

History of Tosashimizu (1)

A crucial port

The coastal villages in what is now the city of Tosashimizu have traditionally been difficult to reach over land, and so have been particularly dependent on the ocean. From around the fifteenth century onward, the coast on both sides of Cape Ashizuri developed into a key port in the shipping lane connecting both Kyoto, the capital at the time, and the mercantile center of Osaka with Ming China and Southeast Asia. Trading crews docked in Tosashimizu's deep inlets, which provided shelter from the elements, to rest and take on supplies. Shimizu ("clear water"), the town's original name, refers to a local spring that attracted parched seafarers.

Flourishing fisheries

In the early Edo period (1603–1868), wealthy and well-equipped fishermen from Kishu (present-day Wakayama Prefecture, on Honshu, east of Shikoku) paid the lords of Tosa for the right to start fishing for skipjack tuna (*katsuo*) off Cape Ashizuri. They taught local people how to catch open-water fish with lures and how to make *katsuobushi*: dried, fermented, and smoked fish flakes, long considered an essential ingredient in Japanese cuisine and now a Tosashimizu specialty.