

Sandankyo: Sandankyo Front Gate to Kurobuchi Pool

The Sandankyo Front Gate is the starting point of the south end of the Sandankyo trail. The three-kilometer trek from the Sandankyo Front Gate to Kurobuchi Pool is the most popular because hikers can experience the gorge's natural beauty in about 50 minutes on paved paths and well-trod dirt roads, making it enjoyable for beginners or day-trippers. The entrance to the trail is located next to both the Sandankyo Hotel and stores providing provisions and information for the hike. After starting on the trail, hikers will cross a bright red bridge over Nagabuchi Pool. At around 100 meters, this is the longest pool in Sandankyo Gorge. A local kayaking and stand-up paddle boarding school is based here. The water is clear and cool in summer, making the pool popular for swimming.

About 5 minutes from Nagabuchi Pool is Shimaidaki Falls. The name means "sister waterfall" and refers to the three streams that run parallel down the rocks into a tranquil pool. Shimaidaki Falls is near Tatsunokuchi Torrent, where the tranquil water turns into tumultuous, rushing rapids.

In about 20 minutes from Shimaidaki Falls, hikers will come across a bright red opening amid the greenery. Called Akadaki Falls, this small waterfall of fresh spring water is framed by rocks covered with the brick-red algae that thrives here. The drinkable water is cold and clean, with a sweet flavor and soft texture. After passing Akadaki Falls, the trail leads onward to Meotobuchi Pool, an eroded pond filled with rocks. The path along Meotobuchi Pool is elevated, and there is no barrier between the path and the long drop to the water. Next to the pool is Ishidoi Shallows, a shallow area also filled with rocks.

Further on, the trail leads to Kurobuchi Pool, where hikers can walk to the water's edge and take a break. The water in this large pool is tranquil and surrounded by giant cliffs covered with pristine forest. Kurobuchiso, a restaurant in the middle of the gorge, can be reached by a small ferryboat (the ride takes about 10 minutes).