

Second-Floor Exhibition: Daily Life in a Post Town

The exhibits on this floor are related to everyday life and business activities in Kumagawa-juku, which was a thriving post town with shipping agencies, porter stations, various shops, and lodging facilities.

Clothing and Tools Used by Travelers and Porters

Travelers that passed through the town in the Edo period (1603–1867) often wore hats, shoes, and raincoats made of straw, and examples of such apparel can be found next to tools used for trade and shipping. Poles and woven baskets were used by porters for carrying heavy loads on their shoulders, and even heavier loads were handled by cattle. The large wooden harness allowed goods to be carried by oxen. It is decorated with mother-of-pearl inlay and may have been used for special occasions like transporting annual tax payments. Hung beside it are straw shoes that were woven for the oxen, serving to protect the hooves and provide traction on slippery footing.

Other Business-Related and Household Items

Some of the other commerce-related objects include wooden signboards from several stores, a pharmacy sign listing some of the medicines on offer, as well as boxes and jars for carrying various goods. During winter snows, wooden sleds were used for transportation. An example of an everyday household item particular to Kumagawa-juku is the *imoarai*, a waterwheel-based, barrel-like device for peeling potatoes that utilizes the force of water flowing in the stone-paved Maegawa channel that runs the entire length of the town.

Kudzu Starch Production Process and Tools

Part of the second floor is dedicated to kudzu starch, a regional specialty in Kumagawa. Items on display include trays, basins, crushing and cutting tools, a kudzu root, and a sample of the final product from 100 years ago. Information panels and photos provide an explanation of the steps involved in the manufacturing process and reproduce historical records mentioning the high quality of Kumagawa-juku starch.

Kumagawa-Juku Present and Past

A large diorama recreates a bird's-eye view of present-day Kumagawa-juku and the surrounding landscape. Two historical maps, one from the late Edo period (1603–1867) and one from 1878, list the names of businesses and families that operated and resided

in the post town and offer insight into how the layout has changed over time. Moments of everyday life are preserved in numerous black and white photos, the oldest of which date to the Taisho era (1912–1926).

The various documents, tools, craft items, clothes, and other exhibits paint a vivid picture of life in Kumagawa-juku over the last several centuries. Be it a firefighter corps banner, a ceremonial staff used in festivals, traditional headgear worn by *ashigaru* foot soldiers, decorative roof tiles, or even a Western-style phonograph, each piece speaks to a time past, now carefully preserved at the museum.