

Hokkein Onsen and the Grasslands

Bogatsuru Marsh is located in Chojabaru, 1,200 m above sea level. It lies alongside the Kuju Mountain Range on the left side of the Yamanami Highway that connects Yufuin in Oita Prefecture to the Mt. Aso area in Kumamoto. Hokkein Onsen, the highest hot spring area in Kyushu, is located within the Bogatsuru Marsh, and can only be reached by foot. The walk in takes around two hours on one of the hiking trails that start at the Chojabaru Visitor Center and goes across the mountain range.

Visitors can stay at Hokkein Onsen Sanso, a facility styled on a mountain hut. It has two buildings; one with guest rooms, and the other with baths, a dining room, and a large banquet hall. The baths are filled with 100% pure, natural hot-spring water, and have a superb view of Mt. Hiji.

The area features open grasslands against a backdrop of rugged mountain terrain, the sort of landscape typical of the Kuju area. The grassland habitat has been nurtured by people for thousands of years, through pasturing, mowing, and grassland burning. The grasslands are home to several rare plants which can be appreciated in different seasons, including marsh marigolds and violets in spring, azaleas and irises in summer, and bellflowers in autumn.