

Gassho Village: Iwasaki House and Folk Museum

The Iwasaki House was built in 1810. It was originally located in Gokayama, now part of the city of Nanto in Toyama Prefecture, and was moved to its current location in 1968. Of the 10 houses in Gassho Village, the Iwasaki House is the only one brought over from Gokayama and offers an opportunity for visitors to study the distinctive architecture of traditional nineteenth-century homes in that region. Gokayama is noted for the *tsumairi* style of house building, in which the entrance is on the gable end, as seen on the Iwasaki House. This differs from the more common *hirairi* style, in which the entrance is on the long side of the house.

The Iwasaki House is now home to the Folk Museum, which showcases tools and artifacts of daily life in nineteenth-century Gifu Prefecture villages. The museum's exhibits include educational materials for children such as old textbooks and school clothes, folk pottery, and ancient armor.

The Folk Museum also displays *tsuchibina* clay dolls, which in Gero and the surrounding region are associated with the annual Hinamatsuri (Girls' Festival), celebrated in spring. From the Edo period (1603–1868) until the 1960s, the Hinamatsuri custom was that local people would buy these dolls for their children and display them at home, serve festival food, and celebrate both their children growing up and the coming of spring. The dolls were themed on everything from kabuki characters to cute animals. Gassho Village celebrates Hinamatsuri every year from early February to early April, when some 1,500 dolls are displayed throughout the village as part of the Tsuchibina Festival.