

Todoroki Falls

Todoroki Falls is located where the Shiota and Iwayagawachi Rivers meet. The origin of Todoroki Falls is due to volcanic activity that began several million years ago on top of a 25-million-year-old Hatatsu Shale Formation, a sedimentary rock formation. The basin of the falls covers an area of 2,500 square meters. The name, deriving from the word *todoroku*, meaning to roar, refers to the cascade's thunderous sound.

The waterfall has three tiers, the top two each 3 meters high, and the bottom 5 meters, giving the waterfall a total height of 11 meters.

In spring the cherry blossoms provide a colorful backdrop. The shallow waters of the river also make the area below the falls a popular spot for children to play.

The Dragon God and Benzaiten

A local legend tells how the dragon god of Todoroki Falls travels through groundwater linking the waterfall to the Nuinoike lake 15 kilometers away in the town of Shiroishi in order to meet Benzaiten, the goddess of love, who dwells in the lake. Pumping of groundwater for farming, however, caused the lake to dry up in 1958, closing the path of the dragon god. In 2000, excessive pumping was halted and the lake began to fill up again. The story goes that the dragon god's visits to Benzaiten, thus restored after the long period of separation, brought Benzaiten to tears.

Fudo Myo-o

In the middle of the waterfall stands a statue of Fudo Myo-o (Acala), one of the wisdom-king deities of Mahayana Buddhism adopted by Japanese Buddhism as guardians to protect people against evil. One of the most commonly depicted of these guardian deities, Fudo Myo-o is characterized by his fierce expression, a lasso in his left hand to catch demons, a sword in his right hand to destroy them, and a large flame behind him to burn away anger and passion so as to purify the mind. In 1944, during World War II, a monk at Daijoji Temple suggested erecting the statue at this location to protect soldiers at sea, due to the sacred nature of the place and the river's access to the sea.