

Tengu Falls

The eight-meter-high Tengu Falls is one of the largest and loudest waterfalls in Kikuchi Gorge, with water rushing over a staircase-like rock formation before crashing into the Ryugabuchi pool below. A bridge over the pool offers an unobstructed view of the falls, which is also visible from walking paths on both sides of the river.

In the past, Tengu Falls was largely obscured by a dense thicket—a habitat believed to be ideal for the legendary *tengu*. These long-nosed, goblin-like creatures are associated with mountain asceticism. Centuries ago, the falls are thought to have been part of a training ground for devotees of the syncretic religious tradition of Shugendo, who would retreat into the wilderness for long periods in pursuit of spiritual discipline. Believers who were engaged in ascetic practice in the nearby mountains would occasionally stop by Tengu Falls to purify themselves in the cold water.