

Hachimori Isaribi Onsen

Hachimori is a small hamlet sandwiched between the Sea of Japan and the mountains of Shirakami Sanchi. But the Ōmagoshikaidō road has been bringing travelers through Hachimori since the sixteenth century. Both Route 101 and the Gonō Train Line follow the path of the historical road, connecting Akita and Aomori. Across from Akitashirakami Station on the Gonō Line, is the Hachimori Isaribi Onsen resort. It is also known as the Hatahata Kan after the *hatahata* sandfish (*Arctoscopus japonicus*), a local delicacy and the official fish of Akita Prefecture. Most of the people using the resort are locals coming to bathe or to buy vegetables from the farmers' market outside.

Bathing in hot springs, or *onsen*, has been a Japanese custom for thousands of years. While almost all modern Japanese homes have baths, many Japanese people like to go to *onsen* to relax and spend time with friends. The Hatahata Kan was built through a public-private partnership to help bring tourists to Hachimori, but most of the bathers live nearby. Going to the *onsen* to meet and chat with the other bathers is a great way to get an authentic peek into life in rural Japan.