

Nishi-Mikawa Gold Park

Nishi-Mikawa Gold Park is located on the site of the Nishi-Mikawa gold dust mine, one of the earliest gold mines on Sado. The park offers hands-on experiences of the placer style of gold mining called *onagashi* that is used to separate small particles of gold from sand and gravel. In this method, water from a river is redirected into a ditch filled with gold-containing sand and gravel. Miners place a small amount of this gold-containing sand and water into a pan, swirling it and allowing the water to wash the lighter materials over the sides of the pan, leaving heavier materials, like gold, behind.

The park is divided into two parts: the exhibition hall and the gold mining experience. The exhibition hall presents the different ways in which gold can be processed, including how it is made into coins and jewelry.

The inner half of the park lets visitors experience *onagashi* gold mining for themselves. There are two courses to choose from. In the beginner's course, visitors stand by an artificial waterway and sift through sand in an effort to discover a few small bits of gold, while the advanced course recreates Edo-period (1603–1868) gold sifting on a larger scale. Visitors squat by a stream and sift for gold much like miners did during the gold rush. They are taught techniques on how to sift efficiently, moving the sand and water in circular motions until only a few pieces of gold remain. It is a great opportunity for both children and adults to experience first-hand the effort it takes to mine for gold, and unlike the miners of the Edo period, visitors can keep their winnings, storing them in a small plastic tube to take home.