**Nishiyama Inari Jinja Shrine**

The vermilion torii gates on the mountain slope near the Shimoncho entrance to the historic Kumagawa-juku post town mark the path toward Nishiyama Inari Jinja Shrine. The small shrine located further up the slope is dedicated to Inari, a deity of agriculture and commerce.

Nishiyama Inari Shrine has been a worship site for many centuries. It was a popular place to pray for success in business and was often visited by people involved in the shipping trade. The date when the shrine was built is not known, but oral history passed down in the area suggests that it was sometime between 1680 and 1760. The spirit of the deity is said to have been brought directly from Fushimi Inari Taisha, the head Inari shrine located in Kyoto. Just like Fushimi Inari Taisha, each autumn Nishiyama Inari Shrine holds an *ohitaki* ritual in which wooden sticks with people’s prayers written on them are burned in a sacred fire. This demonstrates that the connection between post towns such as Kumagawa-juku and the old capital of Kyoto involved an exchange of religious traditions and culture in addition to trading in food and other goods.

When visiting Nishiyama Inari Shrine, please note that the path may be obstructed by fallen trees and that hiking should be avoided in poor weather.