

Dear Newcomers,

Okinawa is a great place to live and an awesome learning experience. You'll learn a lot about the Japanese culture and how they live, what they eat and you'll also learn about their language. At first it'll take time to get used to your new surroundings and driving on the left side of the road, but after a while you'll get used to it!

Since you don't know much about the military life here on Okinawa, I'm going to tell you about it. When you first move here you will be staying in a temporary home just long enough to find you a home. You'll be living on base and will be going to a DODDS, Department of Defense Dependence School, schools. It is nothing to worry about because it's not much different from the school that you have been attending. On Okinawa, Elementary School is K-6, Middle School is 7-9, and High School 10-12.

One type of home you may live in while living on base is a duplex type house. This means you need to make sure you keep everything at a reasonable tone. I say this because if you have your music too loud or are making a lot of noise the people that live beside you are likely to hear it. So be careful and courteous to your neighbors. Not all housing is like this there aren't connected or another type of house is called the Towers, which is a high-rise apartment style home.

While living in Japan I recommend that you do all you can while you can because you're probably not going to be living in Japan forever! Use your time wisely because when the time comes and you have to move you're going to wish that you would of done a lot of things. So what I guess I'm trying to say is moving to Japan is not an everyday place that people just come to visit. So while you're here do what you can and create those memories that you'll never forget! There are a lot of fun place to hang out on Okinawa. My favorite places to go are Dragon Palace (a shopping area), 100 yen store (dollar store), Uniglo (clothes shopping area), Jusco (a mall), Gate 2 Street (shopping area), and the BX and PX. As you can tell I like to shop.

Another think that you should know I sin Okinawa you are limited as far as shopping is concerned. There is the PX and the BX, which are shopping places where you get clothes, shoes, accessories and other everyday things. There is not a Wal-Mart or a Target to go to here so you make due with what you have, unless of course you shop off base. There also is a commissary where you buy all of your food. Now I'm not saying that Okinawa has absolutely nothing! We do have Burger King, Subway, McDonalds, Pizza Hut and a few other popular American food restaurants.

Again I say Okinawa is a great place to live and place that you will never forget. It's not everyday that you live in Japan so enjoy the time that you have here. At first you may not like living here, but after a while you'll figure out it's not a bad

place to live. It is very safe and I have made a lot of good friends. You may not have everything that you had while in the states here, but you'll sure save a lot of money! I love living in Okinawa and I think that you will too!

Youth Welcome Aboard Letter Writing Contest

Aaron Green

Age 9, 4th grade

When I first came to Okinawa, I was not making good grades like I usually do. But after a month I started to make good grades again. The first place I lived in was West Pac Lodge. I went to Zukeran Elementary. It was a nice school. Three weeks later I moved to the North Foster Towers. I started to go to school down the hill. It is called E.C.Killin Elementary. Now it's time for me to tell a little bit about myself. I am 9 years old. I like sports. I start baseball practice this week. I love to write stories. I wrote 7 stories in third grade. I really like to swim. I am in swim lessons now. I just passed level 5 and now I am in level 6. In level 6 you learn to snorkel. I think it is going to fun snorkeling. Now about my family, my dad is in the Marine Corps. My dad is a really cool guy. My mom is a Social Worker. I have a three year old brother; he is a real pain in the butt. My favorite restaurant is Four Seasons because they cook your food right in front of you and the cook flips the salt and pepper shaker to entertain you. My favorite thing to do outside is to play manhunt with my friends. It rains a lot here. When it rains, I hang out on the seventh floor of my building with friends. If you are ever in Okinawa come see Aaron Green.

Youth Welcome Aboard Letter Writing Contest
Michael Dickerson

Dear Newcomer,

Welcome to Okinawa! Okinawa is a fun place, and it's a great personal experience. First of all, you're in a completely foreign country, in which hosts the nicest people in the world. Second, if you take advantage of the high school over here, you'll have one of the best experiences of your life and you'll be setting up a secure future. You're high school experience will be more diversified and unique than the average student in the states. Finally, I believe that you will never regret a day spent on Okinawa.

Okinawa is the most dynamic place that I've been to in my whole life. The first thing you notice about Okinawa is the warm temperature. You can basically wear shorts year round if you please. The Okinawans are genuinely nice people, they have a laid back persona and they're so willing to help out military dependents. When I first interacted with the Okinawans I was a bit reluctant, and stereotypical. But once we started to interact, there seems to be no language barrier at all. On Okinawa there are lot of tours to help Americans become familiar with Okinawa culture, and the history of the island.

The high school experience on Okinawa is really unique. If you're an athlete or you participate in after-school clubs you can really experience some great things. You have the chance to participate in tournaments and competitions. The sports that DoDDS sponsors are cross country, football, tennis, basketball, wrestling, and soccer. The clubs that DoDDS are drama, journalism, choir, and Model United Nations. DoDDS sponsors these events making your plane ticket FREE of charge. The places that you may travel to partake in these occasions are Guam, Mainland Japan, or South Korea. Also the rigorous requirements to graduate high school can put you in place for attending college. The standards for Okinawa high school are raised to ensure the academic success of the students. With all of this hard work with school, Okinawa also features some leisure spots.

Okinawa is world renown for its beautiful and ocean waters. On your free time you can go out with some friends and go to the Kadena Marina and chill on the beach. Another beautiful place to go is Okuma. You can go there and camp out, or relax in the cabanas. There's all kind of fun things to do, you can go jet skiing or banana boating or tubing. There are also some nice places to hang out down and around Camp Foster. You can go to the American Village, where there's an arcade, restaurants, shopping complex, and a cinemaplex. On Camp Foster you can go to The Spot, in which there are a couple of restaurants, pool tables, internet access, and huge movie room in the back. You can also go to the food court, the PX, or the movie theater on Camp Foster.

I promise you when you come to Okinawa, it will be a once in a lifetime opportunity. Just think, your friends in the states will never experience foreign travel. Most of your friends probably won't even move out of their own neighborhoods. In Okinawa you will have the pleasure of knowing that you've lived life to the fullest. So take Okinawa in, and appreciate what is here to offer.

Sincerely,
Michael Dickerson

