

Iga Ninja: The Ninja Museum

Beginning in 1964, the Ninja Museum of Igaryū has offered visitors a broad view of ninja history and the techniques and practices that were specific to the ninja of the Iga region, collectively known as *igaryū*, or the “Iga school.”

Iga’s ninja were local samurai hired by wealthy politicians, samurai, and landowners. Though they lived as farmers, ninja were trained as spies and saboteurs, and the information they collected gave their employers a crucial edge when negotiating with rivals. As their skills and reputation grew, Iga ninja were hired by powerful leaders in other parts of Japan. Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616), founder of the Tokugawa shogunate, famously hired ninja to guard Edo Castle and spy on his enemies. However, the heyday of these home-grown warriors lasted only a few hundred years; by the end of the eighteenth century, their skills were no longer needed, and the ninja all but disappeared.

The Ninja Museum displays a variety of ninja-related exhibits, from farm implements that were repurposed as ninja tools to exhibits on secret codes and memorization techniques. The ninja are brought to life through replica clothing, disguises, and weapons. Visitors can also explore a ninja house featuring hidden passages and trick doors. The museum hosts a space where ninja performers demonstrate authentic ninja weaponry, acrobatics, and other specialized skills.