**Takehara City**

Takehara rose to fame during the Edo period (1603–1867) and Meiji era (1868–1912) as one of Japan’s leading salt and sake producers. The wealth of the town’s merchants during this time is reflected in the number of well-preserved merchant houses and warehouses in the historic district.

Takehara is located in a sheltered bay facing the Seto Inland Sea in the south-central part of Hiroshima Prefecture. It is blessed with bountiful nature and a warm climate typical of regions near the Seto Inland Sea. Rai Sanyo (1780–1832), a prominent local Confucian scholar, historian, artist, and poet, coined the term *sanshi suimei* (purple mountains; light shimmering on the water) to describe the scenery of the Seto Inland Sea from Takehara at dusk.

Takehara became a large-scale manufacturer of salt in the early Edo period. The town’s salt was shipped along two routes: to Osaka and then on to Edo (present-day Tokyo), and to Akita and Hokkaido prefectures in the north along the Sea of Japan in *kitamaebune* trading ships via the Kanmon Straits (separating Honshu and Kyushu). The ships returned with rice, which was also an important commodity during this period.

In 2019, Takehara was designated a Japan heritage site as a port of call for *kitamaebune* ships.

Because salt production was mainly a summer activity—involving the evaporation of seawater under the sun’s intense rays—merchants began to seek roles for their workers during the winter. Many began sake brewing.

Takehara is home to three well-established sake breweries, all of which have been in operation for more than 150 years. It is also the birthplace of Masataka Taketsuru (1894–1979), the founder of the Nikka Whisky Distilling Company.