

Kawaminato Lighthouse and the Former Kozuchi River Port

A timber lighthouse from the late Edo period (1603–1867) marks the site of Kozuchi Minato, a former port on the Nagara River that served Mino's merchant district. Kozuchi Minato was established by the samurai Kanamori Nagachika (1524–1608) at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Kanamori governed the Hida region in the mountains to the north of Mino and was given the lands around the city of Mino (then known as Kozuchi) as a reward for supporting warlord Tokugawa Ieyasu in the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600. Their decisive victory signaled an end to more than a century of civil war and social upheaval and ushered in the union of the country under the Tokugawa shogunate.

An invaluable transportation hub

Materials and products such as timber from the Hida region, knife and sword blades from Seki, and paper from Mino were loaded at Kozuchi Minato and shipped to wholesalers downstream, then on to markets in larger cities such as Osaka and Kyoto. The port had berths for 40 riverboats and was a major transportation hub until a rail line between Mino and the city of Gifu opened in 1911. Compared with road transportation through the mountainous inland region, the rivers offered a faster way to transport large quantities of goods to seaside ports on Ise Bay in Mie Prefecture.

Kawaminato Lighthouse

Rapids at various sections of the Nagara River could be deadly, particularly after heavy rains. Sumiyoshi Shrine was established at the port during the Edo period (1603–1867) and was used by river traders to pray for safe journeys. Kawaminato Lighthouse stands on the riverbank in front of Sumiyoshi Shrine as a beacon for boats and to indicate the location of the shrine. The wooden lighthouse dates from the late Edo period and is still operational. It stands 9 meters high on a stone foundation. Cobblestone steps lead down from the lighthouse to the former boat moorings. The two large stone *toro* lanterns at the top of the steps date from the early nineteenth century.

Mino Bridge and Ogurayama Castle

A few minutes by foot from the lighthouse, a red suspension bridge crosses the river. Mino Bridge is the oldest extant modern suspension bridge in Japan, completed in 1916. When it was built, it was one of the longest suspension bridges in the country, with a span of 116 meters. Since the 1960s it has been closed to traffic and is restricted to pedestrians and cyclists.

Mino Bridge is located at the base of the former Ogurayama Castle, built in 1601 on Mt. Ogura as the retirement residence of Kanamori Nagachika (1524–1608). Kanamori died just seven years later, and when his only living heir, Nagamitsu, died in 1611 at the age of seven, the Kanamori line ended. Without an heir, the surviving family members lost their social standing as samurai and had to forfeit their property. An observatory on the top of Mt. Ogura affords views of the river on one side and the city of Mino on the other.