

Rice Terraces of Ichiu

The rice terraces of Ichiu are called “terraces in the sky.” They are found at elevations of 450 to 700 meters, where mountain ridges can be seen at eye level. The terraces contain 662 rice paddies, each with an average area of 250 square meters. The picturesque landscape and the soothing sound of water trickling down the mountain give Ichiu a distinctive atmosphere.

Fresh Spring Water

The high-quality spring water in Ichiu is safe for drinking and is used for farming. There are drinking fountains provided for public use.

Tenjo no Izumi (Heavenly Fountain)

This fountain faces the Ichiu Activity Center. The water has low levels of dissolved minerals and is pH neutral. The location is the perfect spot to quench your thirst while enjoying the panorama.

Tenku no Izumi (Sky Fountain)

This fountain is located on Town Route No. 31 (Ichiu Road). The water is warm in the winter and cold in the summer.

Furusato no Izumi (Hometown Fountain)

This fountain is found along Prefectural Route No. 16, next to the Ichiu-nishi bus stop. The water is slightly alkaline. A stand of trees offers welcome shade in summer.

Versatile Land Use

In Japan, terraced fields are usually associated with rice, but in Ichiu, farmers grow other crops in the terraces as well. Rice paddies have high water requirements, so some land has been converted into dry fields, especially in lower Ichiu where mountain stream water is limited. Only 6 percent of the total land area of Ichiu is occupied by rice paddies. Fruit trees and plants for the Irodori decorative garnish business account for a larger percentage—over 24 percent and 13 percent, respectively. Buckwheat (*soba*) is also a popular crop, and the terraces turn into spreading white flower beds when the plants are in bloom.

Traditional Rural Landscapes

The scenery is remarkable, with magnificent views of the mountains and traditional homes that seem to be outside the passage of time. One farm guesthouse in particular is famous for such views. The drive uphill from the terraces has many excellent, if unmarked, overlooks along the roadside above the terraces.

Hands-on Activities

The Ichiu Yorozu Association organizes annual events. Participants can transplant rice seedlings in May, make Awa Bancha tea in July, harvest rice in September, and pound mochi in December.