

Shiobara Valley Trail: Mikaeri Trail

Distance: 3.3 km

Duration: 120 minutes (each way)

Nearest Bus Stops:

- West trailhead at Saruiwa Parking Lot: Get off at Shiobara Ooami (500 m, 8-minute walk)
- East trailhead at Mikaeri Bridge in Gamaishi Park: Get off at Mikaeri Bridge

Trail Overview:

Mikaeri Trail is a moderately difficult trail with a number of steep inclines and descents. It crosses the Ooami area south of the Hoki River from Ryūshun Falls to Mikaeri Falls and runs through the forest. Together, Mikaeri Trail and Yashio Trail make up the 8.5-kilometer Shiobara Valley Trail.

It is a short walk from the west trailhead at the Saruiwa Parking Lot to Ryūshun Suspension Bridge and Ryūshun Falls. From there, the path is hilly and leads to a marsh with several stands of large Japanese fir trees. Continuing along the path brings hikers to a series of steep inclines up to the ridgeline, where masses of azaleas bloom in mid-April. After a steady descent with some steeper sections, the trail continues through a forest of Japanese larch, Japanese fir, and *asunaro*, a genus of cypress tree found only in Japan.

Highlights:

Ryūshun Falls and Suspension Bridge

The Ryūshun Suspension Bridge is about a 10-minute walk from the eastern trailhead near Ryūshun Falls, one of the area's gentler waterfalls, whose waters flow 15 meters down a series of rock faces. For about three months between winter and late spring, the water freezes and stops flowing almost entirely.

Azaleas

Several varieties of azalea are clustered along the ridgeline about halfway along the trail. The Ooami area can be seen from the observation deck nearby.

Mikaeri Falls and Suspension Bridge

The 100-meter-long Mikaeri Suspension Bridge crosses the Hoki River near Mikaeri Falls not far from the eastern trailhead. An observation deck near the bridge overlooks

the 55-meter falls on the opposite shore. “Mikaeri” means “to look back” and is a reference to the saying that travelers always look back to see the falls one last time before they leave the valley.