

Private-Residence Lodgings in Kasuge's Hanano Minpaku Street

For travelers curious about daily life in Shirakami Sanchi, private-residence lodgings, or *minpaku*, offer a reasonably priced alternative to staying at a hotel or traditional inn. Six such lodgings make up Hanano Minpaku Street in the Kasuge area of Fujisato, created as part of a town revitalization effort in 2016. Each residence is run by a retired owner or couple, and together the lodgings can accommodate a total of 30 people.

When staying at a *minpaku*, guests will generally eat meals with the owners and will use the same bathroom. Staying in a private home provides an invaluable chance to interact with local residents, learn about traditional home interiors, eat homestyle cooking, and get insider tips on the best things to see and do around town.

Breakfast and dinner can be eaten at the *minpaku*, and most dietary requirements can be accommodated with advance notice. Larger groups also have the option of dining at the Farm Restaurant at the nearby community center, where local produce prepared by the *minpaku* owners is served. There, guests can try making *kiritanpo*, an Akita specialty of cooked rice formed around a skewer and grilled, then added to soups and hotpots. In July, visitors can join in the making of organic blackberry puree. The community center is also a departure point for area bicycle tours.

Some customs of Japanese houses and bathing etiquette are worth noting. Shoes are taken off in the entrance to the house, and slippers are removed when walking on tatami flooring. When bathing, one should use the shower to wash thoroughly before entering the bathtub. After soaking, one should not drain the water from the tub, as it will likely be reheated and used by others bathing later in the evening.

Inquiries and bookings can be made via info@fujisato.info. More information about *minpaku* and local activities is available at <https://www.fujisato.info/en/minshuku/>.