

## **Azai History and Folklore Museum**

This folk museum in eastern Nagahama comprises a cluster of buildings centered on a garden and koi pond. Each structure has dioramas, models, and hands-on activities that introduce aspects of life during the Edo period (1603–1867).

A pair of traditional *minka* farmhouses add to the museum's pastoral atmosphere. The older of the two farmhouses was originally constructed in 1804 and relocated to the museum in 1993. Its well-maintained interior includes period furnishings, tatami mat rooms, and an earthen-floored entrance and kitchen. Visitors who reserve in advance through a certified regional interpreter can try a range of traditional and agrarian activities, such as wearing a kimono or using an antique threshing machine.

The second traditional-style farmhouse on the grounds, built in 1993, showcases a household silk-making operation. The Azai district of Nagahama was known for its high-quality silk, and the displays in this farmhouse illustrate the sericulture process, from raising silkworms to spinning the cocoons into delicate thread. A mockup forge next door shows how Nagahama blacksmiths produced tools such as shovels and hoes for everyday use.

A larger, modern museum building next to the farmhouses features exhibits on the history of the ruling Azai family, who governed the area in the sixteenth century. Illustrated panels, personal effects, and life-sized dioramas tell of the family's rise and fall. Special attention is paid to the three daughters of the last Azai lord, who survived the 1573 destruction of their family stronghold at Odani Castle.