

【Yudanaka Onsen】

The hot springs at Yudanaka Onsen were discovered around 650 by a monk named Chiyū, who dubbed them “waters of longevity” (*yōkare*). Since then, people have been drawn here in the hopes of preserving their youth. Today, the town is a bustling example of a hot spring district, with many historic Japanese inns (*ryokan*) and restaurants that cater to domestic and international visitors alike.

Yudanaka’s clear waters are rich in sodium chloride and sodium sulfate, both said to be beneficial for a variety of ailments including cuts, nerve pain, and chronic indigestion. The heat of the waters also soothes sore muscles.

In the afternoon, many of the *ryokan* open their baths to the public so that daytime visitors can try a variety of indoor and outdoor bathing facilities, including open-air baths (*rotenburo*). In addition, the public bath Kaede no Yu provides all-day facilities and a footbath just outside the train station where tourists can soak their tired feet.

Yudanaka Onsen is also within walking distance of a variety of interesting cultural sites, including one of the world’s tallest freestanding bronze sculptures, a 25-meter-tall statue of the Buddhist deity Kannon. Under the feet of this towering figure, 33 statues, representing Kannon’s 33 manifestations, are configured as a miniature version of the famous Saigoku pilgrimage circuit in the Kansai region.