

## **Misu Kōmon Locks**

Misu Kōmon is a lock gate system that was built in 1929 to facilitate the passage of boats between the Horikawa and Ujigawa Rivers. Because of the embankments on both rivers, the Horikawa and Ujigawa have substantially different water levels, and boats need to be lifted or lowered to pass between them. To do this, the water level in the chamber between the two lock gates is raised or decreased until it reaches the target river's water level. This is the same engineering principle as the Panama Canal locks.

At the time of its construction, Misu Kōmon was considered an architectural marvel, and more than 20,000 cargo boats passed through it during its first year of operation. The lock gates allowed trade to continue between Kyoto and Osaka through Fushimi even after construction of new flood prevention embankments permanently changed the height of the Ujigawa River. The completion of Misu Kōmon also had larger geopolitical significance—it facilitated the buildup of Japanese military might during the years of imperial expansion before World War II. After the war, development of the rail system made water transport obsolete, and the locks ceased operation in 1962.

Misu Kōmon was fully restored and renovated in 2000. Although boats do not pass through the lock gates today, it is recognized as a key part of modern Japan's industrial heritage. The nearby Misu Kōmon Museum was built to explain the role of the lock gates in the history of Fushimi as an inland port town.