

## **Hiruzen Yatsuka Hot Spring Kaiyukan**

With its cool climate and encircling mountains, Hiruzen is a haven for outdoor sports. Hiking and skiing are perennially popular, but the Kaiyukan hot spring venue and its associated facilities for leisure sports offer plenty of other ways to work up a sweat in the valley.

Kaiyukan encompasses a wide range of sporting venues, each of them with the necessary gear available for rental. The driving range, tennis courts, soccer field, baseball diamond, basketball courts, and indoor pool will be familiar to most visitors, as will the rental bikes. But there is also a course for ground golf, a Japanese innovation that follows the rules of traditional golf but uses a wooden club similar to a croquet mallet. It is played on a flat green where tees are separated from holes by relatively short distances. Ground golf is easy for players of all ages to master, and a great family activity.

After exercise, a soak in the radon-rich hot springs of Kaiyukan is an ideal way to freshen up and soothe tired muscles. The waters are known for having some of the nation's highest concentrations of radon, an element produced by the radioactive decay of uranium that is present in igneous rock. Its presence in the springs poses no risk to health; in fact, studies have indicated that low-dose exposure to such natural radiation has a hormetic effect, stimulating the body's immune system and promoting good health. The indoor spa facilities include stone baths, jacuzzies, and saunas. The outdoor baths are surrounded by small gardens. After nightfall, they offer awe-inspiring views of the Milky Way.