

To-no-Hetsuri (River Gorge)

To-no-Hetsuri (lit., “cliff towers alongside the river”) is a 200-meter-long gorge overlooking Okawa River. It features a number of impressive rock formations that have been carved by the wind, rain, and currents over some 28 million years. The tower-like forms have names such as Eagle Tower and Elephant Tower, named after their shapes.

A suspension bridge leads to a small cave with a shrine inside. It is possible to explore some of the cliffside, but the paths can be challenging as the steps are narrow and steep. To-no-Hetsuri is especially spectacular when the foliage turns in the autumn, although the fresh green of early spring, the blooming wisteria that cover the cliffs, and stark beauty of snow-covered rocks in winter make the gorge a memorable sight at any time of year. Visitors can get a good panorama of the cliff faces and the river from the center of the suspension bridge.

To-no-Hetsuri is a popular tourist attraction, and there is a cluster of restaurants and souvenir shops by the bridge.

To-no-Hetsuri is part of Okawa Hatori Prefectural Park. It became an official Natural Monument in 1943.