Many endangered species inhabit Okinawa, including the Irinomote wild cat, which is said to be the greatest biological discovery of the 20th century and only live on Irinomote Island, and the Yanbaru long-armed scarab beetle, which is the largest beetle in Japan. The forests of Okinawa have been protected as the “home” of various flora and fauna.

1) Okinawa rail / 2) Yanbaru long-armed scarab beetle / 3) Irinomote cat / 4) Ryukyu black-breasted leaf turtle
As an independent country known as the “Ryukyu Kingdom,” Okinawa flourished through trading with nearby countries including China. After being invaded by the Satsuma Domain in 1609, it was incorporated into Japan’s feudal system and became a prefecture of Japan when the feudal domain system was abolished in 1879. The battle of Okinawa in 1945 was the only ground battle of the Pacific War fought on Japanese soil, which resulted in many lives lost. After the post-war rule by U.S. forces, Okinawa was returned to Japan on May 15, 1972. Since then, up to the present day the prefecture has continued to show dramatic growth and development.
Okinawa leaps forward in Japan and in the world.

The battle of Okinawa cost many lives on the ground. (Source: Okinawa Prefectural Archives)

Okinawa Reversion Ceremony. (Source: Okinawa Prefectural Archives)

People exchanging currency from dollars to yen. (Source: Okinawa Prefectural Archives)

In line with the change in two-lane roads, the traffic lane of vehicles changed from the right side to the left side of the road. (Source: Naha City Museum of History)

Kyushu-Okinawa Summit. (Source: The Ryukyu Shimpo Company)

Okinawa Prefectural Museum & Art Museum

Okinawa Churaumi Aquarium

HISTORY

1945 The U.S. army lands in Okinawa. The Japanese sign the Instrument of Surrender

1951 The San Francisco Treaty places Okinawa and the Amami islands under U.S. administrative rights

1952 Launch of the Ryukyu Government


1972 Okinawa returned to Japan, Switches from dollars to yen

1975 Okinawa International Ocean Exposition held

1978 Change of traffic lanes

2000 The 26th G8 Summit (known as Kyushu-Okinawa Summit) is held

2002 Okinawa Churaumi Aquarium opened

2003 Okinawa Urban Monorail (Yui Rail) opened

2007 Okinawa Prefectural Museum & Art Museum opened

2012 Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology opened

2014 Kerama islands designated as a national park
Prayers and traditional culture rooted in the region

Each island of Okinawa has its own traditional festivals that are held according to the season. Various festivals representing each region are held including those to welcome souls, pray for abundant crops and safe voyages, and ward off plagues. While these festivals respect traditional methods, they began to blend entertaining elements with the history and culture of Okinawa, attracting tourists from abroad as well as residents of Okinawa prefecture.