

Gerohatsu Onsen Museum

At the Gerohatsu Onsen Museum, visitors learn there is more to hot springs (*onsen*) than just bathing. The museum has about 400 items on display and covers the culture, history, and science behind hot springs in both Gero and the rest of Japan in a family-friendly, informative manner. It is divided into two sections, and also has a cozy library filled with novels and academic texts.

The first section of the museum covers the history and culture behind the *onsen* experience, with a particular focus on Gero. Communal bathing in hot springs has been a cultural pastime in Japan for thousands of years; visitors can learn about the country's many hot springs and the different experiences they offer. Among the items on display here are souvenirs from hot spring towns around Japan and nineteenth-century newspaper lists ranking the country's best hot springs.

The second part of the museum covers the science behind hot springs. Three-dimensional dioramas explain the springs' natural heat and describe how hot spring towns route the water into the baths. The hands-on games and exhibits are educational and fun for both children and adults.

The museum finishes with a foot bath, "Yakushi no Ashiyu." This bath has visitors walk through shallow water which starts off hot and cools down toward the end. It allows visitors to experience a hot spring right after learning about them.