

In early November, I went on a solo trip to northern Gifu! I started my 3-day trip in Kyoto, where I took the night bus to Takayama in Gifu.

Shirakawa-go is famous for its triangular houses with thatched roofs (合掌造り), which have layers and layers of straw up to 80 cm thick! This design is important for winter, as it can hold the weight of the snow until it slides off. Furthermore, it keeps the whole house warm when the hearth (囲炉裏) is heated because the warm air and smoke can travel up, then down the sides of the roof. Inside the houses, you can see how silk was made in the past by farming silkworms. Not only were houses interesting to see, but the village was also very beautiful too! Many people go to Shirakawago in the winter to see houses light up in the snow, but I think that the best time to visit is during autumn. The surrounding mountains were brightly coloured with orange and yellow from the changing leaves, and started to glow as the sun came out!

The next day I took the bus to Fukuji Onsen, one of the many onsen villages in Takayama. When I arrived, I met a local shop owner who offered to keep my bags at her onsen while I went hiking. I hiked up Fukuji-yama (1671.7 m), where I could see Hotakadake (穂高岳), the 3rd tallest mountain in Japan, and Hida Sanmyaku in the distance. Maybe one day, I can climb those mountains too! When I returned, I enjoyed the onsen at Isurugi-no-Yu and ate gohei mochi, which is the specialty food of the Chubu region.

I highly recommend visiting Shirakawa-go when you have the time! I will definitely remember this trip for the rest of my life!

