

Nestled between 1,500m high mountains along the gorge of the Sho River, Gokayama is home to more than 40 small villages. Gokayama is a region located in the southwestern part of Toyama prefecture. The region was once called one of the three hidden places of Japan, given its remote and isolated location.

Its history is thought to date back to as early as the Johmon period. Legend has it that the defeated warriors of the Taira Clan, who were once prosperous in the ancient capital of Kyoto, fled to Gokayama where they lived secretly in the 12th century. In the 14th century, during the Nanbokucho Period (South and North Courts Period), some warriors of the South Court came to consider Gokayama as their eternal habitat. In the 15th century, Jōdo Shinshū (True Pure Land school of Buddhism) was spread throughout Gokayama by Doushu, a native of Gokayama and a disciple of Rennyo, the 8th head priest of the Jōdo Shinshū Honganji Temple. Since then, this religion has become the spiritual essence of the people of Gokayama. During the Ishiyama Honganji War (battle between the powerful warlord Nobunaga and Jōdo Shinshū at Ishiyama Temple in present-day Osaka), pious village people supported Honganji, offering silk and ensho (potassium nitrate gunpowder ingredient). In the Edo Period, Gokayama was ruled by Lord Maeda, the wealthiest provincial lord at the time. During this period, the unique style of triangle thatched roof houses, Gassho-zukuri houses, was developed. Due to the mountainous topography, there were few rice paddies in the region. Instead of growing rice, village people in the Edo Period manufactured other products, such as silk worms, washi (Japanese handmade paper), and ensho (potassium nitrate gunpowder ingredient) to pay the yearly tributes to the ruling clan.

Since 1930, hydroelectric power stations have been constructed along the Sho River. While roofs of the houses in other villages were gradually replaced with tin or tiles, the houses of the Ainokura and Suganuma villages have been preserved in their original form. The two villages were designated as national historic sites in 1970. In 1995, Ainokura and Suganuma were designated as UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Sites, along with Ogimachi in Shirakawa-go, for the traditional Gassho-zukuri houses (praying hands style).

The unique mountain culture of Gokayama has been handed down from generation to generation along with the Gassho-zukuri houses. Explore the natural scenery of Gokayama and its rich cultural heritage!



General There are 9 Gassho-zukuri houses in this village, most of which were built at the end of the Edo Period. The village has been preserved for centuries by the efforts of the local people.

The village is also listed as an Important Preservation District for Groups of Traditional Buildings by nation.

Access **Car** / 1km from Gokayama IC. **Parking** / ¥500 (Cooperation fee for site conservation purposes) English map is available at the parking area. 7-minute walk from the parking area to the village along Rte-156 or a 5-minute walk with elevator ride down. The elevator is located across from the rest rooms in the parking area. ☎0763-67-3008 ☺8:00~17:00(Apr.~Nov. Entry until 16:00), 9:00~16:00(Dec.~Mar. Entry until 15:30) **Bus** / Kaetsuno World Heritage Bus “Suganuma”. Just 1 minute walk down to the village. Hokutetsu Bus “Gokayama Suganuma” 10-minute walk from Suganuma Bus Stop. Coin lockers are available at Suganuma Bus Stop bound for Ainokura-guchi.

Look **Gokayama Folklore Museum** This is one of the oldest Gassho-zukuri houses in Suganuma, which has been turned into an exhibition hall. About 200 tools and utensils used for silkworm raising, washi paper making, and daily life are exhibited. The museum introduces the traditional life style of this mountain village. **Ensho no Yakata** (Niter Museum) Exhibition of the production process of ensho(niter), a gunpowder ingredient manufactured in Gokayama during the Edo Period. Under the patronage of Lord Maeda, ensho made in Gokayama was called “Kaga Shoseki” (potassium niter of Kaga) and boasted as superior in quality and quantity throughout the nation.☺9:00-16:00 Admission: ¥300 for both museums Closed: Dec.29 to Jan.1 **Kago-no-watashi** Used in the Edo Period to cross rivers. The Provincial Kaga Clan did not allow bridges in Gokayama in order to restrict the travel of its people. Visible from Suganuma Bridge and also exhibited in Folklore Museum.

Lunch & Cafe Enjoy local food at **Gorobei**, **Yohachi**, **Arai**. Relax at the local café **Tenohira**.

Souvenir Items include local sake Sanshoraku and Gokayama Washi products, sold at **Yohachi**, **Arai** and **Kappa**.

Event Suganuma Light-Up Event/Sun. in early February, specific days in February & March, late-May



General There are 20 Gassho-zukuri houses in this village, most of which are 100 to 200 years old. The village has been preserved for centuries along with its natural surroundings by the efforts of the local people. Staying overnight at a Gassho-zukuri inn is truly a wonderful way to experience Japanese culture.

Ainokura is also listed as an Important Preservation District for Groups of Traditional Buildings by nation. **Access** **Car** /2km from the crossing of Rte. 156 and Rte. 304, 400m up from Ainokura-guchi bus stop on Rte. 304.

Parking / ¥500 (Cooperation fee for site conservation purposes) English map and coin lockers available at the parking area. ☎0763-66-2123

☺8:30~17:00 **Bus** / Kaetsuno World Heritage Bus “Ainokura-guchi”. Walk about 400m up to the village. Coin lockers are available at Ainokura-guchi Bus Stop bound for Shirakawago.

View point / 5-minute walk up through the terraced fields from the parking area.

Look **Ainokura Folklore Museum** Exhibition of items used in traditional settings, such as wedding ceremonies and Buddhist rituals. One-tenth scale of miniature Gassho-zukuri house is also exhibited.

Ainokura Traditional Industry Museum Exhibition of the tools and utensils used in manufacturing three major products in Gokayama in the Edo period (1603-1868): silkworms, ensho (gunpowder ingredient), and washi (handmade paper). ☺8:30-17:00 Open throughout year Admission: ¥500 for both museums **Yusuke** (local inn open to public in daytime) Exhibition of photos of old and present Ainokura on the 2nd floor of the house, taken by the owner. ☺10:00-15:00 Closed: Tuesday Admission: ¥300 **Gokayama Washi Workshop** (Yamazaki House) Try handmade paper making experience. Open May to November. Closed on some weekdays. Variety of Washi items are available.

Lunch & Cafe Enjoy local cuisine and relax at **Matsuya** and **Ainokuraya**.

Souvenir Items include local sake Sanshoraku and Gokayama Washi products, sold at **Matsuya**, **Ainokuraya**.

Accommodations There are six local Gassho-zukuri inns (Minshuku). Experience staying in a traditional Gassho-zukuri house. The price is 11,500yen and up per person including dinner & breakfast. Advanced reservation required. Inquire at the Gokayama Tourist Information Center for reservations. E-mail / mail@gokayama-info.jp Gassho-zukuri Minshuku **Yusuke**, **Shoshichi**, **Gassho Nakaya**, **Yomoshiro**, **Choyomon**, **Goyomon**.

Event Lighting of the village in Ainokura / late-February, mid-September, late-November



stayed in this house to buy ensho made in Gokayama. The ground floor was built from the keyaki tree (high quality, zelkova hard wood). Iwase-ke is a 5 story house. ☎0763-67-3338 ☺9:00~17:00 (Dec.~Mar. until 16:00) Closed: Thursday Admission: ¥400 **Gyotokuji Temple** The biggest and oldest temple in Gokayama. Its founder Doushu monk spread Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism throughout Gokayama.

Lunch & Cafe **Simizuya** Local café restaurant. **Iwana** has a variety of local dishes such as savory iwana (river trout) sushi. **Kurumi** has soba and udon.

Souvenir **Chinpindo** and **Mansaku** Local food and crafts are available. **Accommodations** Ryokan **Akaokan**.



Access **Car**/Located in between Ainokura (6km) and Suganuma (5km). **Parking**/Free **Bus**/ Kaetsuno World Heritage Bus “Kaminashi”. This village is known as the village of the Gokayama folksong and dance “Kokiriko”, the oldest folksong in Japan. Gokayama Tourist Information Center is located here. Visit our center for further information. ☎9:00~17:00

Look **Murakami-ke** The oldest Gassho-zukuri house in Gokayama, designated as a national important cultural property. Part of its architectural style contains aspects of the early Shoin-zukuri style (Samurai Residence-style). The owner of the house will sing “Kokiriko”, after explaining about the house while sitting around an irori (fire place). Go upstairs to see the interior of a Gassho-zukuri roof. ☺9:00~16:00 (Entry until 15:40) Closed: Tuesday & Wednesday, Dec. 15 to Feb. Admission: ¥400 ☎0763-66-2711 **Main hall of Hakusan-gu Shrine** is designated as a national important cultural property. The oldest wooden structure in Toyama prefecture, dating back to the 15th century. Open to the public only during spring and autumn festivals. The building in front of the main hall is “Buden”, where the Kokiriko dance is dedicated to the shrine god at the festival held on September 25 and 26. **Rukeigoya** (Banishment hut) The Edo period jail for political criminals sent by the Kaga clan, who were then assigned village people to watch over them. The original hut was reconstructed after being destroyed by heavy snowfall.

Lunch & Cafe **Zippensha** Handmade soba(buckwheat noodle)shop. You can also enjoy udon and savor Gokayama tofu dishes. Relax at café **Sakusuke** and **Dederekoden**.

Souvenir Kokiriko musical instrument “sasara” is available at **Kitamura Shoten**, **Sakusuke**, and **Dederekoden**.

Accommodations Gassho-zukuri minshuku **Yajibei** and **Kitabura**, traditional minshuku **Mataemon**. Ryokan **Gokasanso**. Inquire at the Gokayama Tourist Information Center for reservations.

E-mail / mail@gokayama-info.jp



Access **Car**/ 8km from Ainokura and 15km from Suganuma. **Look & Experience** **Gokayama Washi no Sato** Located at Michinoeki Taira. Washi, Japanese handmade paper, was one of the main products of Gokayama offered to the Kaga Clan as a yearly tribute in the Edo period. This traditional handcraft has been handed down throughout the generations and designated as one of Japan’s Traditional Crafts, under the name “Etchu Washi”. Experience washi paper-making or other washi crafts at the Washi Experience Center. Bring back your own work of art as a souvenir for ¥800 and up. Various washi paper and art crafts are available at the neighboring washi shop. ☎0763-66-2223

Lunch **Restaurant Furusato** Local dishes including udon and soba available Located in the compound of Michinoeki Taira.

Souvenir **Asaake** has a variety of local items.

Traditional Dance Performance

Gokayama is a treasure land of folk songs. Enjoy and experience traditional Japanese dance! Check out the schedule at the website below! https://gokayama-info.jp/en



• The oldest folksong in Japan “Kokiriko” Performance at Kaminashi Area



• The nostalgic samurai dance “Mugiyabushi” Performance at Shimonashi Area

■ Restaurants available for both lunch and dinner.

Junchan Shokudo is located on the 2nd floor of Kuroba Onsen. Variety of dishes available including local cuisine.

Iwana is located at Michinoeki Kamitaira. Try fresh Iwana (river trout) sushi, a specialty in this restaurant, as well as other local dishes.

Sakade is located in Shimonashi near the crossing of Route 304 and Route 156. Local food including udon, soba, ramen noodles are available.

Hyotan is located at hot spring “Yu-raku”. A variety of local dishes are available. Open until 21:00 (Last Order 20:00, until 14:00 on Wednesday)

■ Onsen (Hot Spring)

Yu-raku ☺10:00~21:00 (Admission ends at 20:30) ¥620 Closed: Thu. Enjoy local dishes at **Hyotan**.

Kuroba Onsen ☺10:00~21:00 ¥600 Closed: Tue. Enjoy local dishes at **Junchan Shokudo**. Closed: Mon. & Tue.

Gokasanso ☺13:00~20:00 (Entry until 19:00) ¥600 Closed: Wednesday. **Akaokan** ☺9:00~21:00 ¥600 Closed: Jan.1st

■ Type of Accommodation

¥ Price per person including dinner & breakfast.

Gassho-zukuri Minshuku There are three to four tatami mats rooms in a Minshuku. Each room is separated by fusuma (Japanese sliding doors). Futons are prepared by the host. Bathrooms are shared with other guests. Dinner, full of local dishes such as mountain vegetables, tofu, and the river trout “iwana”, are served around an irori (fire place) on low-setting tables called “gozen”. There are eight Gassho-zukuri Minshuku, six in Ainokura and two in Kaminashi. ¥10,000yen to 22,000yen. Advanced reservation required.



Ryokan Japanese-style rooms separated by walls or fusuma. Some rooms have attached washrooms and bathrooms. **Gokasanso**, **Akaokan** and **Yoshinoya** have rooms with Western-style beds. ¥11,000yen to 21,200yen. Ryokan in other areas: **Yoshinoya**, **Seibeikan**, **Iimikan**



Minshuku (Non-Gassho-style house) & Guest House ¥ 4,000yen to 10,000yen. Minshuku (Non-Gassho-style house) in other areas: **Kuraya** Guest House (Non-Gassho-style house) in other areas: **Yamashita-ya** (only breakfast upon request) **Takazuri-KITA** (only breakfast upon request) **GOKAYAMA BASE** (shared kitchen available)



Reservations & Inquiries

Gokayama Tourist Information Center E-mail: mail@gokayama-info.com

Reservation for some accommodations is available through internet booking service. Booking.com (https://www.booking.com/) Japanican.com (https://www.japanican.com/)

■ How to get to Gokayama by public transportation

<<Nearest Shinkansen Station “Shin Takaoka” on Hokuriku Shinkansen ⇄ Gokayama> About 1 hour to 1.5 hours by Kaetsuno “World Heritage Bus”. (Reservations not required)

<Nearest JR Station “Johana” on JR Johana-sen ⇄ Gokayama> About 30 minutes to 45 minutes by Kaetsuno “World Heritage Bus”. (Reservations not required)

<<Kanazawa ⇄ Gokayama> About 1 hour by Highway Bus “Hokutetsu Bus”(Hokuriku Railroad Bus) Advanced reservation required.

<Gokayama ⇄ Shirakawa-go> About 30 minutes to 45 minutes by Kaetsuno “World Heritage Bus”.

Visit the access page on our website https://gokayama-info.jp/en/ **Information is current as of October 2023.**