

Jōmon Culture

【Kimono Industry Events】

The history of weaving in Tōkamachi stretches back two millennia. In premodern times, when families were confined to their homes during winter by the heavy snowfall, women spun thread and wove fabric for clothing. The locally made crêpe fabric, called Echigo *chijimi*, was of such high quality that it was used by members of the Tokugawa shogunate (1603-1868). The textiles industry continues to prosper today, and its representatives hold numerous events each year to promote local textiles.

Tōkamachi Kimono Festival (May 3)

The Tōkamachi Kimono Festival features various events along the streets in the city center, such as free tea ceremonies and a kimono fair. Many visitors dress in kimono for the occasion. The festival coincides with the coming-of-age ceremony (*seijinshiki*) that is traditionally held in January. In Tōkamachi, the ceremony is held in spring to avoid the harsh winters. Kimono are available for rent at the festival but must be reserved in advance.

Tōkamachi Kimono Gottaku (mid-May)

The Tōkamachi Kimono Gottaku is a rare chance to peek behind the scenes of the local textile industry. For a few days in May, the major textile producers of Tōkamachi open their doors to visitors. Participants are able to observe the artisans through the entire process of weaving, fabric preparation, dyeing, stenciling, embroidery, maintenance, and other tasks associated with making a kimono. Reservations are required.

Kimono Town Quilt Exhibition (mid- to late May)

The Kimono Town Quilt Exhibition awards prizes for the best quilts in multiple categories. Submissions of quilts are accepted from across Japan. All submissions are displayed during the exhibition, which also includes quilt-making demonstrations by members of quilting workshops from around Japan.