

## **Baishoen (Oomoto Ayabe Spiritual Center)**

### **Oomoto**

Oomoto is a religion with Shinto roots that was founded in Ayabe in 1892. Baishoen, also known as the Oomoto Ayabe Spiritual Center, is the birthplace of Oomoto worship. The grounds feature green gardens and buildings of notable architecture, and are open to visitors.

### **Mirokuden (Hall of Supreme Love and Compassion)**

Mirokuden is an Oomoto worship hall that was constructed in 1953 and is Baishoen's oldest building. This massive open hall has a steel frame construction, has Japanese cypress woodwork throughout, and over 1,400 square meters of floorspace. Glass paneled sliding doors line three sides of the building, many of which contain the original hand-blown glass panes from 1953. The roof is covered in copper shingles and was designed with a steep pitch to prevent snow accumulation, with a pent roof (*mokoshi*) below the main roof. Mirokuden was designated a Tangible Cultural Property of Japan in 2014.

As the number of Oomoto followers grew, large ceremonies were moved to Choseiden hall in 1992. Worshippers still use Mirokuden to pray for their ancestors and the victims of war and disaster around the world.

### **Konohanaan**

This mid-seventeenth-century thatched farmhouse was once the property of the Okahana family, but it was moved to the Oomoto Ayabe Spiritual Center for preservation in 1971. The house is a precious example of farmhouse architecture and it was registered as an Important Cultural Property of Japan in 1972. It has four rooms: a kitchen with a cooking hearth and sink; a living space with a central hearth (*irori*); a tatami room, which was used to welcome guests and for silkworm cultivation; and an area where livestock were kept under the same roof.

Oomoto members open the house every 5 days to light the hearth and care for the building. Visitors wishing to see the inside should make an appointment.