**Donden Museum**

The Donden Museum showcases Inuyama’s most important event, a religious festival held every April that dates back to 1635. The museum recreates the festival atmosphere by using the same lights and music as the floats, allowing visitors to experience the festival atmosphere year-round. The museum features a film of the procession, and the ornate garments worn by festival participants are also on display. Even the museum building itself, with its narrow frame and high ceiling, resembles the traditional warehouses where the floats were originally stored.

The museum houses several of the city’s 13 festival floats designated Important Tangible Folk Cultural Properties. Each float is more than eight meters high and weighs about five tons. The exhibits highlight the detailed craftsmanship in the wood carvings and the gilt and black lacquer ornamentation. Constructed without the use of nails, the floats are fine examples of traditional Japanese joinery.

The floats have three tiers, each of which has a special purpose during the parade. The lower level is where musicians play traditional flutes and drums, the middle houses the operators of mechanical puppets (*karakuri ningyo*) from the Edo period (1603–1868), and the upper level carries the lively figures of the *karakuri ningyo*. After dark, the floats are decorated with 365 individual candle-lit lanterns representing the days of the year. The floats are not simply for entertainment, but are offerings to the deities.

The Inuyama floats are difficult to maneuver, and a team of people is required to steer each one through the streets during the annual procession. Rounding corners is a feat of both physical strength and skillful maneuvering called *donden*, from which the museum derives its name.