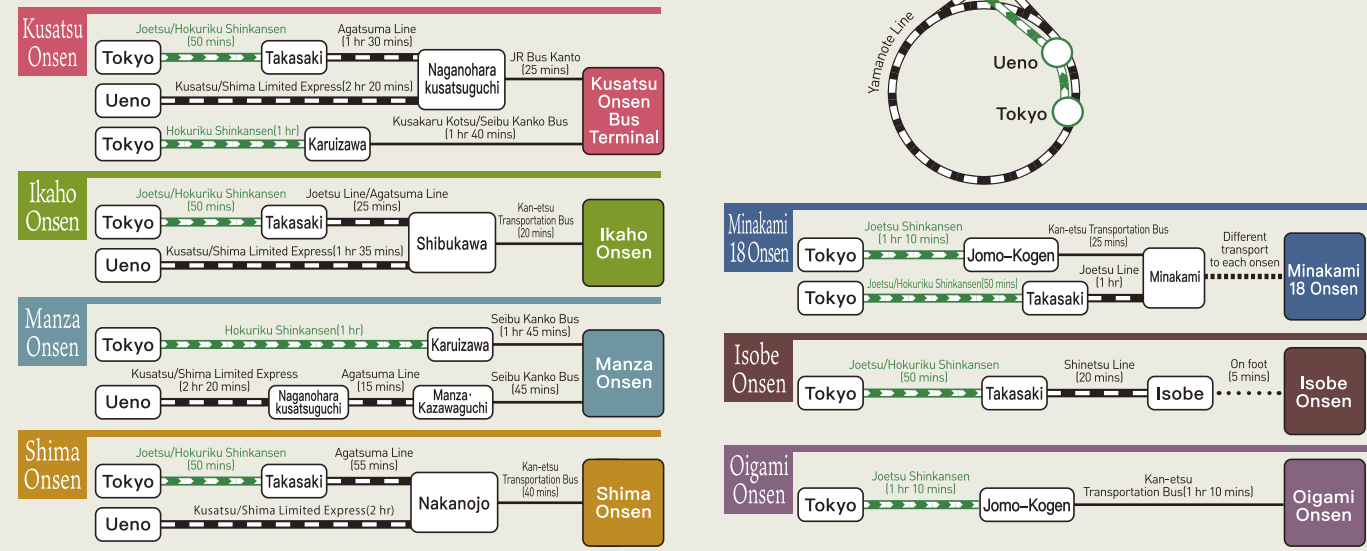


Getting from Tokyo to Gunma's Onsen Hot Spring Area



《Kusatsu/Shima Limited Express》 《Joetsu/Hokuriku Shinkansen》



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Recommended for travel to the areas surrounding Tokyo!
JR TOKYO Wide Pass [SEARCH](#)

*The means of transportation and times indicated are a rough guide. Please allow plenty of time when traveling.
*All images and maps shown are for illustrative purposes only, and may not be completely accurate. Thank you for your understanding.
*The information presented here is correct as of August 2025.

GUNMA LOVE ONSEN

Rediscover the Appeal of ONSEN (Japan's Hot Springs)!
A fresh look at Japan's Onsen culture in the onsen kingdom of Gunma.

Hot springs, or Onsen are a product of Japan's natural features and form a starting point for a singular, unifying culture that is held dear by Japanese people. Immerse, contemplate, and relax. Here we reexamine the cultural value of onsen. Enjoy the ultimate onsen experience in one of Japan's onsen kingdoms, Gunma.

Japan's proud Onsen culture - on its way to UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage status!

More info: [GUNMA YUKEMURI](#)



Japan’s Proud Onsen Culture as UNESCO

Intangible Cultural Heritage

Throughout history, onsens (hot springs) have been places of healing for the Japanese people.

The spiritual experience of communing with nature and its changing seasons heals the mind and spirit, while the properties of the waters themselves heal the body.

The mental, physical, and spiritual benefits gained from this tradition are what define onsen culture and have rooted it so deeply in Japanese culture.

Take some time to get away and enjoy immersion, contemplation, and relaxation...

Our goal is to ensure that onsen culture is preserved for future generations by having it registered by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage.



Enjoy Onsen Culture in Gunma, an Onsen Kingdom

There are roughly 100 hot spring locations in Gunma Prefecture (source: Ministry of the Environment FY2023 Report on the status of usage of hot springs) Each onsen that gushes forth in diverse natural settings comprising mountains, plateaus, valleys, and other elements has been nurtured by the region in which it is situated, and has a unique personality. With an abundance of hot water and a wide variety of spring properties, Gunma Prefecture is known as one of Japan's leading “Onsen Kingdoms”. Here we look at seven prominent onsen locations and examine the elements of onsen culture in each location from the three perspectives of immersing, contemplating, and relaxing. Read on to find out about onsen culture and rediscover the charm of onsen.

For information on other elements of onsen culture in other onsen locations, scan here

GUNMA YUKEMURI |



Immerse
Immerse yourself to warm your body and mind and experience the healing history of onsen



Contemplate
Experience the history and folklore of onsen and see how they have been regarded by people



Relax
Relax and appreciate a culture whose birth and formation includes the elements of therapeutic bathing, recreation, and tourism.

UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage

UNESCO intangible cultural heritage is a framework for protecting cultural heritage on the basis of international treaties. While world heritage applies to tangible cultural properties such as architecture, intangible cultural heritage applies to intangible cultural properties such as folklore, performing arts, social customs, rituals, festivals, traditional craft techniques, and knowledge and customs related to nature and all aspects of creation. In Japan, Noh dance dramas, Kabuki plays, Bunraku puppet theater, Gagaku music, Japanese food, Japanese paper and Traditional knowledge and skills of sake-making with koji mold in Japan have been registered as intangible cultural heritage.



Kusatsu Onsen



Enjoy the history of this onsen resort that formed around the Yubatake hot water field.

Yubatake hot water field, a symbol of the Kusatsu Onsen, is located in the center of the town. 4,000 liters of hot water gush out of this core onsen each minute. The hot spring gutter in Yubatake is used to cool the hot spring water and send it to onsen bathhouses and other locations, and also to collect hot spring mineral deposits. Collecting hot spring mineral deposits is a custom that has been handed down since the Edo period. The design of the gourd-shaped roundabout was overseen by the artist Taro Okamoto, and the path around Yubatake offers facilities including foot baths and hand baths. Visitors can also enjoy the dreamy nighttime illumination of Yubatake.

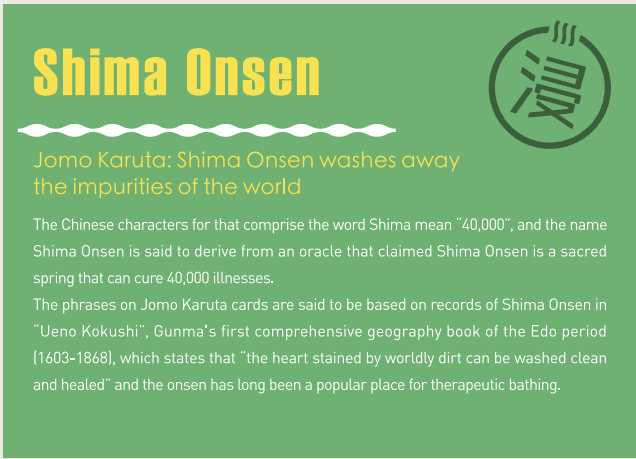


Ikaho Onsen



This stone-stepped town has developed alongside the history of Ikaho.

The stone-stepped town of Ikaho Onsen is a remnant of Japan's first planned hot spring town, which was formed in the Warring States Period. The origins of this stepped town can be traced back to the construction of a sanatorium for wounded soldiers by Katsuyori Takeda, who was defeated in the Battle of Nagashino, as a way to efficiently distribute hot spring water from the source by utilizing the sloping terrain. The small opening that drew hot water from the middle of the stone steps to the onsen's owners is still in use today. In the mid-Edo period, the system was shifted to one in which 12 houses served as the head of the town in the order of the 12 signs of the Chinese zodiac. Reliefs of the twelve signs of the Chinese zodiac are embedded in the stone steps, referring to the 12 houses.



Shima Onsen



Jomo Karuta: Shima Onsen washes away the impurities of the world

The Chinese characters for that comprise the word Shima mean “40,000”, and the name Shima Onsen is said to derive from an oracle that claimed Shima Onsen is a sacred spring that can cure 40,000 illnesses.

The phrases on Jomo Karuta cards are said to be based on records of Shima Onsen in “Ueno Kokushi”, Gunma's first comprehensive geography book of the Edo period (1603-1868), which states that “the heart stained by worldly dirt can be washed clean and healed” and the onsen has long been a popular place for therapeutic bathing.



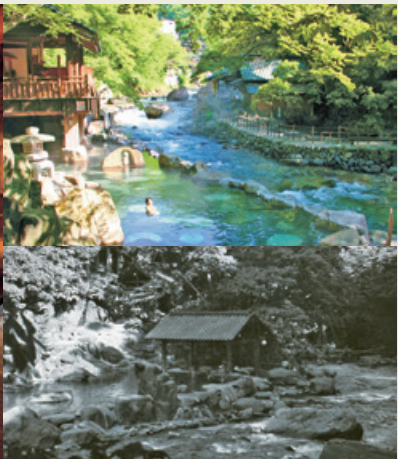
Minakami 18 Onsen



18 hot springs in an area created by a merger of towns and villages make for a luxurious onsen tour.

Located at the headwaters of the Tone River, Minakami Town's rich and precious nature and onsen have long been adored by people who enjoy mountain climbing and skiing, and, these days, also by those who enjoy water activities.

The name Minakami comes from Minakami Travels [Japan's oldest surviving travelogue of the Edo period] written by Wakayama Bokusui. Like Bokusui, who visited this area because of his attachment to Kawanomizuage (the source of the Tone River), the 18 hot springs of Minakami take pride in their natural environment that nurtures a wide variety of spring water properties, and continue to protect it.



Manza Onsen



Enjoy storybook star-filled skies in this highland onsen town.

Located near the summit of Kusatsu-Shiranesan at an altitude of approximately 1,800m, the sulfur content of the main spring at the Manza Onsen is said to be the highest in Japan.

The cloudy (yellowish) water is thought to have a strong sterilizing action and has long been said to be effective against any illness. Based on artifacts excavated from the Manza Kumashiro Cave, it is thought that the onsen has been used since prehistoric times more than 5,000 years ago.



Isobe Onsen



The birthplace of the onsen symbol.

In 1981, a researcher discovered a hot spring symbol on a verdict map dated 1661 regarding a local land dispute. Expert analysis confirmed that it was the first onsen mark in Japan remaining in the historical record, and this revealed that the Japanese onsen mark, which is now known around the world, traces its origins back to the early Edo period (1603-1868).



Oigami Onsen



The struggle of the gods, and a snake festival dedicated to their passion.

The legend of the opening of the Oigami Onsen is a dispute between the god of Mount Akagi (a giant snake) and the god (a giant centipede) of Mount Futara (Mount Nantai in Nikko). The story goes that the god of Mount Akagi was shot with an arrow by the god of Mount Futara and then retreated to this spot where he pulled out the arrow and stuck it in the ground. Hot water then gushed out and healed his wounds before he struck back. In early May, the Great Snake Festival is held to commemorate the legend of the opening of the hot spring and to give thanks to the god of Mount Akagi.