

Kinosaki Onsen History

The town's history goes back around 1,300 years to 720, when wandering mendicant Buddhist priest Dochi Shonin discovered the curative powers of its waters. When he first visited the area, he was instructed in a vision to chant a specific Buddhist sutra for 1,000 consecutive days, and when he did so hot spring water with healing powers sprang forth. Today's Onsen Festival, celebrated on April 23 and 24, commemorates the death of Dochi Shonin.

That first hot spring source is now the site of Mandara-yu, one of the seven public *onsen* of Kinosaki. Dochi Shonin also founded Onsenji Temple, the guardian temple of Kinosaki Onsen, erected in gratitude to the principal deity, Juichimen Kannon Bosatsu ("Eleven-Faced Kannon") for the healing waters and for the protection of the town and its people.

Among the many visitors to Kinosaki over its more recent history was the famous novelist Shiga Naoya (1883–1971), author of the short "I novel" *At Kinosaki* (1917). His portrayal of his time in Kinosaki helped to increase the fame of the town.