

Kanba Falls

At 110 meters high and 20 meters across, Kanba Falls is one of the largest waterfalls in the Chūgoku region. From its crest the water tumbles down over successive ledges of black volcanic rock, like a Chinese ink painting come to life. Toward the bottom of the falls, the water is parted by a narrow stone called “Carp Rock” for its resemblance to a giant fish swimming upstream. This postcard-perfect vista has earned the falls a place on several rankings of Japan’s most beautiful sites.

Kanba Falls is located inside a 100-hectare nature park. A well-maintained trail leads up to the foot of the falls, following a rocky streambed lined by maples, katsuras, and zelkovas that change from lush green in summer to a riot of red and yellow in autumn. Each spring, a species of cherry tree called *fukuzakura* puts forth shaggy blossoms reminiscent of tiny chrysanthemums. A single flower can have hundreds of individual petals, each a dark fuchsia in the center that gradually lightens to pale pink at the edge.

The trail passes another scenic waterfall called Tamadare Falls, loosely translatable as “Hanging Droplet Falls.” Small rivulets trickle along a ledge of moss-covered rock before falling with a delicate plinking sound into the stream below. The scene resembles rain running off a thatched roof—hence the cascade’s name.

Around 160 wild Japanese macaque monkeys live in the park. Native to Japan, the species lives the furthest north of any non-human primate species in the world, with a range that stretches to the northernmost tip of Honshū. The troop that resides here is not always found near the falls, as they spend much of their time foraging higher up in the mountains. However, lucky visitors may catch sight of mothers cradling gawky newborns in spring, juveniles playing raucous games of tag in summer, and adults with bright scarlet faces—signaling a readiness to mate—in fall. Visitors are discouraged from bringing food into the park, as the monkeys may attempt to steal it.