

Nasu's Hot Springs

The history of Nasu's hot springs (*onsen*) stretches back for more than a millennium. Mentioned in written records as early as the eighth century, Nasu grew in popularity as a hot spring resort such that by late in the Edo period (1603–1867), the “Seven Springs of Nasu” were ranked among the best in eastern Japan. Nasu continues to thrive as a hot spring destination. The waters of each *onsen* differ both in mineral composition and the benefits they are said to offer.

Nasu Yumoto Onsen

This is the oldest *onsen* source in the area: Shika no Yu, or “Deer Hot Spring.” Although the earliest documentation dates to 738, legend has it this *onsen* was discovered in 630 by a hunter who was chasing a wounded mystical white deer through the forest. He caught up with the deer to find it soothing its wound in the hot spring. Shika no Yu is a sulfuric spring that is 76°C at its source point. The water is said to alleviate diabetes, anxiety, fatigue, and hemorrhoids.

Ōmaru Onsen

Ōmaru Onsen was discovered in 1691. One of Nasu's more remote springs, it is located midway up the eastern slope of Mt. Chausu. The spring is 60°C and slightly alkaline. It is said to benefit those with gynecological and colon disorders.

Benten Onsen

Benten Onsen was discovered in 1840, when the Buddhist goddess Benzaiten (also called Benten) appeared in a local man's dream and directed him to the source. The spring is slightly alkaline and 50°C. Its water is believed effective for gastrointestinal disorders, anemia, and indigestion.

Kita Onsen

Kita Onsen was discovered in 1696. Some parts of the *onsen* facility date to the late Edo period (1603–1867). One of its many baths is an open-air tub (*rotenburo*) the size of a swimming pool, and another bath is surrounded by huge masks of the mythical *tengu* (long-nosed bird-men). The source is a simple thermal spring with a temperature of 54°C, reputedly good for children's diseases, rheumatism, and infertility.

Yahata Onsen

Yahata Onsen (currently closed) was discovered in 1890 in the early Meiji era (1868–1912). It is located near a mountain slope where 20,000 azaleas bloom between mid-May and early June. Its saline spring water is 65°C, and it is said to help with nervous disorders, heart disease, and gastrointestinal disorders.

Ōruri Onsen

Originally reserved for mountain ascetics who used it for self-purification, Ōruri Onsen was discovered in 1860. It is a slightly acidic sulfuric *onsen* that is 35°C and said to help skin disorders and chronic urinary disorders.

Santogoya Onsen

Santogoya Onsen is an acidic *onsen* discovered in 1142. Located on the western slope of Mt. Asahi at an elevation of 1,500 meters, it can only be reached by hiking 2 hours

from the Nasu Ropeway station on Mt. Chausu's summit. The hot spring, which is 90°C at the source, is thought to help treat nervous disorders, ulcers, and skin disorders.