

## **The History of Shiogama**

Shiogama's history has long been entwined and influenced by the city's proximity to the sea's bounty and by its convenient location between the important cities of Sendai and Matsushima. The city's name means "salt cauldron" and is thought to be connected to a Shinto salt-making ritual that is still held yearly at Okama Jinja Shrine.

The Shiogama area has been inhabited since the Jomon period (10,000–300 BCE) and has been an important port since the Nara period (710–794). Under the Date family rule during the Edo period (1603–1867), Shiogama was the main port for the Sendai domain (which encompassed today's Miyagi Prefecture) and was a bustling gateway for merchants and visitors.

The waters around Shiogama have supported the fishing industry for centuries. The Oyashio and Kuroshio currents, which meet off the coast, bring a constant supply of plankton; and this rich feeding ground attracts a wide variety of fish to this area of the Pacific Ocean. To this day, the city is said to have Japan's highest density of sushi restaurants, which serve freshly caught local fish.

Shiogama Jinja Shrine, perched on a slope overlooking Matsushima Bay, has also helped the city to flourish. For centuries, the shrine has attracted visitors wishing to pray to the deity believed to have taught people how to make salt, a highly prized commodity essential to the local economy.

Today, Shiogama is still a busy port city, as the Shiogama City Fish Market is one of Japan's top markets for fresh tuna. Visitors can experience other regional flavors and Shiogama's history by exploring long-established shops and sake breweries in the Monzenmachi area. From there, visitors can walk up the hill to Shiogama Jinja and Shiwahiko Jinja and pay their respects to the area's guardian deities.