

Kajiyamachi—Exploring Hitoyoshi's Traditional Blacksmith District

The sharp ring of hammers striking iron once filled the air of Kajiyamachi, the blacksmith district of Hitoyoshi in the Edo period (1603–1867). Although there are no working forges in Kajiyamachi today, the district has been preserved, and the main street is now lined with traditional family-run businesses. Signs (mostly in Japanese) along the street and in some of the properties explain the distinguishing features of merchant homes and aspects of local culture, such as Unsun Karuta, a traditional card game once played by Hitoyoshi's blacksmiths.

Touring a soy sauce brewery

Kamada Jozozo is a soy sauce and miso producer operating out of a merchant home from the Taisho era (1912–1926). The property has been renovated over the years but retains many of its original features and design elements. Visitors can take a free tour of the brewery to learn about the production of soy sauce and miso.

Tea and cultural experiences

Tateyama Shoten is a historic merchant home and tea shop with a tasting space overlooking a traditional teahouse garden. The Tateyama family have been purveyors of tea since 1877. They offer tea brewing workshops, ikebana flower arranging, matcha tasting, and tea ceremony experiences that can include wearing a kimono.

Unsun Karuta, the ancient card game

Visitors to Kajiyamachi can learn about Unsun Karuta, a game played with 75 cards across five suits. Unsun Karuta evolved from a game introduced by Portuguese traders in the sixteenth century. The card game became popular across Japan, but due to the gambling potential of the game, it was outlawed under a series of conservative measures (the Kansei Reforms) implemented in the late eighteenth century by the Edo shogunate. Despite these measures, Unsun Karuta continued to be played in Hitoyoshi Kuma and has survived to this day. At Unsun Karuta no Ie in Kajiyamachi, visitors can play and learn about the game, which is designated an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property.