

Tsuyazaki Sengen Historic District

Tsuyazaki Sengen is a historic district in Fukutsu with well-preserved merchant houses from the Meiji era (1868–1912). The area gets its name from the large number of houses that once lined the narrow streets (*sengen* means “a thousand houses”). Some of the historic buildings are open to visitors. The town flourished as the center of the local salt industry until salt production came under government control in 1905. The Tsuyazaki salt fields were closed in 1911.

Traditional businesses

Ai no Ie (“Indigo House”) is a former indigo dyeing workshop, built in 1901. It is now open to the public as a folk museum. Next to Ai no Ie stands the family-run Toyomura Sake Brewery, founded in 1874. Visitors can enter the Meiji-era storefront. The brewery at the back of the property is open to the public during events and festivals. The family-run Harada workshop has been making *Tsuyazaki ningyo*, hand-painted molded clay dolls, for over 240 years. The Harada family makes the figures for the annual Tsuyazaki Gion Yamakasa Festival floats.

The tourist information center, Tsuyazaki Sengen Nagomi, is designed to resemble a traditional merchant house. It has exhibitions and displays about the area’s history, along with pamphlets and maps.

A legendary shrine

Namiori-jinja, a Shinto shrine in the heart of the Tsuyazaki Sengen district, venerates three deities believed to protect fishermen. According to a local legend, three fishermen from Tsuyazaki were once caught in a heavy storm. They prayed for safety, and three deities appeared, who guided the fishermen safely to an island just off the coast. After several days, the storm subsided, and the fishermen returned safely to port. The fishermen found three stones on their ship, which they believed represented the deities. They took the stones back to Tsuyazaki and founded Namiori-jinja to enshrine the stones and venerate the deities who had saved them.

A stone statue in the shrine precincts depicts a “surfing rabbit” standing on the crest of a wave. The statue was donated to the shrine by local community members in 1927—a year of the rabbit, according to the Chinese zodiac.

The shrine is the starting point of the Tsuyazaki Gion Yamakasa Festival each July. This festival dates back over 300 years. It features a colorful race between teams carrying ornate wooden floats through narrow streets.