

Ureshino Hot Springs

Silky-Smooth Waters

The waters in the hot springs of Ureshino are famed for their silken texture; the waters' high alkaline content ranges between a pH level of 7 and 8. The alkaline water is reputed to give bathers smooth, beautiful skin as well as alleviate respiratory and kidney ailments and chronic skin disorders.

The Legend Behind the Name

The name Ureshino derives from a tale about a visit to the area by the legendary Empress Jingu after a battle. She observed a tired red-crowned crane soak its wings in a nearby river, then fly away rejuvenated. When she suggested to the warriors under her command that they bathe in the river, they found that the hot water bubbling up from the riverbed healed their wounds. Upon witnessing this miracle, the empress exclaimed in delight, "Ureshii no!" ("I'm so happy!"), and her words became the name of the town.

A Prosperous Post Town

Ureshino spa has a history dating back over 1,300 years, but the area also prospered as a post town on the Nagasaki Highway during the Edo period (1603–1867). Linking Nagasaki—Japan's sole open trading port in those days—with the city of Kokura in northern Kyushu, the highway was nicknamed "Sugar Road." It served as a transport route for sugar, a much-coveted commodity brought by European ships to Nagasaki. Travelers often stopped at Ureshino to rest and take advantage of the healing properties of the local waters. The influence of contact with the West via the trade along the highway can be observed in the architecture of various buildings in the town, notably Siebold no Yu, a European-style building housing a spa. It takes its name from Philipp Franz von Siebold (1796–1866), a German scientist who spent time in the area analyzing the effects of the hot-spring water.