

Ecotourism on Iriomote Island

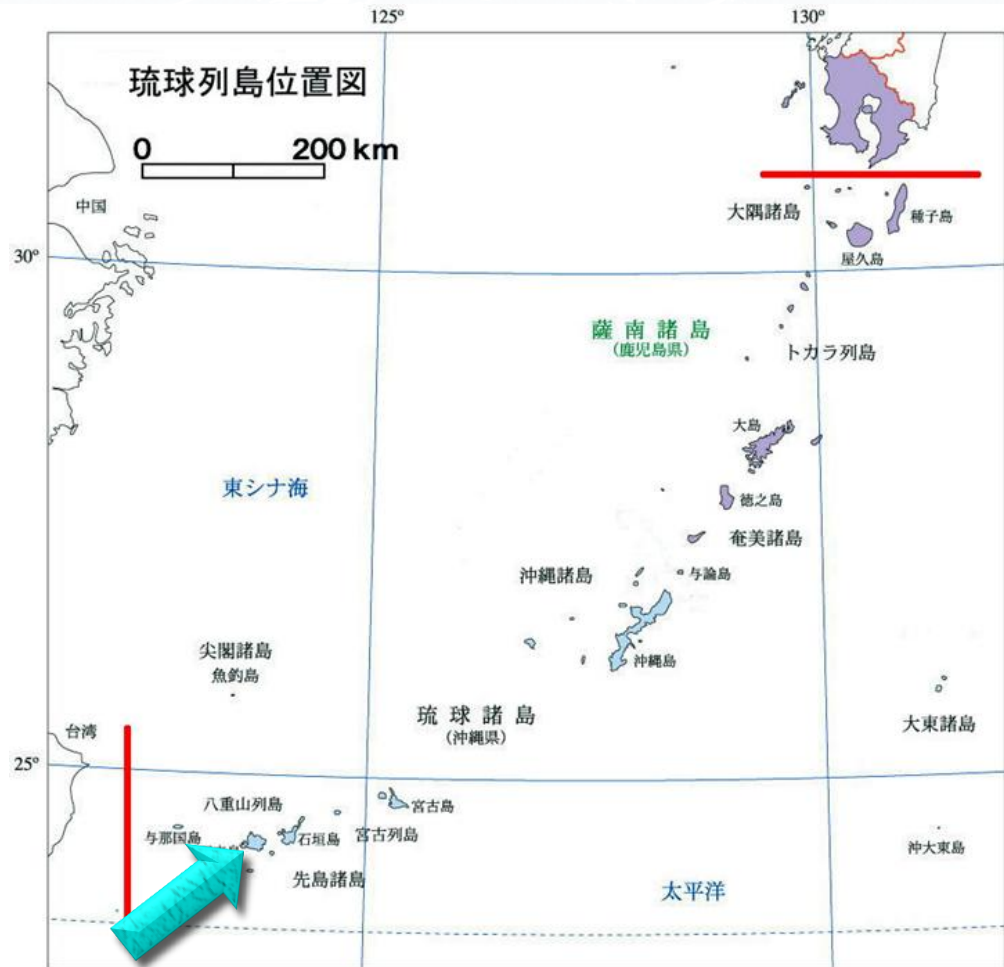
~ Past, present, future~



Akiko Ishigaki, chairperson of the Iriomote Island Ecotourism Association
Representative of Kuuru Koubou

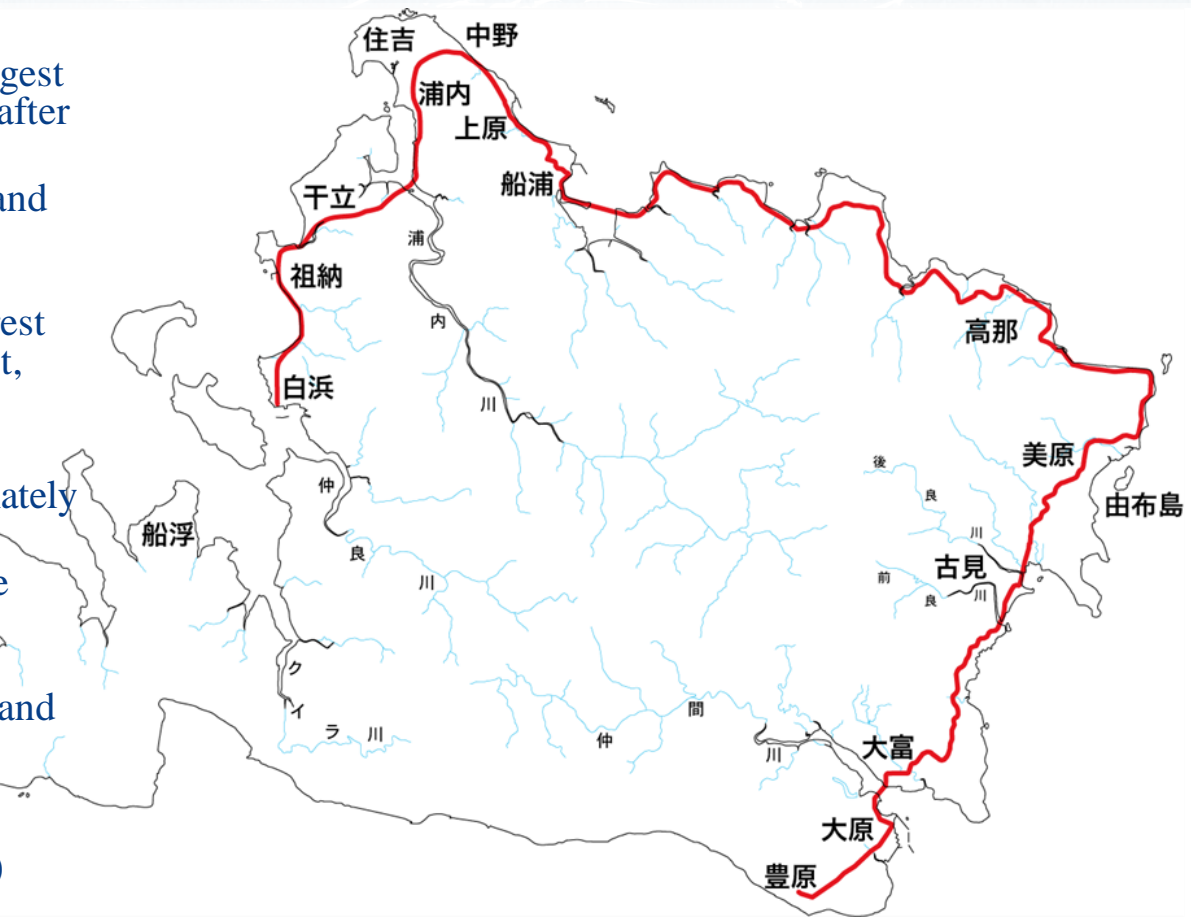
Location of Iriomote Island

- Approximately 430 km further southwest from Okinawa Island
- It belongs to the Yaeyama Islands group centered on Ishigaki Island



Overview of Iriomote Island

- Area of approximately 290 km² (the second largest island in the prefecture after Okinawa Island)
- Subtropical climate, island environment, unique ecosystem
- Approximately 90% forest (subtropical laurel forest, mangrove forests)
- Population of approximately 2,300 people
- The major industries are agriculture, livestock farming, and tourism
- Administratively the island is a part of the town of Taketomi in Yaeyama District
- Approximately 280,000 tourists visit the island annually (2012)



Natural resources of Iriomote Island



Subtropical plants such as mangroves, etc.



Rare creatures



Subtropical forests and geographical features such as waterfalls, etc.



Coral reefs and diverse marine organisms



Cultural resources of Iriomote Island

Customs associated with rice growing



Festivals



Lifestyle and culture such as dyed fabrics, folk handcrafts, etc.



Folk performing arts such as dance, folk songs, etc.



History of Iriomote Island ecotourism and the association

- ❑ 1991: “Study of Measures to Promote Nature Experience Activities” by the Environmental Agency
 - ❑ 1994: Ecotourism Guidebook
“Yamana Kara Suna Pito” published
 - ❑ 1996: **Iriomote Island Ecotourism Association launched**
 - ❑ 2002: Iriomote Island Ecotourism Center established
 - 1999: Won the Home Affairs Minister’s Prize for Region Building
 - 2000: Won the Environmental Agency Director-General’s Prize for Persons who have Made Outstanding Contributions to the Natural Environment
 - 2005: Won the Special Prize in the First Ecotourism Awards
 - ❑ 2010: The association became an NPO
- From the second half of the 1990s~ a boom in eco-tours and canoe tours**



The present state of tourism on Iriomote Island

❑ **Decline in the number of tourists**

(at the peak time: 400,000, 2011: 250,000, 2012: 280,000)

Due to multiple factors such as the cooling off of the Okinawa boom, the appreciation of the yen, disparities with airfares to other isolated islands, etc. Sole proprietors offering accommodation are in a serious situation

❑ **Most tourism is still transitory mass tourism** (day trips)

There is no data regarding the number of people staying overnight on the island in recent years but it is estimated that 10% to 20% of tourists get accommodation

❑ **Even among single travelers the proportion only going for a day trip is increasing**

Most eco tour operators and operators providing other activities are shifting in the direction of targeting day trippers



Iriomote Island eco tours

■ Canoe & trekking tours

(it is estimated that 80%~ 90% of the customers for these tours are day trippers)

- From about 2000 onwards the number of operators and tour customers rapidly increased
- Number of operators: 34 members of the Iriomotejima Canoe Association and 20 to 30 non-members (estimated)
- Tours are concentrated on the Pinaisara Falls
- In recent years the field has expanded to the Nishita River, Yutsun River, Nakara River, etc.

■ Diving

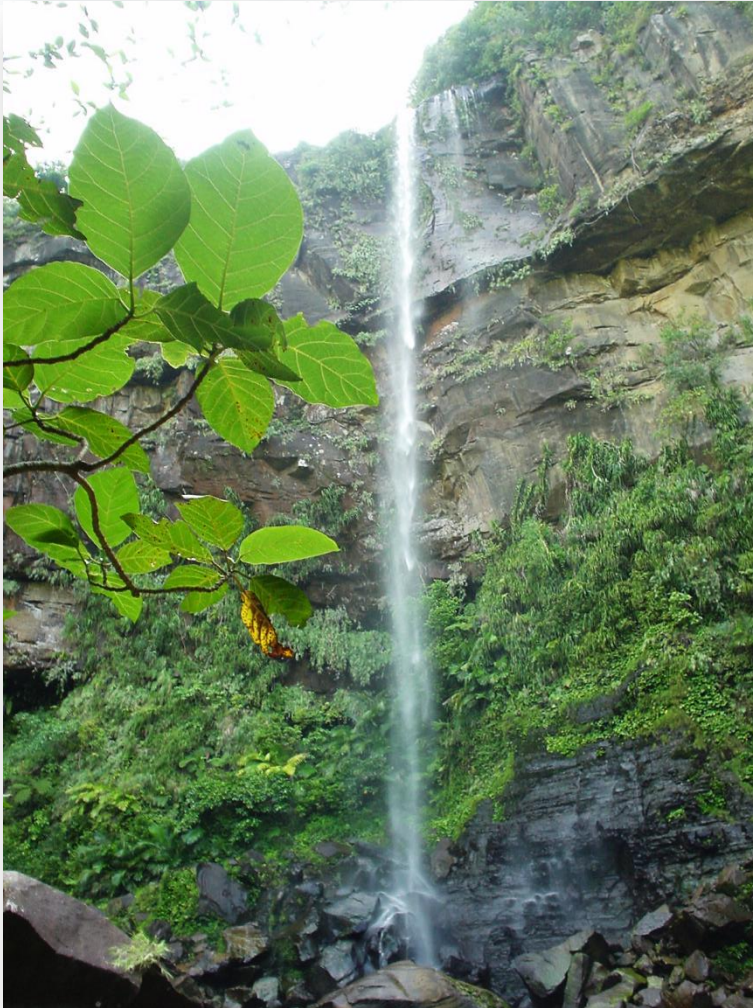
- Number of operators: 23 (all of them belong to the Taketomi Diving Association)
- There are many good diving spots, primarily in the north and west of the island, so at the present time excessive concentration in specific fields is not being seen
- Some damage to the coral caused by crown-of-thorns starfish is being seen but the association is undertaking systematic and continuous starfish eradication activities.

■ Snorkeling

- Number of operators: about 10 (the Iriomote Island Snorkelling Council was launched a few years ago)
- Previously diving operators ran snorkeling but in recent years the number of operators specializing in snorkeling has been increasing



Pinaisara Falls



- Boast the highest drop (55 m) of any waterfall in Okinawa Prefecture
- More than 100 canoes at peak times
- The number of canoeists is regulated by the voluntary rules of the Iriomotejima Canoe Association
- Monopolization of the field by the canoe association



Activities of the Iriomote Island Ecotourism Association

~ Iriomote Island where people and nature
live in harmony ~

Environmental
preservation

Environmental
education

Handing down
culture

Eco-tourism

Most of the activities are subsidy projects or
commissioned projects so the proportions of each
type of activities change substantially in each
fiscal year



Lecture meetings and workshops

- **Lecture & workshop by Kiku Ezaki, the ecotourism promotion advisor for the Ministry of the Environment**

March 2012, December 2012

(Ministry of the Environment subsidy)

- **Lecture meetings**
**"The Future of Iriomote Island
Considered in light of the Act on
Promotion of Ecotourism"**

November 2012

(National Council for Region Building
subsidy)

- **Natural energy workshop**

Fiscal year 2010, fiscal year 2011, and
fiscal year 2012

(Japan Fund for Global Environment
subsidy)



Training guides and certifying guides

- **Development of a curriculum for the guide certification system**

Fiscal year 2010 and fiscal year 2011

(project commissioned by the town of Taketomi)

- **Safety control lecture meeting/workshop**

Fiscal year 2011

(Commissioned by the Ministry of the Environment)



Development of human resources for tourism

■ Okinawa Prefecture Project to Develop World-Class Human Resources for Tourism

January ~ February 2013

- Prior training “Regional guide and coordinator basic training”
In Toba City, Mie Prefecture
- First training “Training to develop masters of Iriomote Island hospitality”
- Second training “Training for receiving foreign travelers and language training”



Environmental preservation activities

- ❑ Beach cleanups
 - Organized by the Iriomote Eco Project
 - Held every month
- ❑ Coral reef preservation activities
 - Reef checks
 - Organized by diving team Unarizaki
 - Eradication of crown-of-thorns starfish
 - Coral identification workshop
 - (Home appliance and housing eco points)
- ❑ Monitoring
 - 1,000 Ministry of the Environment monitoring sites
 - Monitoring of Nakama River
- ❑ Gathering and sharing information about living creatures
- ❑ Soap Promotion Project



Environmental education program

- Accepting trainees
 - JICA
 - University students (Tokai University, University of Tsukuba, etc.)
- Program coordination
 - Okinawa Prefecture Isolated Islands Experience and Exchange Project (Fiscal year 2011, fiscal year 2012)
 - Doshisha University Empowerment Program (February 2013)
- Eco-Tourism Summer Vacation Children's Week
- Development and revision of a natural environmental education curriculum



Handing down and disseminating culture

- ❑ **Island People's Cultural Festival**
Every 2 ~ 3 years
(Agency for Cultural Affairs subsidy)
- ❑ **Hands-on training session (making folk handicrafts)**
(Agency for Cultural Affairs/Bank of Okinawa subsidy)
- ❑ **Handing down and disseminating children's songs, folk songs, dance, ancient songs, classical drumming**
(Agency for Cultural Affairs subsidy)
- ❑ **Tachikuri Course**
- ❑ **Participation in festivals**
Unjami Ocean Festival with Haarii dragon boats



Island People's Cultural Festival

Tradition, creativity, and succession

The residents of Iriomote Island have led lives nurtured by nature since ancient times. This multifaceted event presents the traditional culture handed down over the generations by the residents of the island, introduces the wide variety of cultural activities that people carry out in the regions, and at the same time attempts to communicate new culture.

5th: November 18 ~ 20, 2011

6th: Planned for November 16, 2013

主催：西表文化祭実行委員会・NPO法人西表島エコツーリズム協会 後援：竹富町・竹富町教育委員会ほか

文化庁平成23年度文化遺産を活かした観光振興・地域活性化事業 資源保護のため、マイ箸・エコバッグをお持ちください

第五回 西表 島文化祭

体験プログラム (18・19日) 有料・要予約
皮色蕉で民具作り
ウタラ炭坑を歩く
ミンサー織
陶芸 など

スペシャルツアー (19日) 民謡のふるさと巡り

舞台の部 (20日)
＜第一部＞
わらべ唄 古謡 唄・三線
古典太鼓
舞踊 など

＜第二部＞
スペシャルゲスト
奄美の唄者
朝崎郁恵

展示・販売の部 (20日)
島内作家の作品 展示・販売
島のおいしいものバザー
子供向け体験コーナー
自然エネルギーゆんたく会
パネル展示

クイズラリー
エコショップ・ヨガ体験
シンボルマーク決定授賞式 など

2011年11月18日(金) 19日(土) 体験プログラム
(要予約・お問い合わせはエコツーリズム協会 0980-85-6331 まで)

20日(日) 展示・販売の部 (中野わいわいホール) 10:00 ~ 17:00
舞台の部 (中野わいわいホール) 19:00 ~ 21:00
(18:30 開場・入場無料)

協賛： JTA 日本エコツーリズム協会 ダイビングチームうなりざき
南西観光 株式会社 安栄観光 浦内川観光 ほか



5th Island People's Cultural Festival

Display and sale of handicrafts



Hands-on toy-making for children



Natural Energy Yuntaku Meeting



Bazaar offering delicious food from the island



5th Island People's Cultural Festival



Other

- ❑ Eco Market (eco-tourism market)

Flea market, market for hand-made goods, market for delicious food, hands-on experience corner
- ❑ Activities to support reconstruction after the Great East Japan Earthquake

 - Let's send brown sugar to Tohoku! Our major mission
 - Reconstruction support handbill "Sukesakita"
- ❑ Committees and meetings

 - Okinawa Prefecture Coastal Garbage Countermeasures Promotion Council
 - Iriomote Natural Recreational Forest Executive Committee
 - Forest Ecosystem Conservation Area Preservation Management Committee
 - Iriomote Island Council for the Promotion of Appropriate Pet Breeding
 - Natural Environmental Education Curriculum Liaison Conference



Eco Market

第3回エコツー市場

エコ市 開催!

日時：12月2日(日) 10:00~15:00

場所：西表島エコツーリズムセンター(浦内)

てづくり市

布小物? 陶器?
竹ぼうき?
何があるかは
お楽しみ♪

リサイクル品 フリー マーケット

お気軽に
どうぞ

うまいもの市

西表牛、じゅーしー
カマイ、スイーツ
新鮮野菜など…
を予定

売り切れご免!

体験コーナー

指ハブをつくろう!
13:00 ~ 無料

出店者募集中!
お問い合わせください

主催・問合せ：西表島エコツーリズム協会 85-6331



Eco-Tourism Children's Week

夏休み エコツー リズム ウィーク

8月12日～18日

西表島の自然や文化を学ぼう

島内在住の子供なら、誰でも参加
できます！

〔場所〕 西表島エコツーリズムセンター 〔予約・問合せ〕 西表島エコツーリズム協会 TEL85-6331

12(日)

13:00～15:00

竹の水鉄砲をつくろう！

昔ながらの竹の水鉄砲を、親子
でつくります。水遊びがもっと
楽しくなるよ！

〔対象〕 親子 〔料金〕 無料

〔予約〕 不要 〔定員〕 20名

〔持ち物〕 のこぎり、軍手

〔講師〕 星公望

13(月)

13:00～15:00

西表島の民話と古謡を
知ろう

島に古くから伝わる民話や古謡
を、金星オジイから楽しく学び
ましょう。

〔対象〕 小学生以上

〔料金〕 無料

〔予約〕 不要 〔定員〕 15名

〔講師〕 石垣金星

14(火)

10:00～12:00

ソーラー発電の玩具を
つくろう

ペットボトルをつかってソーラー
ライトをつくります。

〔対象〕 小学生以上 〔料金〕 500円

〔予約〕 要 〔定員〕 10名

〔持ち物〕 はさみ、使用済みペット
ボトル(500ml)

〔講師〕 伊谷美穂・山城まゆみ

15(水)

9:30～12:30

いろんな糸で手織り体験

島で採れた芭蕉の糸や、毛糸、
風糸などをちゃんぶるーして、
コースターをつくります。

〔対象〕 小学生以上

〔料金〕 500円

〔予約〕 要 〔定員〕 10名

〔持ち物〕 はさみ

〔講師〕 塚口洋子・石井由美子

16(木)

10:00～12:00

やまねこの食べ物を
調べよう！

ウンチの中身を調査⇒
ヤマネコが西表島に暮らす
秘密がわかる！！

〔対象〕 小学生以上 〔料金〕 無料

〔予約〕 不要 〔定員〕 10名

〔講師〕 西表野生生物保護センター
スタッフ

17(金)

10:00～16:00

わらぼうきをつくろう

世界でたったひとつ、自分だけ
のミニぼうきをつくります。

〔対象〕 小学4年生以上

〔料金〕 無料

〔予約〕 要 〔定員〕 10名

〔持ち物〕 はさみ、弁当

〔講師〕 星公望

18(土)

①10:00～11:30

②14:00～15:30

星砂を観察しよう

いろいろな種類の星砂を
顕微鏡で観察してみよう！

〔対象〕 小学5年生以上

〔料金〕 無料

〔予約〕 要 〔定員〕 各回10名

〔講師〕 茂木紀夫

〔協力〕 環境省西表野生生物保護センター・琉球大学熱帯生物園研究センター ●一部プログラムは文化庁、地球環境基金の助成を受けて実施します●



Eco-Tourism Children's Week



Trends in activities in recent years

▣ Activities more focused on the regions

Dissemination of "ecotourism" reflecting the original intention

- Holding of the Eco Market and Children's Week
- Transmission of information to the regions
- Activities in collaboration with various organizations in the regions (community centers, women's groups, youth organizations, schools, associations)



Initiatives going forward

- Improving the quality of guides and introducing a guide certification system
 - Initiatives in which governments, business operators, and experts work together
- Development of programs utilizing cultural resources
 - Add “culture” to the existing image that “Iriomote = the great outdoors”
- Consider the possibility of world natural heritage registration
 - The residents take the lead in establishing and sharing a vision of the future island



Iriomote Island 100 years in the future

Harmonious
co-existence
of people and
nature

Correctly
communicate
the value of
the island

Richness of
spirit

A charming
tourism area
that utilizes
its
individuality



Akiko Ishigaki