

Kumagawa-Juku Post Town: Shimoncho Area

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. The historic town is divided into three areas: Kamincho, Nakancho, and Shimoncho.

Shimoncho Area

This is the area of Kumagawa-juku closest to the port town of Obama. It provided lodging and accommodations to many of the travelers who stayed overnight on the journey along the Wakasa Kaido. A stone monument near the Shimoncho entrance is dedicated to Yoshichi, a man who is considered a paragon of filial piety in Kumagawa-juku. Yoshichi and his wife never allowed their aging parents to go hungry, despite being extremely poor themselves. A nearby rest facility named after Yoshichi is used to host exhibitions, hands-on classes, and lectures about Wakasa culture.

Shimoncho is the location of the former residence of Murata Torakichi, who established the three-star Michelin restaurant Kikunoi in Kyoto in 1912. With the assistance of Torakichi's grandson, the third-generation owner of Kikunoi, the building was renovated and reopened as the Murata Museum, a place that introduces the food culture of the Wakasa region.

There is an L-shaped bend in the road called the Magari ("the Bend") between the Shimoncho and Nakancho areas. Similar constructs were often built in castle towns for defensive purposes, intended to slow potential attackers. A mountain castle was located near Kumagawa-juku for a brief period sometime during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and it is believed that the bend was situated at the western edge of the town at the time. The current location of the Magari suggests that Shimoncho was developed comparatively later than the other areas of Kumagawa-juku. Nevertheless, it has a similar atmosphere and contains many traditional townhouses, most of which are now private residences.