

Junior High School and High School

Excellent

“Genuine kindness”

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During the Golden Week, I feel that there are many tourists. In fact, news on TV often covers tourism in Okinawa. What actually attracts tourists to come to this prefecture?

I was born in Nara Prefecture and moved to Okinawa when I was still small. Both my parents are from Mainland Japan so I have no relatives in Okinawa. However, my parents decided to move here. Moving means to lead our lives on this land. The reason that they made a serious decision to move was after a family trip to Okinawa trip that they considered it a serious matter. My parents often came to Okinawa, as they like to travel. My name "Konatsu" is named after the coral reefs of Okinawa. Still, my mother said they did not consider moving to Okinawa before my sister and I were born. When I came to Okinawa for the first time with the whole family, the old ladies in the market helped my mother very kindly when she was carrying me in her arms. Working busily in metropolis, she was impressed by getting help from people and found it fresh. Living in Okinawa Prefecture, I find that attractiveness of Okinawa is "kindness of people". Many tourists coming to Okinawa should be attracted by this "kindness". I think that we can make use of this as the strengths of Okinawa. When I think what specifically could let tourists feel the "kindness of people", the idea of barrier-free has come up to my mind.

There is no train service in Okinawa Prefecture so taxi, bus and monorail are the main means of transportation. I often ride on the bus and I have seen more low-floor buses recently. A low-floor bus has no steps inside the compartment. However, I noticed that there is no space for wheelchairs in any bus. I felt despite the right of every

citizens to use the bus equally, it is not friendly for wheelchair users at all. Among the visitors coming to Okinawa, there should be some disabled and wheelchair users. I want everyone visiting Okinawa to come again. To do so, we should create a society that is easier for those who are socially vulnerable not just only the framework of tourism. There are many things such as voice guide and installation of braille timetable that should be improved at the bus stops. There should also be other things like taxis for wheelchair users. I think the city needs to be user-friendly to everyone; while tourism in Okinawa should let people feel the "kindness of people".

Then it comes to the matter of accommodation. In the past, it was said in the newspaper that travelling is difficult for people who need special care. In other words, it is a problem for the side that takes care of the traveler that has a large burden. For the sake of both sides, barrier-free accommodation is important. I think standby helpers and exclusive nutritionists are desirable. However, pragmatically speaking, the financial burden of those guests is heavy. So I think that the prefecture should build accommodations for tourists who need special care as a part of the tourism policy. It is to lighten their burden physically and financially. In short, I think this will lead to the development of new tourism industry by building this kind of infrastructure. In addition, not just for tourists, it will also consider the place of relaxation for people with disabilities living in the prefecture as well.

Finally, it is tourism that children can enjoy more. Such as Shuri Castle, there are many historic monuments in Okinawa. Learning the history is important for children, and we should also pass our knowledge to future generations. However, it is considered that it is difficult and boring for them to understand the contents. I think that we can make some apps for smartphones and tablets so that they can learn the history and ruins of Okinawa. They will enjoy more if we add production of animations that are easy for children to understand and simple quizzes into those apps. Besides, I think by increasing day-care centers in major tourist facilities for mothers with small children, it will be easier for them to come to Okinawa with the whole family.

In the modern society that the connection among people has become frivolous, the chance of feeling the "kindness of people" in daily life has become less. Taking one step off from everyday life, tourists who come to Okinawa to feel relaxed and chilled the local citizens aim to make it a social concern and compassion. Also, I think that Okinawa as a start, the whole country should build facilities and transportations that allow the socially vulnerable to travel comfortably. People will start to recognize their struggles and troubles that cannot be noticed in everyday life. Now it is time for people of Okinawa to show their "genuine kindness".