

## **Site of Namaike Fort**

In the tumultuous mid-sixteenth century, when rival warlords fought for control throughout Japan, a group of samurai merchants and pirates known as the Matsuura Band operated out of northwestern Kyushu, including the islands of Iki and Goto. They traded and raided along the Korean coast and did business in mainland Japan, accumulating considerable profits along with a measure of political independence.

One of the most influential Matsuura operatives was the Iki-based Minamoto no Ichi, who is thought to have built the hilltop Namaike Fort in the central part of the island. The stronghold was designed as a refuge of last resort, and was probably not manned at all times. Its main compound, a flattened 150-by-100-meter area, was protected by three layers of earthworks and a double dry moat. Access to the compound was via four narrow earthen bridges over the moat, one on each side, built in plain sight to draw enemies into a tight space where they would be easy to target from above.

The moat and earthen bridges remain almost entirely intact today; parts of the fort's walls can also be made out around the top of the hill. The fort site is easily accessible on foot from a nearby parking lot.