

## Mountain Activities

Minakami is an ideal location for a variety of outdoor activities. Forested mountains make up 90 percent of the area, and streams and rivers make up much of the remainder. Visitors to Minakami engage in as many as 26 types of outdoor sports, including hiking, rafting, and skiing.

It is believed that skiing was first introduced to the region in 1918, when forestry officials inspected the mountains, and many ski slopes were opened after the completion of the Jōetsu rail line and Doai Station in 1931. In addition to skiing, the slopes are also used for sledding, snowboarding, and snowshoeing.

Mountaineering reached the Tanigawa Mountain Range in the 1920s, when two mountaineers employed a local to take them along old paths that follow the mountain ridges from Tsuchitaru to the town of Tanigawa Onsen. Today, companies offer guided hiking tours, and in autumn hikers travel to Mt. Tanigawadake to see the striking foliage. For visitors with the necessary equipment and experience, Mt. Tanigawadake is also a popular site for rock climbing.

Minakami has been a pioneer of commercial whitewater rafting and canyoning in Japan, and there are several companies that offer the opportunity to ride down the Tone River. In spring, when the river is fed by snowmelt, sections of its current are ranked approximately grade 4 on an international difficulty scale of 6. In summer, the current slows, and the difficulty rating drops to around 2, which is ideal for beginners. Other popular summer activities include bungee jumping, kayaking, and *sawanobori*, or “shower climbing” up a waterfall.