

Oku-Yambaru no Sato Resort

The small, idyllic resort of Oku-Yambaru no Sato is ideal for unhurried family getaways. While the resort's name refers to its location in the Oku ("inner") area of Kunigami Village, it can also be translated as "a village deep in Yambaru." On Children's Day in early May, the resort's Carp Streamer Festival, which features hundreds of colorful carp-shaped streamers or *koinobori* fluttering from lines strung across the park, attracts thousands of visitors from across Okinawa Island. At other times of the year, it is a quiet retreat.

The main attraction at Oku-Yambaru no Sato is the cool, refreshing stream that runs through the resort. Unlike most rivers in Kunigami, the banks of this one are clear of trees and shrubbery right down to the water's edge, so it is easy to keep an eye on children playing there. Depending on the season, fish, crabs, and long-armed prawns can be found there. A short stroll downstream around the bend to where the river widens and meets the sea reveals another scenic view.

Accommodation here takes the form of individual cottages that combine modern comforts with traditional Okinawan architecture inspired by ancient Chinese geomancy (*feng shui*). The most important room, the *ichiban-za*, corresponds to the "head" of an imagined human figure superimposed on the floor plan. The next most important room, or *niban-za*, which contains the Buddhist altar, corresponds to the heart. Note also the guardian lion or *shisa* on the roof of each cottage.

During your stay, be sure to visit the small museum on the grounds. Photographs, dioramas, and tools donated by local families offer a vivid picture of the way of life that once held sway in this corner of the Yambaru region.