount Omoto, the highest mountain in Okinawa. Even a simple walk along the beach can be enough to feel the island's natural energy and enjoy the luxury of unhurried time.





Traditional Cultural Experience

Discover Ishigaki's city, sounds, dances, and flavors, and experience the island's history and traditions beyond sightseeing.

Town Walking Tour

Rather than simply visiting famous sights, this tour takes you through old houses, sacred sites, and narrow alleyways to explore the history and daily life of Ishigaki. Learn how Ryukyu, mainland Japanese, and overseas cultures have blended to

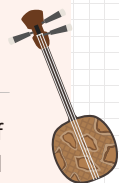
shape the island's identity. Through personal stories, you'll gain a connection to Ishigaki, making this a recommended experience, especially for repeat visitors.



Sanshin Experience

This hands-on Sanshin experience lets beginners try Okinawa's traditional instrument. Even first-time players can learn to play a song in a short time and enjoy

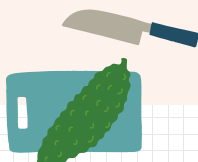
creating the beautiful sounds of the Sanshin. It's a wonderful way to connect with island culture through music.



Traditional Cooking with Local Island Veg.

Yaeyama's food culture blends Ryukyu, Chinese, mainland Japanese, and overseas influences, with traditional dishes still passed down for special occasions. In this experience,

you'll harvest island vegetables with a local grandmother and learn to cook traditional recipes. While enjoying her cooking, you'll gain a glimpse into island life and culture.



I design tours tailored to each guest, to share the history of the island and the rhythm of its people.

What kind of tours do you plan and offer?

Each tour is fully customized to match our guests' interests. One popular option is a "Historical Walk" around Tōrin-ji Temple and the 18-ban Street area, where we explore former entertainment districts, the Gongen Hall reflecting Ryukyu-Satsuma history, and Okinawa's only traditional hand-forged blacksmith, all within just a few hundred meters. I often invite guests to "switch off modern time and travel back to old Ishigaki." First-time visitors learn the island's basics, while repeat and international guests enjoy tailor-made tours that reveal surprising new sides of Ishigaki.

What is the appeal of sharing Ishigaki's traditions and culture?

The greatest charm lies in Ishigaki's layered history, where Ryukyuan, mainland Japanese, and overseas cultures intertwine. This can be seen in places like Tōrin-ji Temple, shell mound pottery showing ties with China and Southeast Asia, and sacred Utaki sites where nature worship coexists with torii gates. By viewing historical figures not as distant legends but as real people, history becomes warm and alive. When guests notice the small, hidden values in everyday scenery, their connection to the island deepens in a powerful way.

What role do you hope to play through this work?

The "rhythm" in Tamarism represents the invisible heartbeat of history and people. History is not about dates, it stays with us when it is told as a

Temarism, Inc.
President

Takashi Okudaira

<https://www.temacoco.jp/>

Profile

After serving for 23 years as a representative director and executive at Hirata Kanko, He founded Tamarism. Drawing on his experience, he plans original tours on history, culture, and the environment. He contributes to regional revitalization while showcasing new values of Ishigaki.



story. For example, learning that Eiichi Shibusawa, featured on Japan's new banknotes, once supported Ishigaki's industries can make guests think of the island every time they open their wallet. I want to place small anchors of history in people's hearts. By making the "invisible" visible and helping guests feel the presence of the past, I hope those who were not interested in history will leave with something that stays with them.

What do you see as the main challenges facing the guide industry?

Tourism demand is increasing faster than the training of qualified guides, making it difficult to maintain both sufficient staffing and high service quality. In addition, low pricing and income instability caused by seasonal fluctuations remain serious challenges for the industry.

Q & A with Cultural Tour Guides



Hiromi Okura

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Affil. / Exp. Yuntaku Garden Association / 3 years
Certs. Wellness Tourism Coordinator,
Nature Observation Instructor



Miki Yamaguchi

☎ 050-3555-3443
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Affil. / Exp. Ritokara Research Institute / 3 years
Certs. Instructor, Nomura School Preservation
Society of Ryukyu Classical Music



Tamako Takanishi

☎ 0980-83-1665 (need reservations)

Affil. / Exp. Marutaka Farm / 20 years

A1 I offer walking tours in Ishigaki's city area to introduce Yaeyama's history, culture, and nature. There are two routes: the West Course (Red-Tile Backstreets Walk) and the East Course (Museum & Utaki Sacred Sites Walk). On both routes, I explain traditional houses, historical sites, and local plants along the way.

A2 The West Course is also part of government-linked relocation programs, featuring traditional houses, sacred utaki sites, and key figures from island history. Guests are especially impressed by the island plants along the route.

A3 While marine tours are popular, I recommend land-based activities such as nature walks, stargazing, and mangrove kayaking, which are also available in winter and avoid the summer heat.

A1 Rather than focusing on simply trying to play the sanshin or dance, our tours are designed to help guests discover Yaeyama's culture and history through town walks and interaction with local instructors. For international visitors, we use a multilingual app for historical explanations, and interpreters can also join the tour upon request.

A2 A key appeal is meeting local instructors who actively carry on Yaeyama culture. While they are not professional guides, their authenticity makes the experience special. My role is to connect people and create meaningful cultural encounters through dialogue and shared experiences.

A3 Winter in Ishigaki is often cloudy, but clear days are especially beautiful. Relaxing with tea in a garden and occasionally enjoying live sanshin music feels like a truly luxurious way to experience island life.

A1 Guests harvest seasonal island vegetables, then cook and enjoy traditional Yaeyama home-style dishes together. With over 20 years of green tourism experience, this program offers a warm and authentic way to learn island cuisine while sharing stories and a meal with a local grandmother.

A2 This experience offers a rare connection to everyday island life. By talking with a local grandmother, guests discover a blended food culture shaped by China and mainland Japan, with dishes adapted for modern and international tastes while preserving tradition.

A3 From around June, tropical fruits like mangoes and pineapples are in season. November is also ideal, with a wider variety of vegetables available for cooking. In midsummer, there are fewer vegetables, but local favorites like goya and hechima are popular.

Discover Ishigaki Traditional Culture

Exploring its rich history and traditions is just as rewarding.
Discover places where the craftsmanship of the past still live on, offering meaningful experiences.



❖ Minsā Craft Center ❖

Minsā weaving features a traditional pattern that carries the wish, "May we be together forever." At the craft center, you can explore exhibits on its history, browse and purchase beautiful woven products, and try your hand at traditional hand weaving. With careful guidance, even first-time weavers can enjoy creating their own piece.

📍 〒907-0004 909 Tonoshiro, Ishigaki City ☎ 0980-82-3473
🕒 9:00 ~ 18:00 (Workshops: 9:30~17:00)
🚗 About 6 minutes by car from the Remote Islands Terminal



❖ Yachimun-kan ❖

A curated collection of Okinawan and Yaeyama crafts is displayed in a traditional house, set within peaceful grounds centered around a 400-year-old banyan tree. Visitors can also join folk craft workshops using local plants to experience island culture and traditional wisdom.

📍 〒907-0242 1960-15 Shiraho, Ishigaki City ☎ 0980-86-8960
🕒 10:00 ~ 16:00 (Closed Sun & Wed)
🚗 About 5 minutes by car from New Ishigaki Airport



❖ Ishigaki City Traditional Crafts Center ❖

This center preserves Yaeyama Jōfu and Minsā weaving, traditional textiles of the Yaeyama region. The second floor offers free exhibits and a shop, while visitors can observe live weaving on the first floor. From April to November, thread-spinning workshops are also held weekly by reservation.

📍 〒907-0004 485-3 Tonoshiro, Ishigaki City ☎ 0980-82-3522
🕒 9:00 ~ 18:00 (Closed Sat afternoon, Sun & public holidays)
🚗 About 5 minutes by car from the Remote Islands Terminal



❖ Ishigaki Yaima Village ❖

This open-air village features restored red-tile houses where visitors can experience traditional island life. Folk music shows, squirrel monkeys, and nearby mangroves make it a fun spot to enjoy history, culture, and nature together.

📍 〒907-0021 967-1 Nagura, Ishigaki City ☎ 0980-82-8798
🕒 9:00 ~ 17:30
🚗 About 20 minutes by car from the Remote Islands Terminal

Learn from ancestral wisdom. Adapt it. Pass it on.

History and traditional culture are shaped by the natural environment of each region and passed down in many forms. In times without electricity, gas, or running water, people discovered countless ideas in nature and applied them to daily life through creativity and ingenuity. At Ishigaki Yaima Village, many places still reflect this wisdom and way of thinking.

Why were pieces of coral used as foundation stones for pillars?
Why are red-tile roofs made so heavy?

What surprising uses did hibiscus have?
What role does the wall in front of the entrance serve?
Throughout the village, you'll find many examples of how nature and everyday life were closely connected.

These can be enjoyed simply as stories of the past, but we hope visitors will go a step further, discovering their own ideas about noticing, creating, and passing on these traditions for the future.



Guide & Promotion
Ishigaki Yaima Village
Sumiyoshi Ryuji
info@yaimamura.com



Festivals & Traditions

行事名	開催月(目安)	旧暦での開催日	開催場所
Haarii	May-June	4th of May in the lunar calendar	Mainly Ishigaki Fishing Port (main venue), also Shiraho Port, Ibaruma Fishing Port, and others
Hōnen Festival	July-Aug	June-July in the lunar calendar	Held in villages across the island
Angama	Aug-Sept	During the "Kyubon" (Lunar Obon) period	Mainly in private homes and villages across the island
Shishi-mai	Aug-Sept	During the "Kyubon" (Lunar Obon) period	Villages such as Ōhama, Shiraho, Miyara, and Tonoshiro
Kitsugan-sai	Sept-Nov	Aug in the lunar calendar	Kabira area, Kohama, Taketomi, Kuroshima, and Iriomote Islands

Haari Dragon Boat Festival

A historic maritime festival where teams compete in "Sabani" (traditional wooden boats) to pray for safety and success at sea. Ishigaki Port hosts the island's most impressive races. Don't miss the



practice sessions held a few days before the festival, the harbor comes alive with the locals' passion and excitement.



Hōnen Festival (Pūri)

The Hōnen Festival is Ishigaki's largest farming ritual, held to give thanks for the harvest and pray for a bountiful year. The two-day celebration features On-Pūri and Mura-Pūri. The most spectacular events take place in the central Shika-aza districts, with Hatagashira banner performances, traditional arts, and a powerful grand tug-of-war.



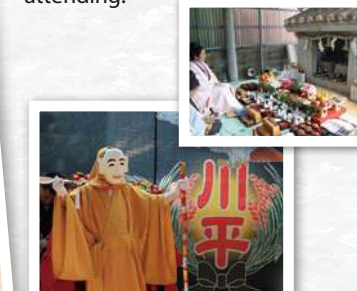
Angama & Shishi-mai

During Obon, the spirits Ushumai and Umii visit homes in the Angama ritual with humorous dances and dialogue. In areas like Shiraho, Shishi-mai lion dances also appear to ward off evil. The playful lions may gently "bite" children's heads, a tradition believed to bring good health and protection.



Ketsugan-sai

Please Note: Festival dates change every year, so be sure to check the schedule in advance. These events are important sacred rituals, not tourist shows. Please observe respectfully and follow local customs when attending.



※These events are important sacred rituals, not tourist shows. Please observe respectfully and follow local customs when attending.

More Ways to Enjoy Ishigaki

Discover More of Ishigaki! So Many Fun Experiences Await!

Horseback Riding

Ride with unique horses such as riders, and even sea rides in Okinawan native and rare Yonaguni summer, Ishigaki offers a truly horses, and enjoy refreshing beach special way to experience nature. rides and wide-open views. With courses for beginners to advanced



Sabani

Glide across the sea by sail and paddle on a traditional Okinawan wooden boat. Sabani rides offer a relaxing way to feel the power of

nature and a slower pace of time. Many boats are built at northern Ishigaki shipyards, with workshops also available.



Distillery & Salt Workshop Visits

Discover Awamori, Okinawa's traditional spirit with over 600 years of history, at local distilleries offering tours and tastings. You can

also visit salt workshops to see salt made from seawater and sun-dried on clear days.



Glass-Bottom Boat

One of Ishigaki's must-do experiences is a glass-bottom boat ride in Kabira Bay, a 3 star destination in the Michelin Green Guide. From the glass floor, you can

enjoy a natural aquarium without getting wet, perfect for those who prefer to stay dry. With many boats operating, it's easy to join without long waiting times.



Ride Through Nature

Beyond ocean activities, Ishigaki offers many exciting ride experiences. Enjoy refreshing Segway tours in Banna Park, scenic mountain bike rides, and even

paragliding for breathtaking views from above. It's a fun way to connect with Ishigaki's rich natural landscapes.



A Sabani ride tunes your heart to a slower, more traditional sense of time.

What is the true appeal of Sabani?

As a boat builder, I feel that the wisdom of generations of maritime culture is literally in my hands, it's like working hand in hand with those who came before us. On a Sabani tour, you cross the sea using both nature's power and your own. It's a primitive act, sometimes challenging, but when conditions are right, it becomes an incredibly graceful experience. During the tour, you can see people's expressions change. Their hearts are almost forced to tune into an older rhythm of time, far from the fast pace of city life. That transformation is what makes Sabani so special.

What kind of guests join your tours?

We welcome everyone, from school trip groups to first-time visitors to Okinawa, as well as loyal repeat guests who have visited many times. International visitors have also increased greatly, especially from Europe and North America. Because this is a sea activity where safety is essential, we sometimes work with interpreter guides who hold water rescue qualifications. Many Western guests, in particular, come seeking deep cultural experiences, and Sabani offers exactly that.



Sail the coral seas of northern Ishigaki and feel at one with nature.

Kura Sabani Tour
(Yoshida Sabani Boatyard)
Tomohiro Yoshida
<https://www.cicadae-sailboat.com/>

Profile

Trained under master boat builder, he became a specializing in traditional wooden sailing canoes built without metal nails. He now runs popular Sabani tours. He is also dedicated to training boat builders and supporting the Sabani tour community.

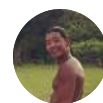


What are your thoughts on marine environmental issues and the future of the Sabani industry?

Sabani tours are close to nature, but no economic activity can be completely eco-friendly or place zero burden on the environment. What matters is whether we carry the mindset of "not causing harm" and "respectfully being allowed to enter nature." I don't want to force this on anyone, but I hope people approach nature with humility and respect.

Right now, I am focusing more on refining the quality of each tour rather than simply increasing guest numbers. I also want to put more energy into building boats. Since many operators use Sabani boats I have built, I hope that together we can bring out each tour's individuality and raise the overall standard of the industry.

Q & A with Tour Guides



Tsukasa Matsuura
☎ 080-6499-7186
@tnt_ishigaki

Affil. / Exp. T&T Co., Ltd. / 13 years

Certs. 2nd Class Unmanned Aircraft Pilot (Drone Operator) Special Small Vessel License



Ryusuke Asakura
<https://ishigaki-umahiroba.com/>

Affil. / Exp. Ishigaki Uma Hiroba / 10 years



Manami Osoko
☎ 0980-84-4118
support@seifuku.co.jp

Affil. / Exp. Seifuku Shuzo Co., Ltd. / 3 years

A1 I guide guests through the stunning landscapes of northern Ishigaki using Yamaha's high-performance electric mountain bikes, the e-Bike YBJ-MT Pro. I also offer tours on the beautiful Yaeyama sea through SUP and windsurfing experiences.

A2 On land, I use mountain bikes, and on the sea, SUP and windsurfing, to showcase the island's best scenery. Each tour is tailored to the day's sea conditions and season, offering experiences that can only be enjoyed here.

A3 Untouched nature and breathtaking, large-scale landscapes are the island's greatest attractions. With SUP, windsurfing, and mountain biking, Ishigaki offers world-class scenery that rivals major resort destinations.



A1 Ride rare native Yonaguni horses and experience the rich nature of northern Ishigaki. Through our tours, we also help promote awareness and conservation of this unique breed.

A2 The highlight is close interaction with the rare Yonaguni horses. In summer, the most popular activity is sea horseback riding, where you can enjoy riding with the horses in the ocean.

A3 Early spring is a great season, with comfortable weather and pleasant temperatures.



A1 We offer a daily factory tour at 2:00 p.m., where you can see the production of Awamori, spirits, and rum up close. After the tour, enjoy tastings and shopping at our distillery shop.

A2 Tours are free and require no reservation. Guests can sample various spirits and browse distillery-exclusive products, souvenirs, and original goods. Special gift sets and shipping services are also available.

A3 With warm weather year-round, Ishigaki is perfect for marine activities and nature sightseeing, especially from spring to autumn. Our indoor factory tour is also a great option on rainy days. Don't miss local cuisine such as Ishigaki beef, fresh seafood, island vegetables, and Yaeyama soba.



Island Tourism : The Future, Through the Lens of Hotels

There is a reason the stars have returned to Ishigaki. We spoke with a hotel operator about their efforts to protect the local community and the natural environment.

A Quiet Challenge That Began When the Ship Lights Disappeared



Guest rooms in the new wing, designed with light controls to protect the night sky.

At first, the team added shades to garden lights to reduce light pollution. They believed that preserving views of the Southern Cross would both protect the environment and enhance guest satisfaction.

In 2014, the hotel launched official stargazing tours. When a new building was added in 2016, lighting was carefully designed to limit light spill. This helped improve stargazing while also protecting nearby rivers and forests, allowing wildlife such as Ryukyu scops owls and giant eels to continue their natural lives.

The story began around 2008, when cargo ships disappeared from the sea in front of the hotel. With the night lights gone, Ms. Akagi noticed the Southern Cross shining clearly for the first time. That moment became the starting point for the hotel's commitment to protecting the night sky.



The night sky seen from the hotel, protecting a starlit sky where the Southern Cross.

Caring for Nature Through Everyday Hotel Practices

Over 50% of our ingredients are sourced locally from Okinawa and Ishigaki, supporting local production and reducing environmental impact. We also measure and analyze waste daily to improve our



Nourish both body and soul with locally sourced, farm-to-table ingredients.

reduction efforts. In our gardens, we minimize the use of chemicals and instead use natural repellents when possible. This helps maintain a healthy ecosystem where insects and birds thrive, creating a peaceful natural scene for our guests. Protecting this balance is an important part of the value we offer.



Ishigaki Island
Beach Hotel Sunshine
General Manager

Yoko Akagi

Founded in 1979, the hotel welcomed Ms. Akagi back in 2005, and she became President and General Manager in 2025. In 2024, it earned GSTC certification, becoming the second Japanese-owned hotel in Japan to receive this international sustainability standard.

Simple Rules to Protect the Island's Night and Environment

As the island becomes brighter due to LED signs and new developments, light management is an increasing challenge. Simple measures such as shaded lighting, adjusted color temperatures, and preventing light from spilling into the sky can reduce costs, save energy, and protect the night environment. Clear zoning of protected and developed areas, along with practical lighting guidelines for future updates, will help balance tourism growth with environmental protection.



Warm, gentle lighting blends beautifully with the sunset

Sustainability as Part of a Comfortable Stay



An eco-friendly garden designed for people and wildlife to live together.

pushing sustainability messages, we aim to weave our values naturally into a comfortable stay, so guests can feel our commitment through their experience.



Beachfront location with stunning ocean views.

Q&A with Hotel & Tour Guide

Q1 Please tell us about your work and what you find most appealing about it.
Q2 What special care do you take for your guests, and what are the unique features?
Q3 What are the best experiences, seasons, or highlights to enjoy in Ishigaki Island?

A1 In Ishigaki's rich natural environment, my role is to create a space where people can reflect on who they truly are and what they are meant to do. By reconnecting with themselves as part of the universe and the Earth, I hope guests can rediscover what it means to live as a human being, and leave with a renewed sense of purpose.

A2 I interact with guests in a warm, open way, beyond titles, background, or gender. By being friendly, and approachable, I aim to create a comfortable atmosphere where people can feel at ease and truly themselves.

A3 Beyond the island's beautiful sea and mountains, experiences unique to island life, such as powerful typhoons, temporary shortages in stores, and the close connections with local producers and businesses, remind us that what we take for granted is not always guaranteed. These moments help people rediscover important values that are often lost in city life.

A1 I work at the tour desk at Fusaki Beach Resort Hotel & Villas, assisting guests with sightseeing and tour arrangements. Drawn by the beauty of the Yaeyama Islands, I moved here six years ago and find great fulfillment in helping visitors discover the island's many charms.

A2 Rather than simply booking tours, I focus on each guest's interests to offer personalized suggestions that enhance their stay. Seeing guests delighted by experiences beyond their expectations is one of the most rewarding parts of my work.

A3 While marine activities are a major draw, Ishigaki also offers world-class stargazing, relaxing natural scenery, and rich local culture, including festivals and traditional crafts, making it a wonderful destination in every season.

A1 As a concierge at a resort hotel in Ishigaki, I provide personalized recommendations based on each guest's travel style and mood. Discovering what suits each person through casual conversation and sharing the island's charm throughout their stay is the most rewarding part of my work.

A2 Along with requested destinations, I also suggest nearby spots and personal favorites to enrich each experience. I value creating a warm, approachable atmosphere where guests feel comfortable seeking advice.

A3 Early spring is an ideal time to visit, with mild weather and beautiful scenery. Even a simple drive reveals blue seas, lush greenery, and chances to enjoy local events unique to the island.

A1 I focus on creating a relaxed environment where our team understands Ishigaki's charm and provides thoughtful, comfortable service. Watching our staff grow and seeing guests leave with happy smiles is the most rewarding part of my work.

A2 We actively hire international staff and value meaningful communication with inbound guests, along with multilingual support. Located on a large, nature-rich property near mangroves, our hotel offers a unique setting that we reflect in personalized guest care.

A3 The island's greatest highlights are found in the untouched northern areas, where mountains, rivers, and sea come together in a uniquely beautiful landscape. Stargazing under a sky filled with stars and quietly watching the sunrise on a peaceful beach are especially recommended, offering deep relaxation and a chance to truly feel Ishigaki's natural beauty and serenity.

A1 I provide personalized support from arrival to departure, using my language skills to bridge the gap for international guests. By sharing the charms of Yaeyama and our hotel, I ensure a safe and welcoming stay. For me, the true reward is connecting with each guest and creating a comfortable, respectful environment.

A2 I strive to anticipate unspoken needs, from catering to vegetarian and vegan preferences to providing reassurance and accurate information during typhoons or other natural events. By sharing real-time insights with my team, we work together to ensure peace of mind. This proactive, team-based care is the extra value I bring to every guest.

A3 Ishigaki's charm lies in its slow pace and deep connection to nature. From the stunning Kabira Bay to marine adventures and the magical transition from sunset to starry skies, the island's beauty changes with the seasons. No matter how many times you visit, there is always something new to discover.



Takao Fukuhara

☎ 050-3633-9696
<https://coco-ishigakijima.com/>

Affil.: Owner, Nuchigusui no Yado coco.
Exp.: 10 yrs in tourism / 8 yrs in hotel front desk operations
Languages: Japanese
(other languages via translation apps)
Cert.: CMAS / Jeff Snorkel Guide



Maria Kukhtina

☎ 0980-88-7000
<https://www.fusaki.com/>

Affil.: Fusaki Beach Resort Hotel & Villas
Exp.: 16 years in the hotel industry
(Guest Relations, Concierge, Tour Desk)
Languages: Japanese / English / Russian
Cert.: JLPT N1, TOEIC Score: 975



Aya Yonekura

☎ Concierge.ANAIcIshigaki@ihg.com
<https://www.anaintercontinental-ishigaki.jp>

Affil.: ANA InterContinental Ishigaki Resort
Exp.: 13 yrs in the hotel industry / 6 yrs as a concierge
Languages: Japanese
(other languages via translation apps)



Kenta Miyazaki

☎ 0980-87-5255
<https://theubufuruishigaki.com/>

Affil.: THE UBUFURU ISHIGAKI
Exp.: 18 yrs in the hotel industry, 12 yrs in restaurant OP
3 yrs in front desk operations and General Manager
Languages: Japanese / English
(other languages via translation apps)



Ghimire Nabin

☎ 0980-82-8611
<https://www.ishigakijima-sunshine.net/>

Affil.: Multi-Relations Team Ishigaki Island
Beach Hotel Sunshine
Exp.: 5 yrs in the hotel
Languages: Japanese / English / Nepal / Hindi



Interpreter Guide Guidebook

Bridging languages to create deeper travel experiences.

Our interpreter-guides connect you with the heart and soul of the island.

Q & A with Interpreter Guides

- Q1** What do you enjoy most about guiding international guests?
Q2 What do you pay special attention to when assisting your guests?
Q3 Is there anything you actively study or work on to improve as a guide?

English

Ayu Tanaka

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Affil. / Yrs. Exp. Momoto Travel / 4 years

Quals. & Exp. Certified Travel Services Manager, TOEIC 885



English

Yuka Maeda

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Affil. / Yrs. Exp. Blue Moon Travel (Freelance) / 10 years

Quals. & Exp. Okinawa Prefecture Licensed Regional Interpreter Guide, Domestic Tour Operations Supervisor, Okinawa Prefecture, Registered Travel Services Arranger



Chinese

Hanami Takana

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hana6577

Affil. / Yrs. Exp. Churashima Juku / 2 years

Quals. & Exp. Professional-level Chinese, Taiwan Permanent-Residency Holder, Experience in Japanese-Chinese interpretation and translation in the tourism field



English / German / Dutch

Erik van Rijn

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Affil. / Yrs. Exp. Nohoho / 9 years

Quals. & Exp. Completed Shimakutuba (Okinawan Language), Instructor Training Program



Russian

Alyona Firsova

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@ blueshine_ishigaki

Affil. / Yrs. Exp. Olimp-export Co., Ltd. / 15 years

Quals. & Exp. Resident in Japan for 20 years, Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) N2



Chinese

Yusuke Odomari

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Affil. / Yrs. Exp. Freelance



A1 I love how guests often make unexpected requests. Once, I was asked to teach Hanafuda, and we ended up playing together for about 30 minutes. It became a fun and memorable moment.

A2 When I sense that guests want to enjoy conversations in Japan rather than perfectly smooth guidance, I sometimes switch to simple Japanese instead of English to share that experience with them.

A3 I have practiced English by memorizing and repeating news and drama lines since my student days. For languages I am still learning, like Chinese, I try to use what I know without fear—guests often help teach me along the way.

A1 I love sharing the unique character of this place, and seeing guests experience moments of surprise that only a guided tour can offer. Being there when someone says, “This is an amazing place,” is very rewarding.

A2 While this may seem obvious, I am careful with topics such as religion and history, depending on the guest’s background. I also make thorough preparations and communicate closely with agents so that both the itinerary and conversation topics can remain flexible.

A3 Rather than relying only on desk research, I make it a priority to visit places myself. I also continue to expand my knowledge so I can adapt to each guest’s interests, while learning about their cultures and histories as well.

A1 Guiding guests around my hometown of Ishigaki allows me to rediscover new charms of the island through their reactions and questions. I also feel fulfilled being a bridge between local people and international visitors. Caring deeply about both Ishigaki and Taiwan, contributing to cultural exchange is a true joy for me.

A2 I pay attention not only to language, but also to cultural and value differences, always explaining things from the guest’s point of view. By understanding each guest’s interests, I try to share helpful information that makes their stay more meaningful, while showing respect for the local community.

A3 I stay updated on travel trends through social media and continue learning about island history, ties with Taiwan, and the natural environment. This helps me adapt my explanations to match each guest’s interests.

English / Chinese / Korean

Satoki Ohira

090-5293-3449
satokiohira@icloud.com

Affil. / Yrs. Exp. Freelance / 10 years

Quals. & Exp. Okinawa Prefecture Licensed Regional Interpreter Guide, PADI Diving Instructor



A1 I have lived in Ishigaki for 20 years and often tell guests they can ask me anything about the island. Even so, I still discover something new on every tour. I usually work as a scuba diving instructor, guiding international guests through Ishigaki’s underwater world. I also offer land-based tours, and welcome anyone interested in scuba diving or snorkeling to get in touch.

A2 I always try to see each tour from the guest’s point of view. Since they have taken the time to join, my goal is to make sure they truly enjoy themselves and leave with great memories.

A3 For English, I practice by reading The Japan Times out loud. For Chinese, I use a smartphone app called SuperChinese. I also try to stay up to date with local information, and make a point of personally checking out new restaurants and sightseeing spots on the island.

English

Zohar Paz

info@discoverishigaki.com
https://discoverishigaki.com

Affil. / Yrs. Exp. Discover Ishigaki

Quals. & Exp. PADI Master Scuba Diver Trainer, Emergency First Response Instructor



A1 Ishigaki brings together stunning beaches, coral seas with sea turtles, and subtropical jungles. Having lived here for over 10 years, I love sharing my local knowledge with people from around the world.

A2 I provide native-level English support from inquiry to tour, helping remove language barriers for travelers. I also offer flexible, small-group English tours for families and senior guests, tailored to different fitness levels and schedules. (Discover Ishigaki is an English-speaking tour operator based in Ishigaki.)

A3 Along with safety, I focus on Ishigaki’s natural environment and continuously research ways to help guests become more aware of wildlife and conservation.

Korean / Chinese

Mihwa Kanna

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churakagi0325@yahoo.ne.jp

Affil. / Yrs. Exp. NPO Churashima Juku, Freelance / 3 years

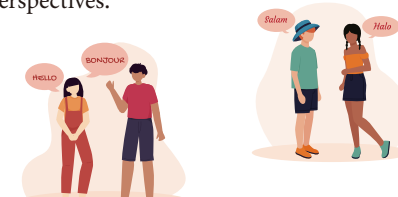
Quals. & Exp. Study Abroad Experience (4 years)



A1 I enjoy interacting closely with native speakers and hearing real, natural language. Since I have lived in Ishigaki for a long time, I am also happy to share local knowledge with guests.

A2 I always try to speak slowly with a big smile, so guests can feel relaxed and comfortable. Since many are unfamiliar with local place names and the area, I avoid speaking too fast and make sure to send them off with a warm “Enjoy your time.” I also do my best to research and respond to any sightseeing requests or inquiries.

A3 I review my expressions daily and look for new ways to say things. I practice with native friends, use foreign languages on LINE, watch movies, and use YouTube and AI tools to keep my language skills fresh.



Discover Ishigaki Guide Map

Enjoy the Island's nature & cultural heritage

For useful information about sightseeing in Ishigaki, please visit the website of the Ishigaki City Tourism Exchange Association.



Rote of Public Bus

路線名	系統番号・色別	
Airport Line	⑩	BT ⇄ Hirae, Kanehide, Museum ⇄ Airport
Airport Line	④	BT ⇄ ANA Ishigaki, Minsah Craft Center, Art Hotel ⇄ Airport
Kabira Roirt Line	⑨	Bus Terminal ⇄ Club Med (Kabira Area)
Yonehara Camp Line	⑪	BT ⇄ Yonehara, Kabira ⇄ Airport
West Loop Line	②	BT⇄ Kabira /Yonehara /Ibaruma /Ishigaki Airport /Shiraho
East Loop Line	③	BT⇄ Shiraho/Ishigaki Airport/Ibaruma/Yonehara/Kabira
Hirano Line	⑤⑥	BT⇄ Shiraho/Ishigaki Airport/Ibaruma/Hirakubo/Hirano

Nat' | Nat. Monument

Arakawa Kanhi-zakura Habitat

The only natural wild habitat of Kanhi-zakura cherry trees in Japan.



Nat' | Nat. Monument

Yoshihara Neparu Utaki Ryukyu Persimmon Forest

A forest of Ryukyu trees preserved within a sacred utaki site, protected as a spiritual sanctuary.

Nat' | Place of Scenic Beauty

Kabira Bay

One of Japan's 100 Scenic Views, and Ishigaki's most iconic scenic spot.



Kannonzaki Lighthouse

Sakieda

Ramsar Site

Nagura Amparu

An important wetland designated under the Ramsar Convention, known for its mangrove diversity and as a stopover site for migratory birds.



Important Cultural Property

Tōrin-ji Temple (Gongendō Hall)

The oldest temple in Yaeyama, founded in 1614. Known for its Nio guardian statues.



Important Cultural Property

Former Miyara Dunchi

A rare Ryukyu Kingdom-era samurai residence. The garden is designated as a National Place of Scenic Beauty.



Important Cultural Property

Ishigaki-shi Garden

A historic site preserving traditional architecture of its era, alongside Former Miyara Dunchi.

Nat' | Historic Site

Furusto-hara Ruins

A ruin from the 14th to 16th centuries, with well-preserved stone structures.



Nat' | Nat. Monument

Yonehara Yaeyama Palm Grove

One of the largest groves of the Yaeyama palm, only on Ishigaki and Iriomote.



Nat' | Nat. Monument

Hirakubo Yaeyama Shitan Habitat

Renamed and newly designated in 2024. This site marks the northernmost natural habitat of the rare Yaeyama shitan tree.

Hirakubo Lighthouse

Hirano

Hirakubo

Hirakubo Sagaribana Grove

Protected by the national government as a Special Zone within the national park. Also selected as "Okinawa's Furusato 100 Selections."

Nat' | Nat. Monument

Hirakubo-Ara Hasunohagiri Grove

A large-scale coastal forest of Hasunohagiri trees, a natural buffer against coastal erosion.



Nat' | Nat. Monument

Tsunami Stones of Ishigaki Island's East Coast

Five massive boulder groups, including the famous "Tsunami Oishi," carried in by the Great Meiwa Tsunami.



©MOEJ

Nat' | Place of Scenic Beauty

Mt. Omoto

Okinawa's highest mountain (526 m), regarded as a sacred peak, with a valuable forest ecosystem rich in rare species.

Hoshino

Ozato

Shiraho Blue Coral (Heliopora) Reef

One of the largest blue coral reef areas in the Northern Hemisphere, approximately 10 km north to south. Protected as a Marine Park Zone.



©MOEJ

Nat' | Nat. Monument

Miyara River Mangrove Forest

One of the largest mangrove forests in Japan, home to Ohirugi and Mehirugi mangroves.



Special National Monument

Crested Serpent Eagle

This symbolic bird of the Yaeyama Islands lives only on Ishigaki and Iriomote. Many are injured or killed by speeding vehicles. Please slow down and stay alert to help protect this rare and precious species.



(Sp.Nat.I Monument / Endangered IA)

Iriomote-Ishigaki Nat' | Park

A national park spanning Iriomote, Ishigaki and surrounding islands, and seas—the largest marine park area in Japan. On Ishigaki Island, it includes Hirakubo Peninsula, Mt. Omoto area, Kabira, Yonehara, Nagura Bay, Shiraho, and the Sekisei Lagoon.

International Dark Sky Place

Designated as Japan's first Dark Sky Park by the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA).



Getting Around the Island



Rental Car

A rental car offers the easiest and most flexible way to get around Ishigaki. An International Driving Permit is required for overseas visitors.



Taxi

Taxis can be hard to find during peak times, so it's best to arrange one in advance. Taxi call centers and ride-hailing apps are also convenient options.



Public Bus

Buses run every 30 minutes between the airport and downtown. You can also use major routes to enjoy exploring the island by bus.



Rental Bicycles & E-bikes

Bicycles, electric bikes, and scooters are easy to find in town and are perfect for short, flexible travel.



日本最南端の自然文化都市

沖縄県

石垣市

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