

## Isa Family Residence

This spacious property is the ancestral home of the Isa family, who served as village headmen (*shoya*) for generations. The main house is a beautifully restored and well-preserved example of the type of residential architecture that was characteristic of this area during the mid-Edo period (1603–1867). It was designated an Important Cultural Property in 1975, and in 1980 five storehouses, a lumber shed, old construction documentation, building plans, and the land itself were added to the designation.

The Isa Family Residence reflects the status of wealthy *shoya* who were charged with administering villages under direct control of the Tokugawa shogunate in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The main house, which was rebuilt in 1734, is distinguished by its especially thick roof thatching, a red earthen wall of the kind usually found only in the houses of nobility or samurai, a spacious kitchen with a particularly large *okudo* stove, and a large number of rooms. Household items that were used by the Isa family also remain in good condition and can still be seen throughout the home. Many of the architectural features of the main house were vital to the duties of a *shoya*, which included meeting with villagers, entertaining important visitors such as shogunate officials, and preparing meals for festivals.

On the southern side of the main house is a set of wooden steps that leads to the front entrance once used to welcome honored guests. Such steps were only permitted at the residences of high-ranking people, showing the status of the family at a glance. Guests would ascend into a spacious foyer and then an antechamber containing a large Buddhist altar before being shown to the inner parlor on the far west side of the house. The inner parlor is decorated with carved wooden transoms, a tokonoma alcove and staggered shelves for displaying art, and a small cabinet with sliding doors covered in gold leaf and paintings. The foyer, antechamber, and inner parlor are all valuable portions of the home that still retain their Edo-period appearance.

The property has a number of other notable structures and features. There are two large granaries for storing the village's annual rice tax, and a raised, roofed passageway built in a style often seen at shrines and temples connects the house to two storehouses. On the southern side of the stone-walled property are remains of the moat that once surrounded the residence, while a bamboo grove borders it on the north. The entire residence covers a total of 2,600 square meters.

The Isa Family Residence is not open to the public, but visiting is possible with a reservation.