

WELCOME TO HIKOBE MANOR!

After parking, please go to the walk that leads to the entrance of the Manor. Stop at the beginning of the walk (marked (1) on your guidemap) before approaching the entrance gate.

(1) **First, a short explanation about what you are about to see:**

Touring Hikobe Manor will give you a glimpse of Japanese life from the Medieval to the Early Modern eras in Japan. At the time the manor was first established in the 16th century, samurai were larger than life and the country was repeatedly wracked by bloody battles that shifted power from one daimyo to another.

The Hikobe family has an astounding history that reaches back some 49 generations. The manor here in Kiryu has been inhabited by an uninterrupted line of Hikobe descendants for over 450 years. Aristocrats, samurai, landed gentry... the Hikobes maintained their hold by shifting their allegiance and identities to flow with the times. The manor's very existence today is evidence of the Hikobe descendants' extraordinary ability to correctly interpret the political climate and survive through crisis after crisis, generation after generation.

(2) The great gatehouse before you is beckoning... walk up to the gate and, as you proceed through, the centuries roll back. The gatehouse was constructed in mid-17th century and first underwent restoration in 1977. In November 1999 a section of the thatched roof was repaired.

But first...find the ticket window on the left hand side as you enter the compound and purchase a ticket to tour the grounds. Then, proceed to the center of the courtyard and wait there to continue the tour.

PURCHASE TICKETS

(3) **Introduction (center of the courtyard)**

First, here is a short explanation about how this medieval manor came to be restored and preserved as a Nationally Designated Important Cultural Asset.

In 1963, the Nitayama Tsumugi Silk Order dating back to the year 1548 was discovered in the Hikobe Family Archive and designated an Important Cultural Asset by Kiryu City. While Kyoto had long been recognized as an important silk producing region, this document issued by the Ashikaga Shogunate proved definitively that Kiryu

was also a well-known and prospering textile producing region 460 years ago.

A few years later, in 1976, Hikobe Manor was designated by Gunma Prefecture an archeological site.

Finally, in 1992, this designation was elevated to a Nationally Recognized Important Cultural Asset.

Included in the designation are the following buildings:

- 1: The Omoya, or Main Residence, constructed about 400 years ago during the early Edo Era. It contains 5 rooms and one earthen floor room. Even by national standards, the architecture is considered very old.
- 2: The Nagaya-mon or Gatehouse, constructed during the 18th century, represents mid-Edo Era design. The main gates can both be fully opened. In addition, a smaller door is cut into one of the gates. Next,
- 3: The Fuyuzumi or Winter Residence. This building, constructed during the end of the 18th century, served as a retirement residence for elderly family members.
- 4: The Granary.
- 5: The Archival Storehouse.

Now, please proceed to the building to the left of the gatehouse, that is, the Winter Residence, labeled (4) on your guidemap.

(5) **THE WINTER RESIDENCE**

This building was constructed around the end of the 18th century, or the latter half of the Edo Era. At the time it was constructed, the building was used for various academic and artistic pursuits such as the study of literature, tea ceremonies, flower arranging, poetry writing, and other cultural activities.

Now, let's look at the Special Characteristics of the Building

1. The reed-thatched roof construction, known as "Irimoya-Tsukuri," has 2 triangular windows at the roof peaks to provide ventilation
2. The building is constructed with double-door insulation so that once a room is warmed by the sun, heat does not easily escape.
3. Because many people came and went into the building for cultural activities, the floors are fitted with the strongest type of tatami mats. In addition, both the 6 and 8 tatami mats rooms are equipped with irori or sunken hearths, useful for tea ceremonies.

4. **Wooden Rod-framed Ceilings:** The 6 mat room in the interior of the building and 8 mat living room both have wooden rod-framed ceilings. There is a smoke vent in the ceiling of the living room. In addition, the 6 mat room “monkey rods,” are so called because of their smooth monkey cheek-like finish.
5. **Kyoto-finished wall in the Tokonoma (alcove):** The substance used to plaster the walls of the alcove was brought from Kyoto and contains iron, which, when exposed to the air, gradually takes on a reddish hue.
6. **The incomparable window-paneled sliding doors of the 8-mat room:** Because of the heavy use of this main room, windows, which could be opened, were installed in the sliding doors in order to provide ample ventilation and prevent the accumulation of body odor.

At present, this building is used for cultural activities such as tea ceremonies, kimono exhibits, etc.

Now, please proceed across the gravel to the garden opposite the Winter Residence labeled (5) on your guidemap.

(5) **FRONT GARDEN, INTERIOR GARDEN, BROOK GARDEN**

1. The official name of the garden is “Chisen Kaiyushiki Tei-en” meaning, “Many Pleasures Garden”. A landscapist was brought from Kyoto at the time of construction to create a Muromachi Era style garden, typical of the aristocratic culture of the time. The famous Kanazawa Kenroku Garden has been landscaped in the same style.
2. In the name, “chi” refers to the “pond” on the surface, drawing spring water (“sen”) bubbling up from the ground in two places in the bamboo grove above. One spring in the “Mosochiku,” or thick-stemmed bamboo grove trickles down through the outer moat in an S formation. Another natural spring arises in the “Madake” or common bamboo grove behind the dormitory. The water from this spring divides into two branches, one passing in front of the stone wall, while the other passes through the center of the garden, together feeding into the pond. From there, the rivulets converge on the west side of the gatehouse, running along the road and on through a field, finally emptying into a stream below.
3. **Spring & Autumn in the Garden:** Spring and autumn are the best seasons to view the garden. In addition to the lovely plum and cherry blossoms, on the 4th Sunday of April there is a public tea ceremony in the garden. Toward the end of November, visitors enjoy gathering the bright red and golden yellow leaves that have fallen

beneath a variety of maple trees.

- While most of the pine trees on the compound are red pines, there is one black pine recognizable for its distinctive “Y” shape. Black pines have been designated the prefectural tree of Gunma.
- Autumn maple leaves in the garden are enjoyed from mid-November through mid-December and arrive in three successive stages. There are about 20 maple trees on the grounds having colorful leaves in autumn.

Now, please proceed around the south corner of the house (the corner enclosed in the garden) and look into the Rear Sitting Room labeled (6) on your guidemap.

(6) REAR SITTING ROOM

This room was reserved for special guests during the Edo Era. The special characteristics of the room are as follows:

1. To protect important visitors, the south wall of the room is composed of adobe-mud.
2. The ceiling is framed with wooden rods.
3. Of the two center tatami mats, the one on the eastern side has been cut for a sunken hearth which can be used for tea ceremonies.
4. The Muromachi style tokonoma, or alcove, is about 30 cm deep with a 25 cm high platform. The wall to the right of the alcove is made of “katsura” board, wood from a native Japanese tree, and it is believed that this wall may also have been used to display hanging scrolls.
5. The “Honored Guest Entrance” is situated such that, after being served tea, the visitor could enjoy an excellent view over the garden.

Now please return to the gravel courtyard and enter the Main Residence or “Omoya” labeled (7) on your guidemap.

(7) MAIN RESIDENCE (“OMOYA”)

The following are of special interest in the Main Residence: the Front Sitting Room, the Hiroma or living room, the horse stall, the wood-fired oven or “kamado”, and the eaves. The following are their characteristics:

1. Toilet: The men’s toilet located just outside the entrance of the Main Residence was used as a signal to the family when visitors arrived.
2. Official visitors to the manor were welcomed through the Shikidai Genkan or Porch Entrance.

3. Regular visitors were welcomed into the Front Sitting Room.
4. The Hiroma or living room is also called the Takesunoko Room. This room has bamboo pole flooring and ceiling. The innermost wall is thinly pressed board in its original condition. The room also features a “Butsudan” or Household Buddhist Altar, a “Kamidana” or Household Shinto Altar, both in their original form.
5. The earthen floor room or Doma features a pounded dirt floor, a horse stall and a wood-fired oven for preparing feed for the horse.

In the morning, the horse was brought in through the east entrance where he waited for his master. The master personally looked after the well-being of the horse.

6. The eaves are constructed in “irimoya” or semi-gabled style. The reed-thatched roof was last changed in 1998. As the reeds weather, they take on a deep golden hue, making the roof look more beautiful than ever. The national government maintains reed fields for thatching the roofs of Important Cultural Assets at the foothills of Mt. Aso in Kyushu. Some 3,000 bundles of these reeds were brought to thatch the roof of the building.

The sunken hearth in the hiroma is lit over 200 days of the year, from the end of September to April of the following year. This serves to warm the building and also to prevent insect infestation of the thatched roof.

The triangular window cut in the rafters also serves as a chimney.

The Front and Rear Sitting Rooms were reserved for Samurai class visitors, while the Hiroma and Doma were used for peasants. The 33rd Hikobe descendant, named Nobukatsu, in order to avoid the extinction of his family and dissolution of his holdings as a samurai during the land survey conducted under Shogun Toyotomi Hideyoshi, made an agonizing decision to change his status from samurai to peasant. As a result, during the Edo Era, the head of the Hikobe Family was the local squire, despite his peasant status and continued to be treated as samurai, allowed keep his surname and to carry a sword in his obi.

Later generations of Hikobes consider Nobukatsu a clever and intelligent master who acted in a timely fashion to protect the heritage of his descendants.

Now please proceed to the Lookout on the northeast side of the manor labeled (8) on your guidemap.

(8) THE LOOKOUT

THE 33RD HIKOBE DESCENDANT, NOBUKATSU, ARRIVES IN KIRYU AND

CONSTRUCTS A MANOR

1. In the year 1560, Kanpaku Konohe Sakitsugu (the chief advisor to the emperor) arrived in Kiryu with Hikobe Nobukatsu. In a gesture of thanks, Yura Narishige, Lord of Kanayama Castle in Ota, donated the area of Hirosawa to Hikobe Nobukatsu who took up residence in Kiryu. His territory extended in one direction as far as Maebashi and the Usui Pass.

Hikobe Manor was situated in a direct line between the two samurai lords, Kiryu and Yura.

2. The Manor is a rectangular compound, extending 130 meters from east to west and 160 meters from north to south. A dry moat and earthen retrenchment surrounds about 100 meters of its northern and western perimeters. The total area of the compound is 20,600 sq. m.
3. From the Lookout facing north there has been a continuous settlement of Hikobe retainers for some 450 years, and to the west of the manor is Fukugonji, a Buddhist temple established in the year 1588 by Nobukatsu, the 33rd descendant and the first Hikobe to reside in Kiryu. Nobukatsu built the temple in memory of the 31st Hikobe descendant, his father, Harunao and his brother, the 32nd descendant Terunobu, both of whom died in the Miyoshi Battle fighting with the 13th Ashikaga Shogun, Yoshiteru. Fukugonji was established from Hasedera (temple) in Nara.
4. In the event of an attack by enemies of the manor, arrows were shot from the Lookout and the wooden drawbridge over the moat below was raised. In addition, the “masugata” or square-shaped gate also served to block the enemies’ entrance into the compound at the Karamete Gate. In point of fact, no battles ever took place here, and it was built in this manner to follow the general practice of the time.

Now, please proceed to the Granary, labeled (9) and Document Archive Storehouse labeled (1 0) on your guidemap.

(9) GRANARY, (1 0) DOCUMENT ARCHIVE

1. Both of these buildings have “Okiyane” or “floating roofs” and are considered

excellent examples of storehouse architecture. It is thought that this style of roof was chosen for the following reasons: First, fires occurred frequently during the Edo Era, and the floating roof was one way of preventing fires; second, this style roof allowed for better ventilation, improving the longevity of the items being stored; and third, this style is an example of the architect's creativity and is meant to demonstrate the power and influence of the family.

2. The granary was constructed during the late Edo Era in 1856; the documents archive was constructed during the mid Edo Era.
3. Originally, the granary was constructed to hold agricultural products grown by the cooperative at the time, however, it is currently used to house pickled plums produced by the Hikobe family. These pickles are produced by successive generations of Hikobe women according to a traditional family recipe. During the summer months, the plums are dried and then in midwinter, snow is gathered from Mt. Akagi and packed over the plums. After three years, the pickled plums are ready for eating. This is the traditional Hikobe method for producing naturally pickled plums.
4. Documents dating as far back as 1560, brought from Kyoto, are stored in the documents archive.
5. The western storehouse contains stirrups, saddles, armor and nuptial cups, etc. along with other family treasures. There is also a basement room under the storehouse.

Now, please proceed to the shrines located in the bamboo grove on the south side of the storehouses labeled (1 1) on your guidemap.

(1 1) **BAMBOO GROVE SHRINES**

The various here shrines were established during the Edo Era by successive generations of Hikobe Ancestors. From the left:

1. This shrine was donated by a powerful regional person sometime between 1781 and 1789;
2. Next to it is Shirahata Inarigu, or the god of commerce, established from Bodaiji or Toji-In, the Ashikaga Family Temple in Kyoto;
3. To the right is Yasaka Jingu, the god of samurai;
4. Next is Tenmangu, the god of academia; and
5. And on the far right is Benzaiten, the god of water and finance.

Now, please proceed along the stone path behind the shrines to the Hikobe Manor Shrine, Hachimangu labeled (1 2) on your guidemap.

(1 2) **HIKOBÉ MANOR HACHIMANGU**

According to Hachimangu documents, this shrine was established from the Iwashimizu Hachimangu in Kyoto and presented to the Hikobe Family by the 12th century 1st Shogun, Minamoto no Yoshikuni, the forefather of both the 1st Ashikaga shogun, Ashikaga Takauji and the famous newage samurai, Nitta Yoshisada. At the time, the Hikobe head was a feudal retainer in what is now Nakosocho, Iwaki City, Fukushima Prefecture.

Marriage arrangements between the Minamoto, Ashikaga and Hikobe families brought them together here in the Hirosawa area during the 12th century. In the rise and fall of samurai families, it is an interesting twist of fate that the Hikobe family would come to establish themselves in the same area some 450 years later. Takegaoka Hachimangu or the Bamboo Grove Hill Hachimangu is the tutelary god of Hikobe Manor.

Now, please proceed along the path back through the bamboo grove. In the year 1600, the people of the Kiryu district contributed 2,410 bolts of silk to be used as banners in battle along with 380 bamboo poles from this grove for the famous Battle of Sekigahara from which Tokugawa Ieyasu emerged victorious. As a result, the 54 towns and villages of the district were relieved of compulsory labor and the Hikobe master continued as the local squire, exempt from taxation.

When you arrive at the arched bridge over the stream, please wait there.

(1 3) **SHINKYO – SACRED BRIDGE**

1. Restoration of the manor began in 1995 and continued for 6 years. During that time, the parts of this stone bridge were discovered in the granary. When the parts were assembled, it was discovered that the bridge had been preserved in its entirety.
2. This bridge lies in a direct line between Hachimangu Shrine and the main entrance to the manor compound. This was the “path of the gods” from of old, and humans were expected to follow the path next to it.
3. Until the city water supply was introduced some 50 years ago, water flowing under this bridge was intercepted and passed through bamboo pipes to supply

water to the manor residents. The rest of the water flowed into the pond. From this bridge up to the pond is the most sacred ground on the manor compound.

Now, please proceed to the area in front of the former dormitory labeled (1 4) on your guidemap.

(1 4) **FORMER DORMITORY**

This building served as a dormitory for female employees from the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate and through the Meiji, Taisho and early Showa eras. There were from 5 to 8 women per room, with a total of 30 to 40 women living in this building. There is a record of 37 women living in the dormitory in 1918. The lattice work on the windows is called “maotoko” and is meant to provide privacy from Peeping Toms.

Now, please proceed on to the Infirmary labeled (1 5) on your guidemap.

(1 5) **FORMER INFIRMARY**

This building was used as an infirmary during the period when many women were living on the compound and employed in the textile mill. It is hoped that the dormitory and the infirmary will eventually be declared early modern cultural assets and preserved for posterity.

Now, please proceed on to the factory labeled (1 6) on your guidemap.

(1 6) **REMAINS OF THE FACTORY**

1. The Japanese cypress bathtub. This bath was made available to the women who were employed in the textile mill.
2. The dyeing vats:
 - a. After the first stage excavation, these vats were discovered in their entirety.
 - b. In 1826, Hikobe Gohei Tomoyuki repeatedly experimented with dyes and discovered a process for dyeing satin black, further contributing to Kiryu's prosperity as a textile center.
 - c. A successful local dyer, Mr. Tajima, now continues to use this facility for dyeing every Sunday. In addition, he recruits people interested in herb dyeing from July through September of each year.
3. The 41st Hikobe descendant, Nobu'ari became the one and only physician in the

family. Nobu'ari went up to Edo in its latter days to study medicine, the use of herbs and potions. He learned to produce medicines and to treat patients. After returning, he invested his own money to provide treatment and medicines to the poor of the area free of charge, and in so doing provided an important service to the area.

4. The Notice Board on which is written an Imperial Edict: This edict declares that as of July 1868 the nation's capital "Edo" will henceforth be called "Tokyo." In September of that year, the Meiji Era began. The original edict, its transliteration and its explanation are all included on the board.

5. Items discovered during excavation: During the restoration of the manor, the ground was excavated, and many artifacts were discovered, including pottery shards and other items of everyday life. On the right hand side is some white porcelain which was likely presented to the 27th Hikobe descendant, Tadaharu as a reward from the Muromachi Era Shogun Yoshimitsu for his work as an administrator during the construction of the famous "Golden Pavilion" or Kinkakuji in Kyoto in the year 1397. At that time, the shogunate engaged in considerable trade with China, importing precious porcelain which was then given out as rewards.

This is the end of our tour. Thank you very much for visiting Hikobe Manor!