

Utazu Komachi

Utazu has been a prosperous port town since the Muromachi period (1336–1573). A part of the old town south of the town hall is called Komachi, where many historic shrines, temples, and traditional merchants' family homes (*machiya*) can still be seen along the streets. The long, thin merchant's homes, which are distinguished by their narrow entrances, were mainly built in the mid-1800s and are joined by newer Western-style buildings here and there. Among the nine Buddhist temples in Komachi, the most notable is Goshoji, the 78th sacred site on the 88-temple Shikoku Pilgrimage. Another notable religious site is Ubushina Shrine, a Shinto sanctuary with more than 1,200 years of history. Komachi is best explored on foot, with a stop or two at the old shops that sell *ohagi*, a traditional sweet treat made from mochi rice cake and red bean paste. The neighborhood attracts crowds every March, when a festival is held to celebrate Hinamatsuri (Dolls Festival).