

Setouchi Minato no Yado

From the outside, the two houses that make up Setouchi Minato no Yado couldn't be more different. Shimazui Manor, with its distinctive Spanish Revival-esque style, and the Edo-era Izumo Yashiki standing beside it certainly make an odd pair. But behind the mismatched facades are two carefully restored historic houses, each revealing a different part of Onomichi's past. Both buildings are also fully equipped deluxe accommodations, giving visitors the chance to live like a local in Onomichi.

When Izumo Yashiki was built, during the Edo period (1603–1868), it was one of the few houses on a hillside dedicated to shrines and temples. Back then, the house was both a residence and an office for officials and traders from the Matsue Domain in Izumo Province (modern-day Shimane Prefecture), hence the name Izumo Yashiki. After a comprehensive renovation by architect, historian, and conservationist of historic buildings, Nakamura Masao, Izumo Yashiki opened to guests in 2013.

Nakamura added modern conveniences to the house, including plumbing, a full kitchen, and a Western-style living room. The stunning tearoom, with its neighboring garden, were both carefully restored by Nakamura, who specializes in Japanese teahouse architecture. The balance of traditional and modern elements means guests can step back in time without leaving their comfort zone.

Next door, Shimazui Manor offers a panoramic view of the Onomichi Channel. Built by a wealthy merchant in 1931 as a home with an attached storehouse, Shimazui Manor's Spanish-style tiled roof and rough mortar exterior show the increased influence of Western architecture at that time. Inside, the building is open-plan, with fewer sliding doors and tatami mats than Izumo Yashiki, but still retains an unmistakably Japanese feel. This blend of styles is known as *giyofu* (quasi-Western style) architecture, which refers to buildings with Western-style facades and floor plans, but built using Japanese techniques.

Architect Kiritani Masahiro's 2012 renovation focused on preserving the original exterior of the building, while also emphasizing the open layout. In the storehouse, the original wooden beams have been retained, and the high ceiling gives an impressive sense of space. Shimazui Manor is divided into two wings. The east wing, Bou, is the original house, while the west

wing, Sou, is the converted storehouse.