

Miyajima History and Folklore Museum: Traditional Merchant House

The two-story main building of the Miyajima History and Folklore Museum was once one of the most lavish homes on the island. Built in the early 1800s, it belonged to the wealthy Egami family, who made their fortune in the soy sauce business. The house conveys a sense of how an affluent merchant family lived on Miyajima in the late Edo period (1603–1868).

Just beyond the wide entrance is a tatami-mat room on the left, the floor of which is considerably higher than that of the entrance hall. This simple, functional space is where the soy sauce merchant would sit when serving customers. The other rooms in the house are more ornate, some of them featuring hanging scrolls and other artwork on the walls. Another sign of affluence is the sturdy horizontal beam in the middle of the house. It supports the entire structure and was cut from a single pine tree, and is thus likely to have been very expensive.

After viewing the interior rooms, visitors can relax in the room facing the inner garden. The garden was built after the Egami family discontinued its soy sauce business in the early 1900s and the house was turned into a residence for the keeper of a *ryokan* inn. The pond has koi carp in it, which visitors are welcome to feed from April to October.