

Overview of Gero Onsen Gassho Village

Gero Onsen Gassho Village invites visitors in Gero to take a break from bathing and learn about the area's nineteenth-century history. The village is an outdoor museum featuring 10 *gassho-zukuri* houses transferred from the village of Shirakawa in northern Gifu Prefecture and from the Gokayama area in the city of Nanto in Toyama Prefecture. *Gassho-zukuri* means “praying-hands construction”—the steep triangular shape created by the logs forming a frame for the houses' roofs was thought to resemble two hands pressed together in prayer.

The traditional village homes were built in the nineteenth century in northern Gifu and southwestern Toyama Prefectures, both areas of heavy snowfall in winter. The houses are cultural properties, and have also been preserved in other villages around Gifu Prefecture. Some of the houses have been remodeled on the inside and now house workshops or museums. Others, such as the Odo House, have been preserved as they were and serve as a glimpse into traditional village life in Gifu.

The village offers picturesque scenes in every season, including the iconic view of the houses' steep roofs covered in snow. In addition to seeing the houses, visitors can participate in hands-on workshops to learn local crafts and pottery, or even decorate tiles to be displayed in the village. The Enku Gallery presents works by the Gifu-born monk Enku, who dedicated his life to carving figures of the Buddha in wood. For lunch, some restaurants serve Gifu specialties, such as *ayu* (sweetfish) skewered and grilled slowly over charcoal.