

Chirimen Kaido

Cultural Heritage

Chirimen Kaido is a historically important merchant street and distribution hub named for the region's prosperous silk crepe (*chirimen*) industry. Silk crepe is woven using a special technique that was introduced to the Kaya region (now part of the town of Yosano) in 1722 by three men who had learned the secrets of weaving fine silk textiles in the city of Kyoto. Chirimen Kaido soon became a bustling commercial center, and Kaya grew considerably in the following years.

The street originally led to the gates of a sixteenth-century castle, and its zigzag layout was meant to slow down and confuse approaching enemies. Its generous width despite predating cars is evidence that it once carried a large volume of foot traffic.

Architecture

Architecture from the Edo period (1603–1867) to the early twentieth century can be seen in approximately 120 of the 260 buildings lining Chirimen Kaido. In 2005, the area was designated an Important Preservation District for Groups of Traditional Buildings.

Points of Interest

Izutsuya Ryokan, established in 1890 and rebuilt in 1933, has the distinction of being the only inn still operating along Chirimen Kaido. The Former Bito Residence, built in 1863 as the home and storefront of a silk merchant family, is now open to the public. The Former Kaya Town Hall building was constructed in 1929 following the Kita Tango Earthquake, and is an example of Western-style architecture. As you stroll down the street, listen for the clacking of looms in textile workshops that still operate in the neighborhood.