

Kumagawa-Juku Post Town

Kumagawa-juku was a prosperous post town that facilitated the transport of goods along the Wakasa Kaido road, a major trade route that connected the Wakasa region with the capital in Kyoto. In 1589, a government edict exempted the town from a number of taxes, which stimulated the development of businesses such as shipping agencies, porter stations, shops, and lodging facilities. Kumagawa-juku is a nationally designated Important Preservation District for Groups of Traditional Buildings, and its historical atmosphere provides a glimpse into what everyday life may have been like in a bustling post town between 1750 and 1867. The town is divided into three areas: Kamincho, Nakancho, and Shimoncho.

Notable Sites

1. Kumagawa Guardhouse

Government officials manning the guardhouse monitored the road in and out of the post town, inspecting travel permits and levying taxes on transported goods. It has been restored to its original appearance, and the interior recreates a scene showing inspectors at work with a variety of weapons displayed in the back. The guardhouse is designated a Tangible Cultural Property by the town of Wakasa.

2. Former Residence of Henmi Kanbei

This property once belonged to Henmi Kanbei (1842–1909), the first mayor of Kumagawa. It represents the type of *machiya* townhouses that were favored by wealthy residents of the post town. The property underwent extensive restoration to serve as an example of how traditional buildings can be preserved for future generations. At present, it contains a lodging facility, a café, and a souvenir shop.

3. Kumagawa-Juku Museum (Shukubakan)

The building was originally constructed in 1940 and served as the Kumagawa Village Office. In 1997, it became a museum dedicated to the history and culture of Kumagawa-juku and the Saba Kaido (“Mackerel Road”) network of trade routes that connected Wakasa and Kyoto. Exhibits include archive documents, photographs, panel displays, and a variety of items related to everyday life and commercial activities of the old post town.

4. Historic Residence of the Ogino Family

For generations, the Ogino family operated a prosperous business called Kuramiya that specialized in the transportation of goods. The main house of the property was built around 1811 and is the oldest remaining traditional *machiya* townhouse in Kumagawa-juku. Other notable architectural features include an adjacent baggage storehouse and loft sleeping quarters for employees. The residence is a nationally designated Important Cultural Property.

5. Murata Museum

This building was once the home of Murata Torakichi, the founder of Kikunoi, a restaurant with three Michelin stars that was established in Kyoto in 1912. With the assistance of Torakichi's grandson, the third-generation owner of Kikunoi, the former residence was renovated and became a facility dedicated to the food culture of Wakasa that flourished along the Saba Kaido trade routes.

6. Yoshichi Rest Area

The building functions as a rest facility that is also used to hold exhibitions, hands-on classes, lectures, and other events. It is named after a man called Yoshichi, who is considered the epitome of filial piety in Kumagawa-juku. Yoshichi lived in the area with his wife, and although they were extremely poor, they never failed to provide food for their aging parents. In the end, they were richly rewarded for their respect and devotion by the lord of the Obama domain.