

Iwase House

The Iwase residence is one of the largest *gassho-zukuri* (steep thatched roof) structures still standing in the Gokayama region. Built approximately 300 years ago, the five-story house is 26.4 meters long, 12.7 meters wide, and 14.4 meters tall, and was typically home to several generations of the family living together. Designated an Important Cultural Property in 1958, the house stands as a prime example of *gassho*-style architecture because it is still structured around its original wooden beams. The guest rooms were built in *shoin-zukuri*, a style of architecture typical of the houses of high-ranking samurai. In the left part of the building, large beams made from Japanese zelkova trees (*keyaki*), can be found in their original form, while at the other end of the house, the *shoin-zukuri* rooms are accented by detailed Inami wood carvings, a traditional handicraft from nearby Inami, now part of Nanto city. As is the case with most *gassho*-style houses, the Iwase House was built without the use of any metal or nails; instead, ropes and other natural materials are used to secure the structure. The thatched roof is made with *kariyasu*, a variety of miscanthus, and it is rethatched every 25 years.