

Garō Falls

This 12-meter-high waterfall is called Garō Falls, named for the steep and narrow Garō Gorge from which it flows. The emerald pool at the base of the falls is 3 to 4 meters deep in the center.

The woodland surrounding Garō Falls consists mostly of painted maple (*Acer mono*), Japanese cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*), and Japanese horse chestnut (*Aesculus turbinata*). Leaves of the chestnuts, maples, and several ginkgos (*Ginkgo biloba*) near the waterfall take on brilliant yellow and orange hues in autumn, thickly carpeting the walkway along the water's edge. The vines twining around some of the trees are wisteria.

Garō Falls has attracted visitors for centuries. In 1802, the waterfall was the subject of a poem by Sugae Masumi (1754–1829), a traveler and natural historian known for his writings about Akita. His poem, in the traditional *waka* form of 31 syllables, is engraved on the stone nearby:

furu yuki ka
hana ka aranu ka
yamakaze ni
sasowaretechiru
taki no shira awa

Is it falling snow?
Pale blossoms, perhaps . . . or not?
In the mountain wind,
Drawn, carried, scattered about—
The waterfall's white froth.

The wooden structure beside the falls is Taki no Sawa Shrine. Built in 1780, it is dedicated to Fudō Myō-ō, a fearsome-looking Buddhist deity often enshrined near waterfalls and on remote mountains.

A second, two-tiered waterfall called Shiraito Nidan Falls lies above Garō Falls higher in the gorge. It can be reached by following the unpaved road that leads toward Mt. Takayama from the Garō Falls parking area. The walk takes about 30 minutes.