

Toshijima Island

Walking around Toshijima Island and exploring its maze of alleyways gives the visitor a glimpse into the everyday life of this fishing community, including the traditional process of making salted *wakame* seaweed.

The sea has provided Toshijima locals with their livelihood for centuries. Since ancient times, the deity Hachiman has been worshipped by the fishing community. Many houses and boats bear the *marubachi* symbol—a circle with the Japanese character 八 (eight). The character is pronounced “hachi,” as in Hachiman. The mark is believed to protect fisherfolk from dangers at sea, as well as representing a prayer for plentiful catches. During January’s Hachiman Festival, fishermen repaint each symbol using ink carried from the Hachiman Shrine.

Local warlord Kuki Yoshitaka (1542–1600) launched his navy from here during the unification struggles in the sixteenth century, siding with the Toyotomi Clan. However, Kuki’s son Moritaka (1573–1632) joined the opposing side led by Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616). When Tokugawa defeated Toyotomi, Kuki’s son obtained a pardon for his father from the victor. However, before this news could reach him, Kuki Yoshitaka committed suicide. Legend has it that the blade he used was washed in the pond next to his grave on Toshijima.