

We want your help in protecting our important regional resources – our people, nature, and culture – to ensure they remain for the future.

# Rulebook of Yambaru



# Enjoy Some Pleasant Time in Yambaru.

Spanning three villages in north of the main island of Okinawa (Kunigami, Ogimi, and Higashi), the Forest of Yambaru has nurtured a rich natural environment, culture and history for many years.

This is due not only to the natural geography and passage of time, but also to the way the local people have lived their lives.

It is important to promote the preservation and proper use of the natural environment so that many people can enjoy the charm of the region, including the Forest of Yambaru, in the future.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation!

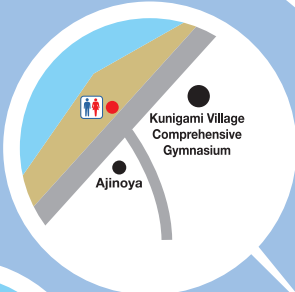
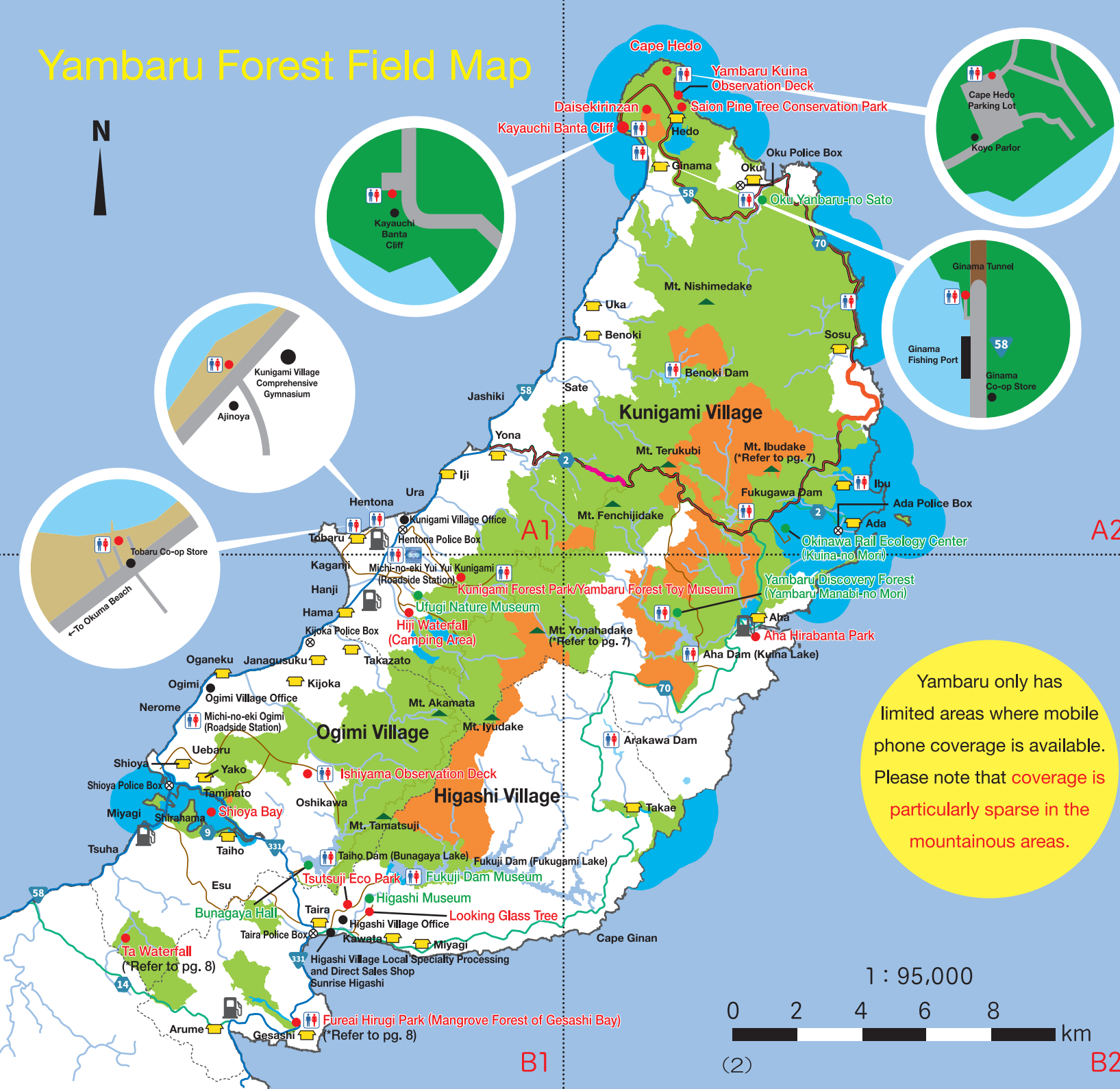
## Contents

- Yambaru Forest Field Map (2)
- Relevant Laws (3)
- Common Rules (4)
- Rules Relating to Living Organisms (6)
- Rules for Each Nature Experience Location (7)
- Respect for Livelihood and Privacy of Residents (9)
- Equipment and Emergencies (11)
- Contact Information (12)



## Rule of Visiting the Yambaru Field

# Yambaru Forest Field Map



In the Yambaru area, the abundant and precious nature of the Forest of Yambaru remains mainly on the land comprising the island's three northern villages. Each has its own special flavor for you to enjoy. When visiting, try to keep in mind that you are a guest in a place that people and living organisms have made their home.

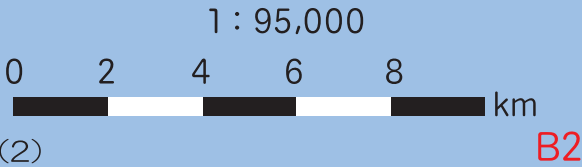
## Map Legend

- Place for sightseeing/fun
- Place to learn
- Facility with public toilet
- Co-op Store
- Gas station
- EV charging stand (for electric vehicles)
- Roadkill caution zone
- Okinawa Rail traffic accident prevention priority zone
- Ryukyu Longtailed Giant Rat traffic accident prevention priority zone

Yambaru only has limited areas where mobile phone coverage is available. Please note that coverage is particularly sparse in the mountainous areas.

## Yambaru National Park

- Special Protection Area
- Special Area
- Common Area



# Relevant Laws

## Natural Parks Act (Yambaru National Park)

On September 15, 2016, the villages of Kunigami, Ogimi, and Higashi (commonly called “Yambaru”) were designated as Yambaru National Park, making them the 33rd National Park in Japan. In the Special Protection Areas set forth in that same law, there are regulations that govern damage to trees and bamboo, open fires, the collection of plants, setting animals loose, the capture of animals, and the driving of vehicles. Violations of the regulations will be punished by imprisonment of up to six months or a fine of less than 500,000 yen.

## Species Conservation Act (Domestic Rare Wild Fauna and Flora)

In addition to the capture of wild flora and fauna such as beetles and frogs only found in Yambaru being prohibited, there is also a ban on displays or advertising for the purpose of their transfer, sale or distribution.

Violations will be punished by imprisonment of up to 5 years (for individuals) or a fine of up to 5 million yen (a fine of up to 100 million yen for companies).

## Cultural Property Protection Act (Protected Species)

The capture, etc., of natural treasures such as the Ryukyu Black Breasted Leaf Turtle, is prohibited under the Cultural Property Protection Act, and violations will be punished by imprisonment of up to 5 years or a fine of up to 300,000 yen.

## Animal Welfare Act (Cats, Dogs, Etc.)

Abandonment of a dog or a cat or other animal in your care will be punished by a fine of up to 1 million yen. Death or injury caused to a dog or a cat or other animal in your care will be punished by imprisonment of up to 2 years or a fine of up to 2 million yen.

## Wildlife Protection Management Act

The Wildlife Protection Management Act allows only persons who have been granted permission to capture wildlife or collect the eggs of birds. Violations will be punished by imprisonment of up to 1 year or a fine of up to 1 million yen. The Yambaru area also contains the nationally designated wildlife protection areas of Ada and Aha, and the prefecturally designated wildlife protection areas of Taiho, Mt. Nishimedake, Sate, and Mt. Yonahadake. These areas aim for the protection of the wildlife that inhabit them, and are patrolled day and night by rangers who police activities including the poaching of Japanese white-eye birds.

## Invasive Alien Species Act (Introduced Species)

It is prohibited to keep or transport animals or plants that have been designated as introduced species, such as the mongoose. The Mikania Micrantha creeper vine can also be seen in the Yambaru area. During the winter it produces countless tiny seeds, and there are concerns that they may attach to clothing or similar and spread to further negatively impact the natural ecosystem.

# Common Rules

The following rules should be adhered to for full enjoyment of Yambaru's nature.

## Enter Nature Areas at Your Own Risk

Yambaru has many dangerous places such as cliffs, poisonous animals such as Habu snakes and bees, and plants that can cause rashes if they touch your skin, yet at the same time **it has only a few medical institutions** and it takes time to reach them. In addition, **there are places with no mobile phone coverage**. When going for a stroll, it is recommended that you take a local guide.



## Take Your Trash Home with You

Yambaru is not a trash bin. Take responsibility for the items you bring with you. In particular, food scraps being left behind leads to the wildlife becoming accustomed to getting their food from humans, and there are concerns about the adverse effect this has on the ecosystem. Meanwhile, plastic, metal, and other similar items left behind will remain in the ground without decomposing.



## Go to the Toilet Before You Leave

There are no toilets in the forest, so be sure to go to the toilet before you enter the forest environment. Human excrement is unhygienic, and may also risk attracting the wildlife, while any toilet paper used will remain in the forest without decomposing. If you are worried about needing to go to the toilet in the forest, bring a portable toilet with you and leave nothing behind.



Toilets at Kunigami Village Forest Park

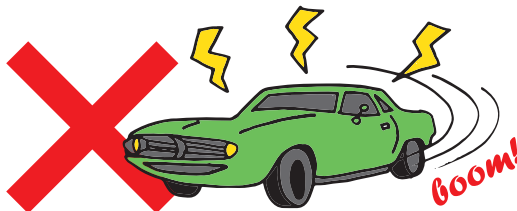


Toilets at the Yonhadake Parking Area



## Do Not Be a Nuisance to Others

Yambaru's nature, such as its mountains and oceans, is also part of the areas where local residents live their lives. Speaking loudly or making loud noises can be bothersome to the people who live in the area. Be considerate of others and don't play car stereos at high volumes, make noise with fireworks or similar items, or drift-race on the roads.





## Do Not Drive Cars or Bikes Indiscriminately on Places That Are Not Paved as Road

Unpaved areas may contain mud or sharp differences in ground-level, and are dangerous to drive into or onto. You may also crush flora or fauna that live in the Forest of Yambaru by doing so, or inadvertently help create roads that assist with poaching or illegal mining. In addition, please be careful where you drive, because the road you follow may lead to private land, including farmland, and in some places, vehicles are not allowed by law.



## Do Not Leave Paths to Enter the Forest

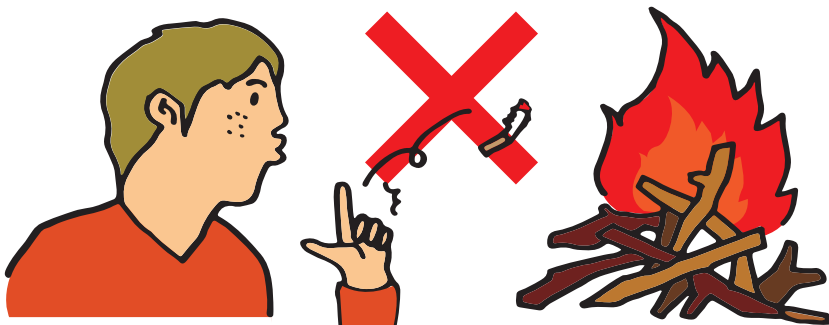
There are basically no mountain trails in the forest. Entering the forest arbitrarily may lead to you becoming stranded or crushing rare flora or fauna. It also increases your likelihood of encountering dangerous animals such as Habu snakes.



Evacuation Warning Sign

## Do Not Light Fires

Do not light fires outside of permitted areas such as campsites, or throw away cigarette butts. Doing so may cause a wildfire. In addition, depending on the location, doing so is also prohibited by law.



# Rules Relating to Living Organisms

Yambaru's nature is very fragile, and there are many plants and animals that are endangered. The following are rules that have been put in place to ensure this abundant nature will remain forever.

## Do Not Remove Plants or Animals

Do not take or trample flora and fauna or set traps. Do not fool yourself by thinking that "just a little is OK."



## Do Not Scare Animals

At night, refrain from persistently shining flashlights on wildlife or making loud noises. Stimulation from humans may lead animals to panic or abandon their young (as is the case with the Okinawan Woodpecker and Okinawa Rail, etc.)

This kind of behavior can also be a nuisance to local residents who live nearby.



## Do Not Introduce Plants or Animals

Do not abandon animals not from Yambaru (non-native species) or pets. Even a cute pet will become a predator to Yambaru's indigenous rare flora and fauna if it is released in the wild. Also, non-native species may disrupt the balance of the ecosystem.



## Avoid Hitting Wildlife While Driving

Drive carefully, as roadkill incidents do occur. Particular care is required on Prefectural Route 70 on the east coast, and Prefectural Route 2 that crosses Yambaru from east to west.

**\*Many roadkill incidents occur in the early morning and evening for the Okinawa Rail, and at night for the nocturnal Ryukyu Longtailed Giant Rat and Ryukyu Black Breasted Leaf Turtle.**

Roadkill incidents (traffic accidents) occur because the places where the animals living in the Forest of Yambaru and the positions of the roads used by humans overlap. Imagine how you would feel if it were your own pet that had been involved in an accident...

A small amount of attention paid to other living things on the road will help prevent damage to fauna caused by roadkill, and also ensure greater safety for those who are driving.

Ministry of Environment, Yambaru Conservation Office,  
Nature Conservation Chief



Animals crossing warning sign

# Rules for Each Nature Experience Location

The following are rules for you to keep in mind for each of the villages where you can experience the abundant nature bequeathed to Yambaru. The Forest of Yambaru has many poisonous animals such as Habu snakes and plants that can cause rashes if they touch your skin, so you need to be careful. It is also a good idea to accompany a guide in order to enjoy this wilderness.

## Kunigami Village

[Mt. Yonhadake] (Map: B1 top-right)



Covered in an evergreen broadleaf forest, Mt. Yonhadake is Okinawa's highest peak (altitude: 503m), and is a place where many indigenous and rare plants and animals live and grow. Strict conservation is required by law at elevations above the area with the sign (pictured above). Please cooperate with the restrictions on entry.

In 2005, as one of our conservation efforts, we bought land at the 9th station on Mt. Yonhadake and made it a wildlife sanctuary. This forest raised by ancestors who utilized nature is a treasure-house of life.

It is an irreplaceable region on Earth, and needs to have a connection with the following generations of the future.

The first thing we need to do for that is to know and love the forest.

There are many wild creatures waiting to meet you in the forest.

NPO Yambaru Forest Trust Toyoko Ichida

[Mt. Ibudake] (Map: A2 middle)



The giant Okinawa Urajirogashi tree is recognized as one of the 100 famous trees of Okinawa, and is respected by the local people.

Do not climb, tread on the roots, or damage the tree in any way. It is dangerous to go beyond the giant Okinawa Urajirogashi tree, so please refrain from doing so.

The amount of tourism enjoying nature and nature-conservation activities is increasing. Our food and lifestyles are supported by the blessings of an ecosystem that involves a variety of living creatures. Take advantage of a guide to protect your connection with flora and fauna and to interact with nature properly.

Yambaru Eco-Tourism Institute Shinobu Nakane



# Ogimi Village

【Ta Waterfall】 (Map: B1 bottom left)



In rivers, there is the risk that a small amount of carelessness can lead to a serious accident that may be life-threatening. Wear footwear such as river shoes or athletic shoes that can get wet.

If stormy weather is expected, the parking lot may be closed if a lightning alert or more serious warning is issued.

It is recommended you wear a life jacket.

Climbing the waterfall at Ta Waterfall is very dangerous, so please refrain from doing so.

# Higashi Village

【Mangrove Forest of Gesahi Bay】 (Map: B1 bottom)



It is required to book a guided tour in advance if you want to ride in a canoe.

Please enjoy the mangroves from the promenade without entering the mangrove forest or tidal flats directly.

Please do not fish.

The use of roller-skates, roller-blades, skateboards or bicycles on the wooden path is forbidden because it may make the path dangerous for other users.

To avoid safety concerns, please do not play on/in canoes that are anchored in the river or placed on the ground.



# Respect for Livelihood and Privacy of Residents

There are many places of interest in Yambaru that are very close to people going about their daily lives. Please be respectful of their lives and privacy.

## Slow down When Driving – Especially in Villages and on Mountain Roads

There are many settlements where people live just off the main road. Even main roads are used as part of daily life for heading to work such as farming. Please do not tailgate behind work trucks or motorcycles driven by residents, and be sure to drive safely and comfortably within the speed limit.



## Park Your Car in a Place Where It Will Not Cause Problems for Traffic or Residents

There are many private or village-managed pieces of land in Yambaru that are mistaken for parking. Please check with the residents when you park. In addition, it is dangerous to park on the road because there are many winding roads with poor visibility in Yambaru. Please refrain from leaving your car's engine idling.



## Do Not Enter or Peer inside Private Homes

If you are taking a stroll around the village or close to a private home, have consideration for the privacy of the residents. Facilities such as Community Centers are managed to be available for the lives and activities of the local residents, so please do not use them without permission. In addition, the same considerations apply not only to private homes, but also to entering farmland along the mountain roads away from the villages. Please take care to bear this in mind.

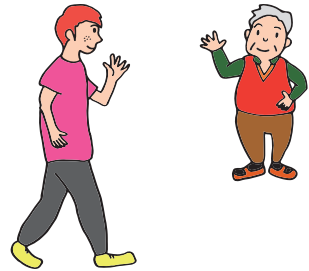


## Behave Towards Local Residents as a Guest Should

A greeting can provide the impetus for a conversation, which will make your visit all the more memorable. The same is true when asking for directions.

The people in the settlement of Yona, and in particular the elderly women, are very friendly, and the spirit of Icharibachode (once we meet we become siblings) is important to them. They will cheerfully strike up a conversation with people they don't know. I hope you can have fun interacting with some of the locals.

Kunigami Village, Yona-Ward Chushin Miyagi



## Be Respectful of Sacred Places, Such as the Places of Worship Called “Uganjo”

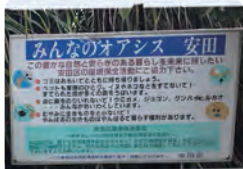
Please refrain from presumptuous observation or photography of traditional ceremonies or the like. Please note that the position from where you are observing may interfere with the ritual. In addition, the remains of fences to deter wild boar and charcoal kilns are assets that tell the history of the region. Please do not break them.



An Uganjo (Yugami) in Kodama Forest, in Kunigami Village's Hiji-Ward



## Please Help Local Initiatives



Signs in Kunigami Village's Ada-Ward

In Ada-Ward, we have established rules and regulations as settlements, and are actively making efforts to protect the rich natural environment, including prohibiting nuisance activities such as the use of vehicles on beaches and the capture of rare species. We also are seeking donations to help with our various activities. Please help us if you can!

# Equipment and Emergencies

## Beware of Becoming Lost!

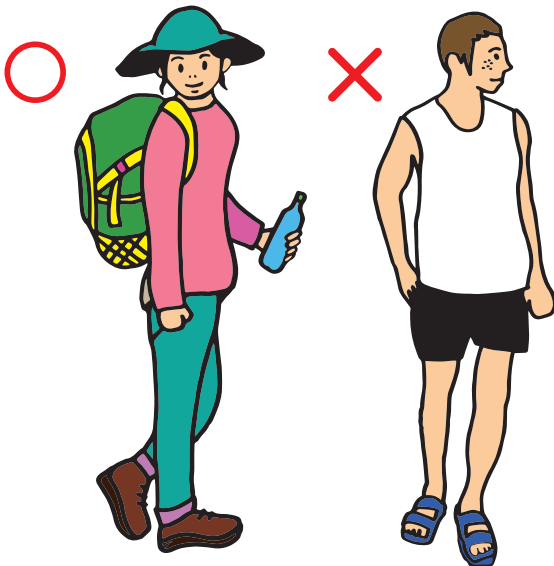
While the Forest of Yambaru is basically not equipped with mountain trails, there are roads that used to be used, and also work-roads for anti-mongoose measures, so it is easy to become lost. In order to avoid becoming lost, do not carelessly follow unknown roads. Moreover, because the vegetation in the forest is so deep, it becomes darker earlier than you think. Please take care to descend from the mountain early.

## Be Sufficiently Prepared with the Proper Equipment

- As a measure to protect against slipping and dangerous animals such as Habu snakes, wear sturdy hiking shoes. Sandals are a no-go!
- Wear a hat to protect your head from foliage and the strong sunlight.
- Wearing long sleeves and long trousers (to enable temperature regulation!) when climbing helps to avoid not only injuries, but also bites or stings from insects such as caterpillars, gadflies, and wasps.
- Use a backpack to enable the use of both hands.
- Carry rain gear and a mobile phone.
- Be sure to take high-energy rations and drinking water to guard against heat stroke and dehydration.
- Protect yourself properly against insects and sunburn.

**CHECK!**

There are dangerous roads like this in the forest!



# Contact Information

## In Case of Emergency

In case of sudden illness or serious injury, call **119**!

Hokubu District Medical Association Hospital  
(Umusa, Nago city)

TEL : 0980-54-1111

Medical Interpretation is Available in the Following Language: English

\*Support may not be available depending on the nature of the inquiry or when a staff member that speaks the language in question is not available.



## If You Find a Creature That is Injured or Stuck

If you see a rare creature that is injured or has died, contact one of the following:

Ministry of the Environment Yambaru Wildlife Conservation Center

TEL : 0980-50-1025

\*Inquiries are available only in English.

Okinawa Rail Hotline (NPO Animal Hospital Okinawa)

TEL : 090-6857-8917

\*Inquiries are available only in Japanese.



## Inquiries

•Kunigami Tourism Association

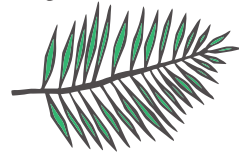
TEL : 0980-41-2420 \*Inquiries are available only in English.

•Ogimi Village Biodiversity Center Management Council

TEL : 080-9851-0359 \*Inquiries are available only in Japanese.

•Higashi Village Tourism Promotion Council

TEL : 0980-51-2433 \*Inquiries are available only in English.



Translation Publication:

Okinawa Prefecture Department of Environmental Nature Conservation Division