

Magari (Bend in the Road)

Residents of Kumagawa-juku refer to this L-shaped bend in the road between the Shimoncho and Nakancho areas as the Magari (“the Bend”). It is considered a remnant of military defenses from sometime between the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries when a mountain castle overlooked the town. Similar constructs called *masugata* (literally “box shape”) were used in castle towns throughout the country to slow down potential invaders and obscure their line of sight, preventing them from easily charging forward. In addition to defensive purposes, during the relatively peaceful Edo period (1603–1867) the Magari was used as a communal place where regional laws and orders were posted on official signposts.

In other areas, *masugata* were often built at town entrances, but the Magari of Kumagawa-juku is in a more central location. Since the western side of Kumagawa-juku is relatively newer, it is believed that the town may have expanded in that direction from its original layout, meaning that the Magari used to lie at the western edge.