

Otaki Gorge

Otaki Gorge is a tranquil hiking spot located between the city of Toyota and Matsudaira-go. The 1.8-kilometer gorge is 148 meters deep and was made by the swift flow of the Nio River into the Tomoe River further downstream. The western end of the gorge is near Myoshoji Temple. On either side of the river is an observation deck: the Fudosan Observatory on one side and the Fukuroga Castle Observatory on the other. Both have sweeping views of the valley below. Walking trails follow the river, leading further up the gorge to the east to the secluded Utaishi Park and Otaki Lake.

The dense tree cover in the gorge keeps the area near the river shady and cool, somewhat like a rainforest. Along with the running water, it creates the ideal conditions for moss to grow on tree trunks, rocks, and the bridges over the river. Even the large old rocks in the river are covered with moss, which flourishes in the undisturbed, moist environment.

A round-trip walk from the entrance of the gorge up to Otaki Lake and back takes roughly three hours. Near the lake is a large park with a barbecue area and the striking red Otaki Lake Bridge. The gorge is noted for its beauty throughout the year, but is particularly popular in autumn for its brilliant maple foliage and in spring for its plum and cherry blossoms.