

Yomogihira Onsen

The natural hot springs (*onsen*) in the town of Yomogihira first became popular after the building of Koryu Shrine in 1390. Visitors to the shrine would sometimes make use of the nearby hot-spring baths. Local residents would also visit the baths after a long, hard workday.

The area's first hot-spring inn, Yomogihira Onsen, opened in 1869, at the outset of the Meiji era (1868–1912). This was a time of great upheaval and modernization across the country. However, it was not until 1965, when a road first connected this area to Nagaoka, that the inn became known beyond nearby communities.

The waters of each hot spring in Japan are all slightly different in terms of mineral composition. As such, the purported effects vary from one location to another. The waters of Yomogihira Onsen are said to help improve and maintain skin condition. Proponents also believe they relieve stress and tension.

Of course, hot-spring baths are just part of the experiences to be savored in an *onsen* town. Here are a few other local highlights:

Koryu Shrine

This shrine stood here long before any hotels or inns were constructed, and remains a community focal point. Visitors are encouraged to take the time to visit both this shrine and its companion, Myoryu Shrine.

In many cultures around the world, custom dictates bringing a gift when visiting someone's house. This same custom applies to the shrine's deity. When you approach the stairway and elevator up to the shrine, you may notice a small shop. It is customary to buy eggs and a small bottle of local sake from this shop, as an offering, before entering Koryu Shrine. The offering goes to the shrine's dragon god. According to local mythology, eggs and sake are the god's favorite food and drink.

With its elevated position, Koryu Shrine also provides sweeping panoramic views of the surrounding area.

Takenokochi Fudo Waterfall

A short walk up the sloping road, behind Koryu Shrine, lies Takenokochi Fudo Waterfall. This local spot is famed for its natural beauty. From an elevation of about 10 meters, waters cascade down into the basin below, creating a backdrop of peace and tranquility.

The waterfall predates all the settlements and shrines that lie around it. It is said to have provided inspiration to scholars and holy men over the centuries.

Myoryu Shrine

This shrine is about a 10-minute drive to the west of the main hot-spring area. Like Koryu Shrine, it once had an elevated position, with a long stone staircase leading up to it. However, it recently moved to its current location due to road expansion. A familiar

red torii gate marks the entrance.

Myoryu Shrine is less well-known than Koryu Shrine. Yet despite being smaller and more remote, it is an equally important part of community life. Without these shrines and the pilgrims they originally attracted to the area, there would be no hot-spring town in Yomogihira.

We invite you to experience the whole of this hillside oasis, with its hot springs, shrines, and warm hospitality. Yomogihira Onsen Town can be reached from Nagaoka Station by car in about 20 minutes.