

## **Akiota's Mountains and Forests**

Ninety percent of Akiota is covered with forest. In the Edo period (1603–1868), this forest provided wood for making the charcoal used in the region's traditional *tatara* iron smelting, and today creates numerous opportunities for outdoor adventures. Sandankyo Gorge is Akiota's most popular destination for experiencing the area's rich nature firsthand, though many visitors also head to Mt. Osorakan, Mt. Shinnyu, Mt. Tenjo, and Ryuzu Gorge, all of which have their own distinct charms. Akiota is blessed with an exceptionally diverse variety of natural features, including primary forest, snow-covered hills in winter, and white-water rivers.

The 16-kilometer Sandankyo Gorge winds along the Shibaki River, a tributary of the Ota River. Hikers can experience the beauty of the gorge by walking to Kurobuchi Pool, about 50 minutes from the Sandankyo Front Gate, or by exploring waterfalls such as the hidden Nidandaki Falls, accessible only by boat.

At 1,346 meters, Mt. Osorakan is Hiroshima Prefecture's highest peak. The snow from December to March draws skiers and snowboarders, while outdoor enthusiasts head to the mountain from April to November for camping and zip-lining. The grassy slopes of the 1,153-meter Mt. Shinnyu are burned off every April since 1749 in a practice called *yamayaki*, creating a pastoral landscape rich with plant life in summer. Mt. Tenjo, at 973 meters tall, is home to Hikiake no Mori, a virtually untouched forest with trees up to 400 years old.