

## **History of Shiobara Onsen**

The history of Shiobara Onsen began with the discovery of a hot spring in the Motoyu area in approximately 810 CE. Motoyu is the settlement on the far left side of the map. Some accounts credit the discovery of the springs to a hunter, but others credit a traveling monk. Located deep in the mountains, the *onsen* was difficult to reach and was not frequently visited until the advent of trains in the late nineteenth century.

In 1884, a new road was opened to Shiobara and in 1886 railroad service was extended to Nishinasuno Station. Horse-drawn carriages called *tote-basha* were used to transport visitors the 14 kilometers from the station to Shiobara's *onsen* town. Later, as cars and buses became more common, the horse-drawn carriages were used to take tourists between the hot springs and other attractions, which proved immensely popular.

Notably, the town was a popular destination for many literary figures in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. People like Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916) and Yosano Akiko (1878–1942) came to Shiobara to relax and get away from the industrialization of the cities in order to focus on their writing.