

**Ryumon Valley**

Ryumon Valley is part of Kurokamiyama Prefectural Natural Park, a relaxing place to enjoy nature. The seasonal changes of the gorge are apparent in the pink cherry blossoms of spring, the vibrant greens of summer, the red and orange leaves of fall, and the snowy white of winter. The calls of the *kajika* (literally “river deer”) frog that resound in the woods of the valley in summer has been a subject of poetry since the 700s. The clear water of the Hirose River that runs through Ryumon Valley has been selected as both one of the “100 Most Famous Japanese Waters” and “100 Most Famous Japanese Forest Water Sources.”

Downstream from the valley is Ryumon Dam. Hiking trails to Mt. Kurokami (518 meters), selected as one of “Japan's Top 100 Nature Spots That Should Be Preserved for the Twenty-First Century,” begin near the parking lot for the dam. The hike to the summit takes about 90 minutes, and the trail is dotted with statues of Buddhist deities and saints. Even before Arita was known as the capital of Japanese porcelain, the mountain was a stop on a spiritual pilgrimage route.

The river is also an important source for water used to make local sake, and for freshwater fish that can be enjoyed at specialty restaurants near the dam.