

## Higashiyama Onsen

Higashiyama Onsen is considered one of the best *onsen* (hot spring) villages in the region. According to legend, the Buddhist priest Gyoki (668–749) established the village more than 1,300 years ago, and it was a popular retreat for local samurai. Today, the village's inns, hotels, restaurants, and gift shops line a scenic valley along the Yukawa River, giving visitors the chance to experience a taste of country life while still within easy reach of central Aizu-Wakamatsu. Higashiyama Onsen can be reached in 10 minutes by car or 20 minutes by bus from Aizu-Wakamatsu Station.

Higashiyama Onsen offers a variety of accommodations, allowing visitors to choose the location and style of lodging that best suits their needs. *Onsen ryokan* (traditional-style hot-spring inns) generally include both dinner and breakfast for overnight guests, while hotels tend to offer more flexibility with meals and schedules. These differences aside, all hot-spring accommodations in the village allow guests to experience fresh seasonal food and a relaxing bath. Many of them also welcome day visitors.

At an *onsen*, bathers are expected to wash and rinse their whole body before entering the water. It is not acceptable to wear clothing or a swimsuit into the bath. Some *onsen* may not accept guests with tattoos, so it is best to check in advance. In some cases, small tattoos can be covered with a bandage before entry, or it may be possible to reserve a bath for private use.