

Reimei Falls

Reimei Falls is the first waterfall along the walking path that starts from the Kikuchi Gorge visitor center and is perhaps the most photographed feature of the gorge. Usually, the water flows down only one side of the giant moss-covered boulder at the center of the waterfall, but several additional cascades form around this boulder when the river's water level rises, such as after rain. The waterfall's relatively gentle drop of 5 meters produces a delicate spray said to resemble mist at daybreak—hence the name *reimei*, which means dawn.

The pool underneath the falls is generally calm and it is possible to walk quite close to the main waterfall to take in the roar of the water. From the falls, the walking trail heads upward into a grove of cedars planted in 1823 by the local daimyo lord, intended for use as construction material. Left standing, these trees now tower high above the river and provide a habitat for the Japanese giant flying squirrel (*musasabi*). The squirrels climb the trees using their sharp claws, leaving the bark ragged in spots.