

## **Ogimachi Castle Site Scenic Lookout**

The Ogimachi Castle Site Scenic Lookout affords visitors unimpeded views over the village of Ogimachi, the central settlement in Shirakawa-go and part of the “Historic Villages of Shirakawa-go and Gokayama” World Heritage Site. The landscape that spreads out beneath the hilltop lookout is dotted with gassho-style houses characterized by their steeply slanted, triangular roofs, and makes for an impressive sight throughout the year. Looking out over the village, visitors will notice how most of the gassho-style houses are built in a north-south direction. This was done both to maximize the amount of sunlight received by their thatched roofs and to protect the tall, narrow structures from the strong wind that usually blows through the Shō river valley from either north or south. Any gassho-style houses not built in a north-south direction are likely to be ones relocated to Ogimachi from elsewhere. Also evident from the lookout is the relative lack of flat, arable land in the river valley, which is another distinguishing feature of Ogimachi. Unable to subsist on agriculture alone, the local people adopted sericulture, or silkworm raising, as their primary source of income during the mid-Edo period (1603–1867). Gassho-style houses became popular mainly due to their suitability for sericulture, for which their well-lit, multi-level attics were ideal spaces.