Kasari Area, Amami City Tale of Manya Community

Kasari area is surrounded by the Pacific Ocean and the East China Sea, and has small mountains with altitudes of 200m or less running north and south. On the east side, here lies a flatland where sugarcane and semi-tropical fruit fields are cultivated, and livestock is raised. Kasari Bay, one of " 500 Important Wetlands in Japan," designated by the Ministry of the Environment, covers the west side. Many communities in Kasari area inherit their traditional performing arts, passing their unique culture from generation to generation through their daily lives.

※ The scale below is presented as an approximate guideline.

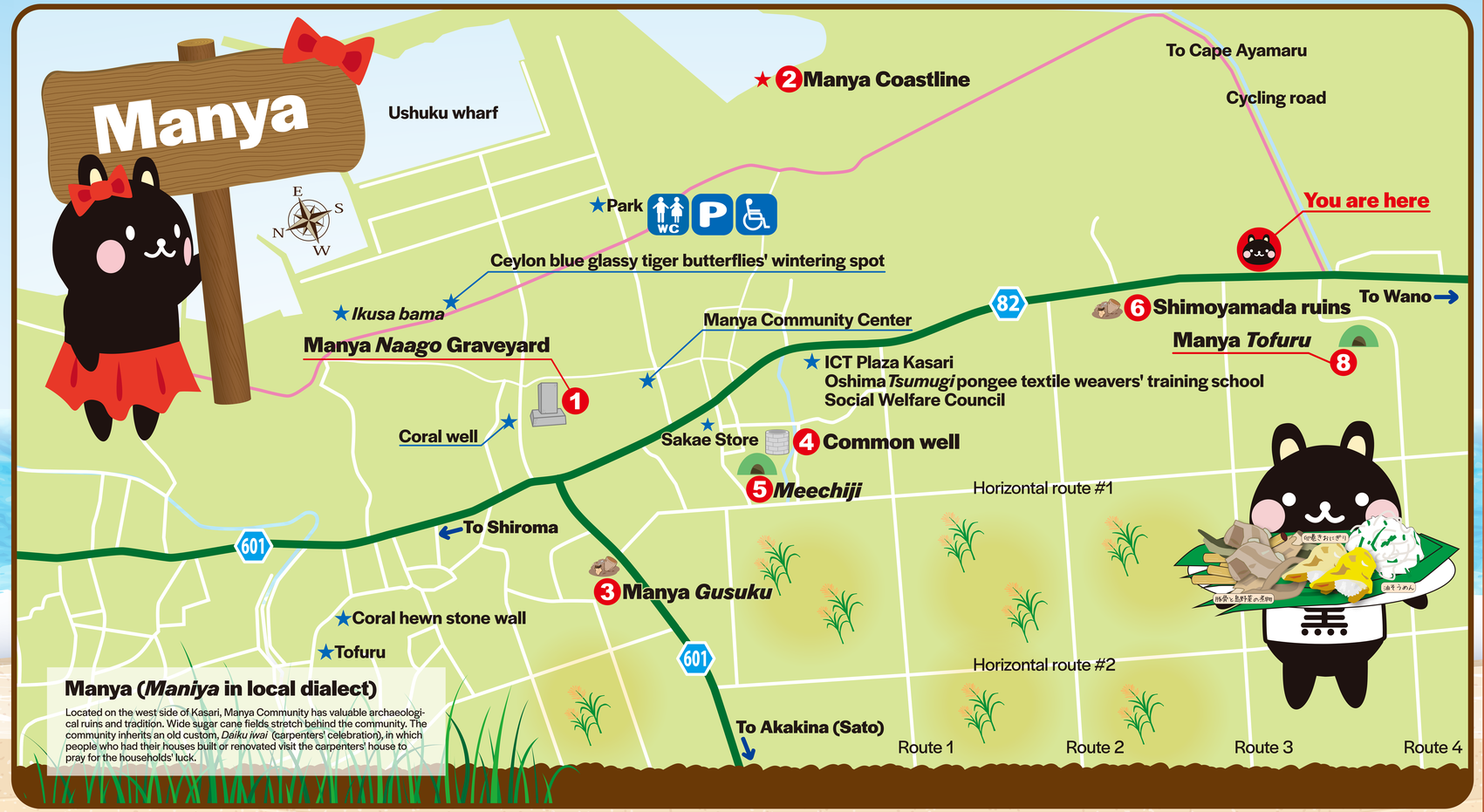
0Km 1Km 2Km 3Km 4Km 5Km

Amami City HP

Administration: Amami City

Legend

- Toilet
- Shower
- Parking area
- Rest area
- Barrier-free toilet
- Kasari Branch, Amami City
- Major Sightseeing Spots and Facilities



Manya (*Maniya* in local dialect)

Located on the west side of Kasari, Manya Community has valuable archaeological ruins and tradition. Wide sugar cane fields stretch behind the community. The community inherits an old custom, *Daiku iwai* (carpenters' celebration), in which people who had their houses built or renovated visit the carpenters' house to pray for the households' luck.

Manya Naago graveyard

Manya graveyard is situated on a short sand dune on the east side of the community. The graveyard is relatively well organized with various kinds of tombstones, including five-layered towers, those made of some precious stone, coral stones, and those with stone fences. The graveyard was relocated to its current place from the dune on the beach. A number of old tombstones, including those of the Edo period, are found in the graveyard.

Manya Coastline

As Manya coastline has white sand and developed reefs full of fish and seashells, the community had many fishermen. There used to be a beautiful beach where community events were held and children played around. Although the area turned into a coastline with a park and airport, a part of the beach remains to remind people of the old days.

Manya *Gusuku*

An excavation and research was held at Manya *Gusuku* (fortress) in 1996. A ruin of an artificial pond with coral stones discovered at the site indicates it was built in the 13th century, implying Amami Oshima island had dominant figures with gardens at that time. A number of postholes were found on the east side of the site. From further east, grooves, human bone, celadon porcelain pieces, and distinctive *Kamuyaki* ware pieces were discovered.

Common well

Each community had at least one common well for drinking water. Noshi River running on the south side of the community used to be the resource for people's daily water. People washed vegetables in the upstream and clothes in the downstream. Kushi and Mae wells provided drinking water. While the wells along the pathways in the community are no longer used and covered with lids, they remind people of olden day's community life.

Meechiji

Manya Community, consisting of Ushiro, Mae, and Nagata areas, has some sacred spots including Manya *Gusuku*, Nagata, *Yanshiro*, and *Meechiji*. At Meechiji, people have a ritual called *Miki-mori* on September 9th of the Lunar calendar, offering *Miki* (fermented drink) to the deity to pray for safety of the households. There is a site of a large residence, *Kamimichi* (deity's path), and two bomb-proof shelter sites.

Shimoyamada ruins

At the sand dunes along the coastline in Ushuku Elementary School's district, there are a number of archaeological sites from the prehistoric and *Kodai* (3rd - 7th century) eras. In the 1970's, Kagoshima Prefecture's Cultural Property Department held some excavation and research projects, with Nagahama Kaneku, Shimoyamada, and Keji ruins as the representative ruins in the area. With the dune formation process and the ruins' era taken into consideration, the excavation projects paid attention to preserve the natural environment.

Manya August Dance

Manya August Dance starts from near *Yanshiro*. People used to visit and dance at each household in the community. Today, they dance at specific households selected for the year in conjunction with other harvest events (*Arasetsu*, *Shibasashi*, and *Kanesaru*). 24 dances and songs were inherited through generations as a part of adult education led by Keiji Shirouchi.

Manya *Tofuru*

The northern limit of household locations in Manya Community was Noshi River at the south. Today, residences are found beyond the river, up to Izumi River running on the north side of Amami Airport. *Tofuru* grave is situated in a round shaped forest, containing funerary urns with human bones. The grave is no longer used, and the human bones are precious materials that tell us valuable historical data.