

## **Akamakan Tourist Center**

The Akamakan Tourist Center is in Akamajuku, a post town on the Karatsu Kaido highway—a major route through Fukuoka during the Edo period (1603–1867). In the area around Akamakan are shops and townhouses in a mix of styles, mainly from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The modern tourist center was constructed to resemble an Edo-period merchant house, using materials salvaged from traditional-style buildings.

The Akamakan Tourist Center is staffed by local volunteers, some of whom speak English. Visitors can dress in a kimono and participate in a tea ceremony. The center offers a range of kimonos for men and women in all sizes. Visitors are welcome to stroll the old-fashioned streets dressed in a kimono. Reservations for these activities should be made at least three days in advance.

The tourist center has maps of the local area and pamphlets about the history and attractions of the Munakata area, rental bicycles, and free Wi-Fi. There is a cafe and a shop selling local crafts and specialties, such as rice crackers and soy sauce. In the courtyard is one of the two remaining wells in Akamajuku. There were seven wells in the area during the Edo period, drawing water from an underground spring. The other working well is at the Katsuya Sake Brewery next to Akamakan. The brewery, which uses the well water, supplies sake for Shinto rituals at Munakata Taisha.

The Karatsu Kaido was the main route connecting Karatsu in Saga with Kitakyushu in the Edo period. Akamajuku was one of 21 post towns in the area, where travelers could find lodgings, have a meal, and shop.