

Shomyo Falls

The 350-meter Shomyo Falls is the tallest continuously flowing waterfall in Japan and the most distinctive feature of the Shomyo River, which originates on the slopes of the Mt. Tate volcano. The waterfall cascades over four tiers of rock protruding from a sheer volcanic cliff, producing a thunderous roar. The waterfall was formed by an ancient volcanic eruption, when lava flowed down the slopes of the mountain and hardened, and then by erosion caused by the river over tens of thousands of years. In April and May, when meltwater from the mountain fills the river to the brim, an even taller waterfall known as Hannoki Falls appears to the right of the main cataract.

Shomyo means “chanting scripture,” and the falls earned this poetic name from the strangely harmonious rumble emitted by the plunging water, thought to resemble the sound of monks chanting sutras in a temple. An elevated lookout to the right of the falls provides unimpeded views of the plunge basin, and the spray rising from it often reaches the viewing point. Under the right conditions, most commonly in mid-afternoon, a rainbow may appear in the spray.

Shomyo Falls can be reached by a bus that connects Tateyama Station with the parking lot that marks the entrance to the falls area. From there, it is a 30-minute walk to the falls on a well-maintained path along the river, with constant views of the steep cliff formation that culminates in the waterfall. Renting an E-bike at the station and cycling to the parking lot is also possible, but note that bicycles are not allowed beyond the entrance.