

Garden Stream and Poetry Festival, Motsuji Temple

This stream, restored in 1986, serves as the canal used for carrying water to the temple pond (Oizumigaike), and is the only remaining twelfth-century garden stream in Japan that retains its original form. Its design replicates a natural stream running downhill from the mountains to the sea.

Each year on the fourth Sunday in May, Motsuji Temple hosts a traditional poetry festival called *Gokusui no En* (“Winding Stream Festival”) along the banks of the stream. Participants wear Heian period (794–1185) courtly dress: men wear traditional hunting attire and headdresses, and women wear layered kimono called *junihitoe*.

Participants compose traditional poems on a specific theme as a small wooden boat floats down the stream carrying a cup of sake, and attempt to complete their compositions before the sake cup arrives.

The festival pays homage to traditional poetry competitions held by Japanese nobles, and also commemorates Fujiwara no Hidehira (1122–1187), the third Fujiwara lord to rule Hiraizumi.