

## Oku-Nikko Yumoto Onsen Hot Spring

Oku-Nikko Yumoto Onsen is a natural hot spring onsen thought to have been discovered 1,200 years ago, possibly in 788, by Shodo (735–817), a great monk who founded the temples and shrines of Nikko. The traditional practice of “*toji*”, when people visit hot springs for an extended time to heal ailments and improve health, is still practiced here at Yumoto Onsen. Nearby Onsenji Temple, a branch of Rinnoji Temple, where the main image is a Yakushi Nyorai (Healing Buddha), and Onsen Shrine, a Shinto shrine founded by Shodo and dedicated to the guardian deity of onsen, can both be visited. A mini bronze shrine found at Onsen Shrine is engraved with the year 1513, suggesting the hot springs were in use at that time.

Many bath facilities and traditional Japanese ryokan inns were constructed here during the Meiji period (1868–1912). Many of the buildings date today back to the rebuilding after a catastrophic fire in 1928. The sources of the sulfurous hot springs are in the surrounding mountains and the waters are a milky-white color. Their coloration is the result of oxidation. Yunodaira Wetland in Oku-Nikko has numerous hot spring sources where hot water bubbles up from the ground. There are many wooden huts here built above the hot springs. The huts supply hot spring water to the ryokan nearby. Visitors are welcome to enjoy these unique hot springs. The waters are believed to have many health benefits, including improving the circulation.