

Seirei Falls (Dragonfly Falls)

Seirei Falls is a 50-meter waterfall that thunders down the face of a bare cliff and into a stone channel worn smooth by the torrent. On sunny days, spray from the falls sometimes creates miniature rainbows.

According to legend, Japan's twenty-first ruler, Emperor Yūryaku (c. 417–479), gave the waterfall its name. While hunting near the falls, the emperor was about to fire an arrow when a gadfly bit his elbow. Just as quickly, a dragonfly swooped down like a bodyguard and seized the fly. The emperor was so pleased that he named the area “Dragonfly Field” (*akitsu no ono*), and the name was later extended to the falls.

Seirei is one of Kawakami's most accessible waterfalls, just a 5-minute walk from the Akitsu no Ono Park parking area. Akitsu no Ono Park has flat areas for picnics, a shallow stream where young children can swim, and shady walkways through the park's cherry trees.

Past a short bridge, several stone torii span the entrance to the pathway that leads to the waterfall. There are three viewing platforms, the lowest of which is at the base of the falls, near its plunge pool. A side path from the middle platform leads to a small wooden temple. Inside are statues of the deities Fudō Myō-ō and Zaō Daigongen, who were worshipped by the Shugendō mountain ascetics who visited these falls, as well as a statue of En no Gyōja (634–c. 701), the founder of Shugendō.