



Historic Village of Shirakawa-go

UNESCO World Heritage

Shirakawa Village Aim to Balance Residents Life and Tourism

October 2, 2024

Kazuya Iwamoto, Vice Mayor of Shirakawa Village





Village Profile

- Population: 1,483
Number of households: 603
Note: Data is as of Sept 1st, 2024.
- Altitude: 496 meter at Shirakawa village office.
- Total area: 356.64 km² (97% of village is covered by forest.)



Village Profile

- Inscribed on the World Heritage List in December 1995 as Historic Villages of Shirakawa-go and Gokayama.
- Selected by UN Tourism as Best Tourism Village in October 2023.



Shirakawa, Japan

Officially recognized as a Best Tourism Village by UN Tourism in **2023**

Village Profile

■ Number of visitors

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Domestic visitors	1,132,238	507,933	419,958	707,211	1,065,613
International visitors	1,019,046	202,413	X	63,397	658,441
Total	2,151,284	710,346	419,958	770,608	1,724,054

Note: Statistical disclosure controls on the number of international tourists in 2022.

■ Top 5 International visitors

2019

Region	Total Visitors	Percentage of Visitors
1.Taiwan	209,966	20.61
2.Thailand	158,625	15.57
3.Hong Kong	142,860	14.02
4.China	138,631	13.6
5.Indonesia	54,998	5.4

2022

Region	Total Visitors	Percentage of Visitors
1.Thailand	12,533	19.77
2.Singapore	9,499	14.98
3.Hong Kong	7,762	12.24
4.Indonesia	6,366	10.04
5.Taiwan	5,888	9.29

2023

Region	Total Visitors	Percentage of Visitors
1.Taiwan	166,985	25.36
1.Thailand	76,086	11.56
3.Hong Kong	61,616	9.36
4.Indonesia	40,296	6.12
5.South Korea	38,229	5.81

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1.Conservation activities for World Heritage

- Nearly 500 residents live and maintain the Ogimachi Gassho-style village. We are not a theme park or a reenactment.
- During the period of high-economic growth (circa 1955-1973), the construction of dams and modernization of lifestyles led to an increasing number of residents abandoning their Gassho-style houses.
- In 1971, local residents established the “**Shirakawa-mura Ogimachi Natural Environment Preservation Society**” with all Ogimachi residents as members. They also established the Residents' Guidelines for Protecting the Natural Environment of Shirakawa-go World Heritage, based on the three principles of preservation: **prohibited the sale, renting, and demolishing of Gassho-style houses**, which were declared a valuable historic and tourism resource.
- The Society plays a leading role in landscape conservation activities in the village.
- Thanks to the advanced feature of the Residents' Guidelines, established half a century ago, **the area has been preserved and maintained solely by local residents without any outside capital.**

2.Circulation of tourism revenue

- The conservation of a World Heritage village, primarily through the replacement of thatched roofs, requires a budget of approximately US\$356,000 per year.
- Roofs are replaced on an approximately 30-year cycle. Since the cost of replacing one side of the roof is approximately US\$50,000 to US\$107,00, the owner receives a subsidy of 90% of the project cost from the local government of Shirakawa Village.

*The 90% subsidy includes subsidies from the national and prefectural governments.



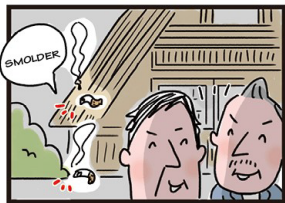
- Shirakawa Village has established a scheme to secure financial resources for the conservation of these World Heritage villages by setting aside **30% of tourist parking revenues as a fund.**
- Therefore, an innovative initiative is taken to **circulate part of the tourism income to the conservation of the World Heritage Site.**

3.Challenges facing tourism

- Since the area where the locals are living is registered as a World Heritage, life and tourism are combined.
- Over tourism issue: Tourist behavior that threatens the existence of the World Heritage site and creates stress on residents' lives is occurring.
(e.g.) Risk of fire (smoking on the street, littering cigarette butts), littering, trespassing on private property and unauthorized parking.
- Education on manners for foreign tourists with different cultures and values from those of Japan is necessary.

4.Promotion of responsible tourism

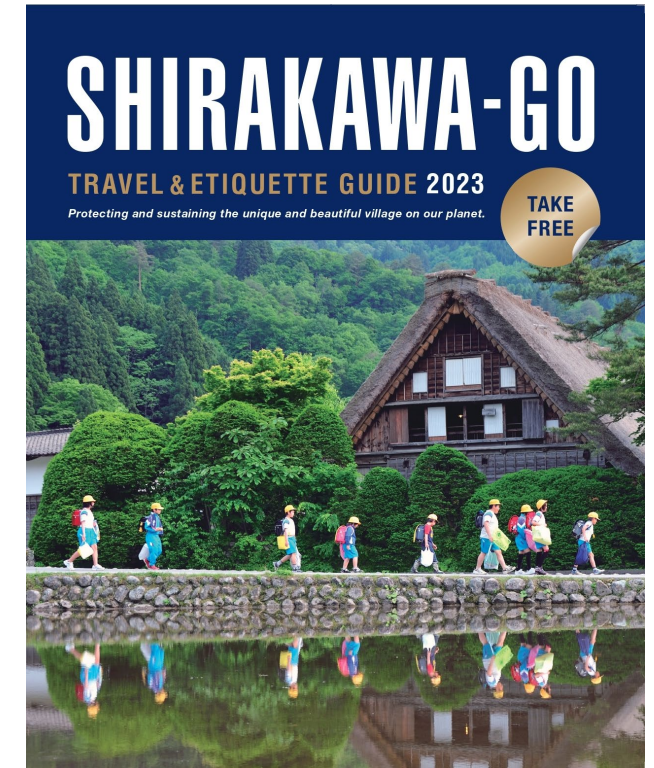
2017



2019



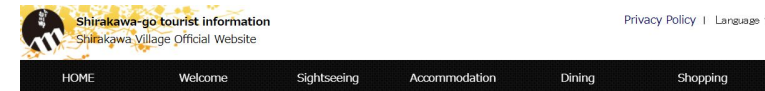
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4.Promotion of responsible tourism

- Shirakawa Village positioned etiquette measures as one of the strategies for developing a sustainable tourism destination, and set “Responsible Tourism” as the keyword for its initiatives.
- Shirakawa Village assumed that, as in the case of Hawaii, requesting responsible behavior toward tourists by providing specific actions and reasons would be a good model for Shirakawa Village to promote its tourism etiquette measures.
- The website of Responsible Tourism introduces five essential etiquettes to be aware of.

<https://www.vill.shirakawa.lg.jp/srt-en/>



Shirakawa-go Responsible Tourism

A style of traveling that respects the local lifestyles of the people.



Protecting and preserving the unique and beautiful village on our planet.





白川村
Shirakawa Village