

CONTRIBUTED BY JOELLE YAMADA



Dragging an infant, toddler, pre-teen, husband and in-laws ANYWHERE might not sound like much fun, but I have to admit that we all completely enjoyed ourselves at [Ryukyu Mura](#). It's basically a traditional Okinawan village with exhibits showcasing various festivals, crafts and foods. We got there just in time for the Parade (10am -- also at 4pm) that condenses a years worth of festivals into one parade:



Usudeku, Karate, Miruku, Kajimayah, Lion Dance, Juri,



Mamidoma & Eisa. I especially loved the older lady who walked around with a huge bottle of awamori balanced on her head and the wonderful eisa dancers (they do their own show at 9am & 1pm). The Lion came right up to my son and snapped its *jaws* and scared him a bit, but he recovered. There were several opportunities for the audience to join into the dancing.

Then we went to the Habu Show (happens every 45 minutes or so throughout the day) and watched the snake handler *play* with the Habu which was in a glass box next to its nemesis – the mongoose. I get the impression they used to have fights between the two, but are no longer allowed due to those pesky animal rights laws – thank goodness! But there is a computer animated video of what that fight might be like. At the end of the show, you are invited to swallow a mouthful of “ground up Habu” that is supposed to give you energy – and then of course given the chance to buy the powder to take home with you.... hmmm...

At several places throughout the park you have the chance to participate in the local crafts. You can buy a ticket to paint Shisa dogs, try your hand at bingata or pottery, learn the dances or to play various instruments (the prices start at 800¥).

We had a chance to see many parts of traditional life in Okinawa and rewarded ourselves at the end with Okinawan donuts and coconut milk (there was also a restaurant where you buy the ticket corresponding to what you want to eat).

There is a lot for sale – the typical souvenirs as well as locally produced sea salt and brown sugar.

*Ryukyu Mura is located north of Kadena in Onna Village. Take the 58 north past the turns for Torii until you see a digital TV type of thing on the left that says Ryukyu Mura with an arrow to the Left. Turn left and follow the signs for a little ways. You'll see the parking on the right side of the road and the entrance on the left. They open at 8:30 and last entry is at 5:30pm. If you buy tickets from ITT they are 770¥ for adults, 700¥ for students 16-18kj & 390¥ for kids 3-15. Tickets are about 50¥ more at the door. Phone: 098-965-1234*