

Yuda Onsen

The hot springs of Yuda Onsen date from the fifteenth century and are said to have been discovered by a white fox. Seven sources feed the baths of the Yuda Onsen district, in the city center of Yamaguchi. The soft, alkaline waters reportedly have restorative properties and are known for leaving the skin feeling smooth. Visitors can experience these rejuvenating waters at hotels, public footbaths, and hot spring cafes.

According to legend, a white fox with an injured paw was noticed soaking its leg in a pond on the grounds of a small temple. The fox returned day after day, and after a week its paw was healed. Townspeople were intrigued by the fox's recovery. They checked the pond and found the water to be warm. They dug into the bed of the pond to reveal a hot spring source and a statue of Yakushi Nyorai, the Buddha of healing and medicine. Over the centuries, Yuda Onsen became a popular hot spring town, bringing wealth and development to the area. White foxes have become synonymous with the hot springs and fox motifs are seen throughout the area, appearing on signs, as statues, and as latte art. Manhole covers in the hot spring district bear colored designs depicting scenes from the legend.

Most accommodations in Yuda Onsen have bathing facilities. Some of the oldest date from the Edo period (1603–1867) and have hosted famous historical figures such as Saigo Takamori (1828–1877), a leader in the overthrow of the Tokugawa shogunate. Baths are typically reserved for hotel guests, but some accommodations allow non-staying guests to use the facilities for a fee. Footbaths in the hot spring district are open to all and typically free of charge. There are seven locations in total, including Kitsune no Ashi Ato (literally, fox's footprint), a hot spring cafe and visitor center where you can enjoy a coffee or try some local sake while soaking your feet for a small fee.