

Tanize

(Web)

Tanize, a hamlet in the northern part of Totsukawa, is perched on a mountainside high above the Totsukawa River. For years it was an isolated community, as the river could only be crossed on log bridges that were frequently washed away by heavy rainfalls. The Tanize Suspension Bridge, a 297-meter-long, 54-meter-high span over the river, was completed in 1954, linking the hamlet to the opposite shore. It is the longest steel suspension footbridge in Japan that serves as a commuter route for local residents, and is one of the major tourist attractions of Totsukawa.

In many ways, Tanize is a typical hamlet of Totsukawa. The access road winds up a mountain until it reaches a few stretches of flat land created when steep slopes collapsed many years ago. The homes of the hamlet range from traditional Japanese architecture to more modern structures, and *yuzu* citrus trees seem to grow in every garden. The rice paddies here are noticeably large (for Totsukawa, at least), and a portion of the harvest ends up as highly valued sake.

Residents of Tanize are involved in several programs to attract newcomers and tourists to the hamlet. A map of a “Relaxed Walking Trail” was produced to show visitors the way to such local highlights as an intimate café, private lodging facilities in an old Japanese-style home, a picturesque old shrine that was built high on the mountain in 1838, and an observation deck that provides a panoramic view of the river and the suspension bridge far below. The deck was built, residents say, at the spot where people from the hamlet would use hand signals to communicate with friends and family on the other side of the river in the days before the bridge was constructed.