



### Access

- Fukuoka City — Kyushu Expressway 2 hr 10 min by car
- JR Kumamoto Station — 1 hr 30 min by car
- Aso Kumamoto Airport — 1 hr by car
- Ueki IC — 50 min by car
- Hita IC — 1 hr 40 min by car

Kikuchi Gorge

### Tourist Spots

- Kikuchi Onsen — 25 min
- Ryumon Dam — 20 min
- Site of Kikuchi Castle — 35 min
- Aso Daikanbo — 20 min
- Mt. Aso Peak — 60 min



### Kikuchi Onsen: One of Japan's Top 100 Hot Springs

The water of Kikuchi Onsen is pure and soft and helps beautify the skin. Visitors who donate to Kikuchi Gorge will receive a ¥200 coupon to use at Kikuchi Onsen.

### Kikuchi Gorge Travel Guide

**Season** March 1 to November 30 **Hours** 8:30AM to 5PM  
It is possible to enter the gorge at other days and times, but there will be no staff on hand. Please take great care to avoid accidents if visiting unattended.

**Donations for Preservation** High school students and older: ¥300/person

Money collected for preservation will be used to protect the natural environment of Kikuchi Gorge and preserve it for future generations, as well as on facilities to improve safety and convenience for visitors.

#### Parking

**First Lot:** Approx. 80 spaces, 7 spaces for buses and large vehicles  
**Second Lot:** Approx. 45 spaces (only open during busy seasons)

Large Vehicles:	¥2,000
Minibuses:	¥1,000
Standard-size Cars:	¥300
Motorcycles:	¥200

**Central Lot:** Approx. 300 spaces (only open during busy seasons)

#### Points of Caution During Your Visit

Be cautious while walking through the gorge as there are sections with fast-flowing water and slippery rocks.  
**The following activities are prohibited:** Swimming, bringing in pets, introducing or removing animals/plants, smoking, lighting fires, camping, using drones (unless use is approved by the Japan government)

### Kikuchi Gorge Visitor Center



**Hours:** 8:30AM to 5PM  
**Phone:** 0968-27-0005

Scan here to view the Visitor Center website for more details.



This facility is at the entrance to Kikuchi Gorge and provides tourism information. Its glass-walled construction lets visitors observe the beautiful nature outside. In addition to providing helpful information, the Visitor Center also sells special goods and snacks such as salt-grilled masu trout.

### For Questions About Kikuchi Gorge

#### Kikuchi City Hall Tourism Section

Waifu 888-banchi, Kikuchi, Kumamoto Phone: 0968-25-7223

#### Association for the Preservation and Beautification of Kikuchi Gorge

Hara 5026-banchi, Kikuchi, Kumamoto Phone: 0968-27-0210 (office)

Kikuchi City Website



Kikuchi Gorge Website

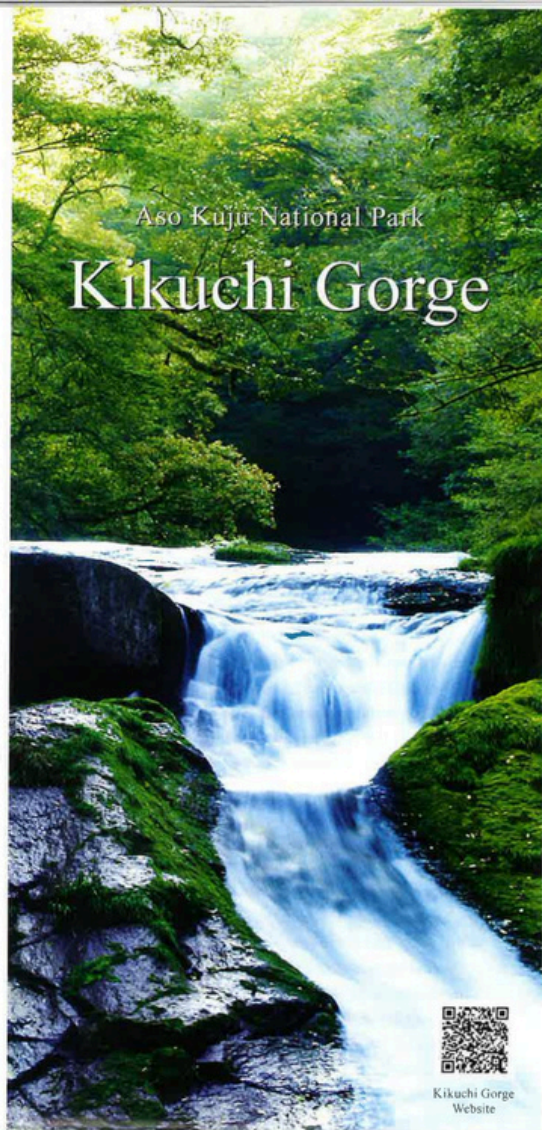


### For Questions About Sightseeing and Accommodations

#### Kikuchi Tourism Association

Waifu 1273-banchi 1, Kikuchi, Kumamoto Phone: 0968-25-0513

Kikuchi Tourism Association Website

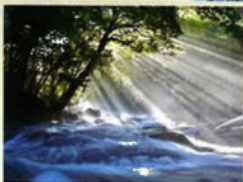


Kikuchi Gorge Website

## The Water in Kikuchi Gorge

Countless streams that originate in mountains to the northwest of the Mt. Aso volcano converge in Kikuchi Gorge to form the Kikuchi River. The water in the gorge is clear and cold, typical of secluded rivers at high altitudes. What makes this river distinctive is its almost complete lack of active volcanic chemicals and its low magnesium and calcium content.

Fresh growth enlivens the gorge in spring



Sunlight, shade, and rushing waters provide beautiful respite in summer

Colorful leaves enchant the heart during autumn



Breathtaking snowy vistas move the soul during winter

The Kikuchi River takes shape over 800 meters above sea level, near the northwestern ridge of the Mt. Aso caldera's outer rim. The river's sources are all on the outer slope of the caldera, and are also situated at an altitude significantly higher than the caldera floor. Consequently, substances derived from the active volcano are unable to enter the Kikuchi watershed. The water is, however, filtered by layers of the ancient volcanic rock that form the caldera walls. This combination of geography and geology result in the pure, soft water for which Kikuchi Gorge is famed.

The interplay of clear, low-mineral water and volcanic rock in the gorge also affects the river's appearance. In places where the riverbed consists of light rock, the water looks cobalt blue—caused by sunlight passing through it and reflecting off the rock without interference from substances in the water.

Access to an abundance of pure water carried downstream by the Kikuchi River is the main reason that the Kikuchi Plain has been able to support large human settlements for more than 2,000 years. The river and the fertile fields around it have made Kikuchi one of the most productive rice-growing regions in Japan, and the prized soft water flowing down from Kikuchi Gorge once supported a thriving sake brewing industry.



The Kikuchi River Basin is registered as the Rice Farming in the Kikuchi River Basin: 2,000 Years of Dedication and Ingenuity Japan Heritage site.

## The Flora & Fauna of Kikuchi Gorge

### [ Birds ]

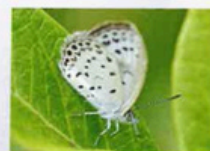


**Blue-and-White Flycatcher**  
A beautiful bird, known for its graceful form, melodious song, and colorful plumage.



**Crested Kingfisher**  
A bird with distinctive black and white dappled plumage and pointy head feathers.

### [ Butterflies ]



**Celastrina Sugitanii Butterfly**  
Emerges in early April. Wings are light gray with black spots and navy blue edges.



**White Admiral**  
A relative of the Neptis philyra, with a distinctive white band across its dark brown wings.

### [ Fish ]



**Yamame (landlocked masu salmon)**  
A descendant of cherry trout that stayed in landlocked waters rather than migrating to the sea. Called the "queen of the mountain stream."



**Takahaya (upstream fat minnow)**  
A long and narrow fish indigenous to the cold upstream river waters of western Japan.

### [ Trees ]



**Southern Japanese bemlock (Tsuga sieboldii)**  
An evergreen conifer in the Pinaceae family. Highly resilient due to its hard wood.



**Zelkova**  
A tall deciduous tree in the Ulmaceae family. Its branches grow upward into a beautiful figure.

# Kikuchi Gorge Guide Map

The well-maintained walking path allows visitors to stroll through the gorge and enjoy its natural beauty during any season.

## Kikuchi Gorge



### 8 Hirokawara

Located where the walking path through the gorge doubles back. In the autumn, the water surface here becomes a colorful carpet of fallen leaves.

The 4-kilometer Kikuchi Gorge cuts a straight line through dense forest on the eastern edge of the municipality of Kikuchi, a 20-minute drive from the city proper. The gorge is a tranquil hiking spot noted for its distinctive scenery, with waterfalls alternating with long sections of gently flowing water. This landscape, and the great diversity of plant and animal life in the area, are products of the gorge's topography and its volcanic origins.

### A tale of many climates

The gorge is the source of the Kikuchi River, which flows southwest across the Kikuchi Plain for 71 kilometers before reaching the Ariake Sea. The river and gorge take shape at an altitude of 800 meters, at the convergence of countless streams originating in mountains on the outer rim of the Mt. Aso caldera. Flowing downhill from there, the river reaches an altitude of 500 meters at the end of the gorge. The 300-meter change in elevation over a distance of only 4 kilometers means significant biodiversity in the gorge, from fir and oak forest in the cold upper reaches to evergreen broadleaf trees in the lower temperate parts. This range of climatic conditions and the coexistence of forest and river ecosystems attracts a wide range of small mammals, frogs and lizards, birds, and insects.

### A landscape in constant flux

The dramatic series of steep waterfalls is the result of ancient eruptions of the Mt. Aso volcano, located southeast of the gorge, and the ceaseless flow of water over tens of thousands of years. The volcano experienced four massive eruptions between 270,000 and 90,000 years ago. Volcanic matter unleashed by these eruptions piled up in the valley that was to become Kikuchi Gorge. This matter—mainly hot, thick ash—solidified, forming a type of rock called welded tuff. As welded tuff cools, the rock contracts and its surface cracks. As this cooling progresses, the cracks deepen and form columnar joints. Water flowing over the rock eventually penetrates these fissures and causes blocks to break off, leaving sheer cliffs that become waterfalls. The vertical breaks in the rock are visible throughout Kikuchi Gorge, as are giant boulders that have fallen from the mountainsides due to erosion and tumbled into the river.

The combination of the river's comparatively steep flow and the welded tuff's tendency to break off in large pieces means that the landscape in Kikuchi Gorge is in constant flux.

The rock visible in the gorge today is thought to be approximately 270,000 years old, produced by the first of Aso's great eruptions—the newer layers have already been swept away by the water.



### 7 Hogan Keyaki Tree

A rare formation in which the roots of a giant tree are wrapped around a volcanic rock created by an eruption of Mt. Aso.

*Lycoris sanguinea*  
Habitat



Downstream of Ryugabuchi Pool



### Half Course

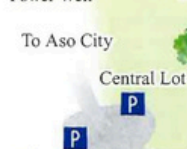
Roundtrip 1 km approx 40 min  
 Gorge entrance - walking path - Reimei Falls - Ryugabuchi - Kyushu Nature Trail - Gorge entrance

### Long Course

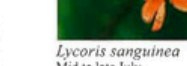
Roundtrip 2 km approx 1 hr 20 min  
 Gorge entrance - walking path - Reimei Falls - Hirokawara - Kyushu Nature Trail - Gorge entrance



Hydroelectric Power Weir



Route 45 (Kikuchi-Aso Skyline)



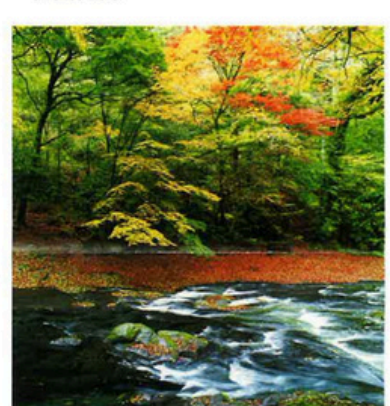
### 6 Yonjusanman Falls

The powerful flow causes water to splash about dynamically. The name of this waterfall references the volume of water that flows through it daily, which is equivalent to 7,800 tons.



### 4 Ryugabuchi Pool 5 Tengu Falls

Ryugabuchi is at the bottom of the 8m drop from Tengu Falls. Legend has it that a dragon once dwelled here.



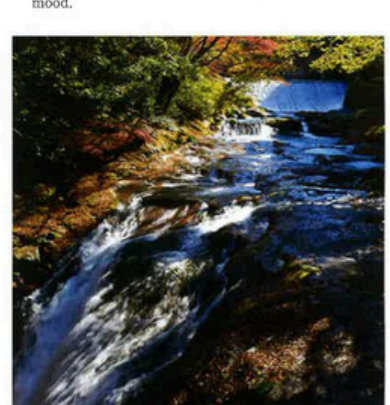
### 3 Momijigase

Maple trees line both sides of the river here, turning the water surface into a multicolored carpet of fallen leaves in the autumn.



### 2 Reimei Falls

In the summer, sunlight reflecting on the mist rising from the river lends this spot a mystical mood.



### 1 Kakemaku Falls

At 20 meters, this is the tallest waterfall in Kikuchi Gorge. Visitors can see a rainbow near the falling water on clear days.



Wisteria  
Late April to mid May



Hydrangea  
Early to late July



*Lycoris sanguinea*  
Mid to late July



Peak autumn foliage  
Early November