

## **Haiseiden**

Built in 1942 to commemorate the 300th anniversary of Bashō's (1644–1694) birth, the Haiseiden hall is a striking monument to its namesake, the “saint of haiku.” The building was commissioned by the city of Iga in a project led by Kawasaki Katsu (1880–1949), a Mie Prefecture politician who was one of the poet's greatest admirers. The Haiseiden is meant to resemble Bashō himself. Its upper curved roof corresponds to his hat, while the lower octagonal roof corresponds to his coat and sash. The pillars at the base represent the poet's ever-present walking stick. A ceramic statue of Bashō sits inside the hall, offering inspiration to modern poets.

Every year on October 12—the anniversary of Bashō's death—a festival is held at the Haiseiden to honor his legacy, during which the doors to the statue's chamber are opened. A national haiku contest is held in which writers offer poems and prayers to the poet's memory. In recent years the contest has been opened to international poets, and submissions in English are accepted.