

Kanmon Kisen Co., Ltd.

The Kanmon Strait, the narrow and turbulent stretch of water that separates Honshu to the east and Kyushu to the west, was for many centuries a formidable obstacle to trade, travel, and communication between the islands. As the cities of Shimonoseki (on Honshu) and Moji (on Kyushu) began to prosper and grow during the Meiji era (1868–1912), demand emerged for a reliable way to cross the strait between them, but a bridge or under-ocean tunnel was still a technological impossibility. In September 1889, Ishida Heikichi (1853–1929), a local business leader and later member of the House of Representatives, inaugurated the first ferry route across the strait. In 1896, Kanmon Kisen Co., Ltd. was formed by Doi Jūkichi (1853–1936), and a new era of cross-strait transportation was born.

Ferry Services

More than a century after its founding, the company still operates regular passenger ferry services, including the Kanmon Ferry, which connects Karato Pier in Shimonoseki with Marine Gate in Moji. Other boats serve the historic island of Ganryūjima (Funajima).

The ferry ride between Karato and Mojikō takes about five minutes. Ferries depart from both ports and run every 20 minutes from 6:00 a.m. (7:00 a.m. on weekends and holidays) to 9:00 p.m. The ferry between Shimonoseki and Ganryūjima makes two round trips every hour from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The Mojikō-to-Ganryūjima service has similar hours but operates only on weekends.

The captains of these ferries expertly navigate the strong currents of the Kanmon Strait while avoiding the massive vessels that travel across their paths. If the weather allows, riding on the exposed top deck of the ferry affords the best view of the water and the port cities on both sides of the strait.