

Tsuitoshi Tunnel and Nearby Shirahone Onsen

The 20-meter-long Tsuitoshi tunnel was formed naturally over millions of years by the rushing waters of the Yu River, which has slowly eroded the limestone in its path. The river passes through the hot-spring village of Shirahone Onsen, and while access to the tunnel is not possible due to the steep, rocky slope, it can be viewed from the road above, or from the public bath at Shirahone. A suspension bridge, which crosses the river downstream of the tunnel, offers extensive views of the surrounding forest and the roaring waters below.

The hot springs at Shirahone Onsen near the Tsuitoshi tunnel are characterized by milky white water, the result of calcium leaching from the area's limestone bedrock. This gave the area its original name: Shirafune, or "white bath." Over time, white calcified crusts developed around the edges of the bathing pools, and these may be the source of the current name, Shirahone, which is composed of the Japanese characters for "white" and "bone." The springs are believed to have restorative properties, and people drink the cloudy water from bamboo spouts installed around the village.