

## **Kunitomo Gun Museum**

The Kunitomo Gun Museum is a place to explore Nagahama's history as one of Japan's earliest centers of firearms production. About 50 antique weapons are on display, most of which date to the late Edo period (1603–1867). The weapons in its collection range from practical battlefield muskets to ornately engraved showpieces.

Firearms were introduced to Japan from Europe in the mid-sixteenth century, and they soon played a pivotal role in warfare. Kunitomo, part of what is now the city of Nagahama, quickly established a reputation for its gunsmiths. By the seventeenth century, some 500 firearms manufacturers lived and worked in Kunitomo, and the area continued to supply government armories for the next 200 years.

A section of the museum is dedicated to the life and work of Kunitomo Ikkansai (1778–1840), a gunsmith and inventor who is sometimes called “the Da Vinci of the Edo period.” Ikkansai's work extended beyond firearms to include projection mirrors and the first Japanese-made reflective telescope, which he used to observe the surfaces of the sun and moon. Some of Ikkansai's astronomical drawings and inventions are on display at the museum.