**Otsumago**

**The Place Between**

Otsumago stands between Tsumago (2 kilometers to the north), and Magome (8 kilometers to the south) on the River Otaru. Villages like this were known as *ai-no-shuku*, or “place between two post towns.” The “O” in the name Otsumago comes not from the word *ookii*, meaning “big,” but from *oku*, meaning “the inner part.” In writing the name of the town, however, the kanji character for “big” is used, as this is felt to be more auspicious.

Though small, the village is extremely picturesque. Of particular note are the three houses in a row at the upper end of the main street that are excellent examples of post-town architecture. They feature the typical plaster-covered earthen walls with projecting gables (to prevent the spread of fire) and protruding beams supporting an overhanging second floor. They are now guesthouses, and the present Crown Prince Akishino once stayed in one of them.