

Hot Springs

Villages with hot-spring (*onsen*) facilities dot the southern parts of Chubusangaku National Park. The water at most of these facilities is naturally heated by geothermal activity at the volcanic Mt. Yakedake and Mt. Norikura. There is natural variation in water quality, and each of the hot-spring villages specializes in a particular type of water. The materials used in the baths' construction also differ, with hinoki cypress and local stone often chosen. A wide range of bathing experiences are therefore available (see below).

Bathers are required to shower and wash thoroughly before entering the hot-spring waters at the facilities, as with all public bathing in Japan. Bathing is nude and separated by gender, although some establishments allow mixed bathing.

Shirahone Onsen

The waters of Shirahone Onsen are milky white due to high levels of calcium and sulfur in the water. Legend states that those who bathe for three days in the waters at Shirahone will not catch a cold for three years. Freshly sourced water, supplied via bamboo spouts installed around the village, can be drunk as is, and consuming it is said to help with gastrointestinal problems.

Norikura Onsen Village

Norikura Onsen Village is located on the Norikura Kogen highlands, and its many hot springs are tapped from three sources. The water sourced from the oldest spring, Norikura Kogen Onsen, is cloudy with a strong smell of sulfur. It also has antibacterial properties and a slightly sour taste, which result from its acidity.

Sawando Onsen

Sawando Onsen was developed in 1998 following the discovery of an underground geothermal spring during construction of the Abo Tunnel, making it one of the newest hot-spring villages in the region. The slightly alkaline waters are very hot, and a free public footbath supplied by the same hot-spring source is located in the center of the village.

Kamikochi Onsen

Famous writers were known to frequent the two hot-spring resorts sitting on the right

bank of the Azusa River at Kamikochi. The resorts subsequently are mentioned in several well-known Japanese literary works.

Hirayu Onsen

Forty different sources supply the waters at Hirayu Onsen. Each of these contains a variety of natural minerals with different properties. As a result, the baths in this village all differ depending on the sources they are fed by, and each facility takes pride in its own hot-spring water.

Shin-Hotaka Onsen

Many of Shin-Hotaka's facilities are located along the Kamata River. The high-temperature waters here are pure and alkaline. Shin-Hotaka Onsen is popular for its many outdoor baths offering views of the surrounding mountains.