

Gassho Village: Odo House

The Odo House is the largest house in Gassho Village, with an area of some 250 square meters. Transferred to its current location from the village of Shirakawa in 1963, the house was constructed using Japanese witch hazel (*neso*) and rope rather than nails. The 12.5-meter-long house gives visitors an inside look into how villagers lived in nineteenth-century Gifu Prefecture. The house was designated an Important Tangible Folk Cultural Property in 1956.

The 13-meter-tall house has four stories, which is unusual for houses of its style; most have only two or three stories. It has a thatched, deeply slanted *gassho-zukuri* roof. Gifu Prefecture receives heavy snowfall in winter, and the slanted roof prevents an excess of snow from accumulating and crushing the structure.

The first floor of the Odo House was the center of daily life; it consists of a wooden-floored room with a sunken hearth (*irori*), a kitchen, a dining room, an altar for praying to ancestors, and a stable. The floors are connected by steep, ladder-like staircases. The upper floors of the house were used for cultivating silkworms and reeling silk.