

Akasawa-Shuku Post Town

Hidden deep within the forested mountains of Yamanashi is one of the few remaining post towns in Japan, known as Akasawa-Shuku. In Japan, post towns or post stations were small villages that acted as rest stops where travelers could find food and lodging. Akasawa-Shuku was a post town mainly used by pilgrims coming and going between Minobusan Kuonji Temple, one of the head temples of the Nichiren sect, and Mt. Shichimen, a sacred mountain.

Today, only two inns are still operating in the area: Edoya and Osakaya. Those who wish to make the pilgrimage up Mt. Shichimen but are physically unable to do so can take advantage of a service that carries devotees up the mountain in a litter.

During the Meiji era (1868–1912), when business in Akasawa-Shuku was at its peak, over a thousand people a day stayed at inns in the village. At each inn, wooden name plates known as *manegi fuda* were displayed near the entrance. These name plates were created by the visitors themselves. Originally quite plain, as the trend caught on, they became more and more elaborate, with embossed letters and engravings in red and black ink.

Though times have changed, the town is still lively. Akasawa-Shuku was selected by the government as an area of historical and cultural significance. The landscape of the town continues to remind visitors of its rich and historic past.