

inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List

Aikawa-Tsurushi Gold and Silver Mine

From the late 16th to the mid-19th century, this mine was the largest gold and silver mine in Japan.

It is a globally rare heritage site which has remains showing the development of mining technologies for hard-rock lode deposits and of settlements, together with former mining towns.

Nishimikawa Placer Gold Mine

This mine is presumed to be the oldest placer gold mine in Sado.

Many of historical remains from the Edo Period showing placer gold collection systems still can be observed here.



Placer gold
Nishimikawa Placer Gold Mine
[Privately owned]



Gold ore
Aikawa-Tsurushi Gold and Silver Mine
[Property of Golden Sado Inc.]

Historical materials remaining in abundance ~Sado Mines picture scrolls / technical books~

In Sado, under the control of the Tokugawa Shogunate, huge numbers of materials were made for report to the Shogunate. Approximately 150 of the picture scrolls of Sado Gold and Silver Mines, which can still be seen in Japan and abroad, technical books for mining, and other historical materials about Sado convey detailed mining operations and mining techniques at the time of operation. They are also crucial for the interpretation and understanding of the remains on site.



Picture Scrolls of Sado Gold and Silver Mines(18-19th Century)



A picture of how to classify ore grade
("Kinginzan Taigaisho": Technical book of Sado, 18th Century)



What is a World Heritage?



A Shared Treasure for Humanity

A World Heritage Site is a place that is a shared treasure for humanity, brought about by nature and mankind, and that has been passed down from the past to the present. These sites include places that are endangered by war, natural disasters, and environmental pollutions. Under the protection of international cooperation (across borders), people all over the world should preserve World Heritage Sites for future generations.

UNESCO and the World Heritage Site

UNESCO is a specialized agency of the United Nations, and the World Heritage Centre is located within its headquarters. Based on the World Heritage Convention, they created the framework of international cooperation to preserve and pass down World Heritage Sites, and calls for the protection of World Heritage Sites.



Kirarium Sado, Sado Island Gold Mines Visitor Center

Your journey to the "Sado Island Gold Mines" begins here.

This facility serves as a gateway to the "Sado Island Gold Mines", providing information about the site and tips for visiting. The exhibition room is equipped with large screens, information panels and replicas that explain in simple terms the value and attraction of the "Sado Island Gold Mines". A Tourist Information Desk is also available, offering bike rentals, guided tours, and apps to help explore the surrounding area.

Address: 18-1, Aikawa Sanchome-Hamamachi, Sado, Niigata 952-1562

About 50 minutes by car from Ryotsu Port and 1 hour and 15 minutes by car from Ogi Port.

Tel: +81(0)259-74-2215

Open: 8:30 AM 5:00 PM Last admission at 4:30 PM.

Closed: December 29 through January 3

Admission Fee: 300 JPY for adults, 150 JPY for ages 7-15

Groups (15 people or more): 250 JPY for adults, 100 JPY for ages 7-15

Your cooperation in the preservation and use of this World Heritage Site is highly appreciated.

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For more information,
please see the website

Sado Island Gold Mines

https://www.sado-goldmine.jp/en/



UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE

Sado Island Gold Mines



Doyu-no-warito Opencut Site
Large-scale opencut site excavated by hand

The "Sado Island Gold Mines" has been officially

Path to Inscription on the World Heritage List

1997: Grassroots organizations launch initiatives for the inscription of the "Sado Island Gold Mines" as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

2006: Niigata Prefecture and Sado City launch initiatives for inscription.

2010: The "Sado Island Gold Mines" is added to the World Heritage Tentative List.

2022: The Japanese government selects the "Sado Island Gold Mines" as a candidate for nomination as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and submits a nomination dossier to the World Heritage Center.

2023: The revised nomination dossier is submitted, followed by the on-site evaluation mission by ICOMOS, an advisory body to UNESCO.

July 27, 2024: UNESCO's 46th World Heritage Committee inscribes the "Sado Island Gold Mines" on the World Heritage List.

The Value of the "Sado Island Gold Mines" as a UNESCO World Heritage Site

The "Sado Island Gold Mines" represents a unique and precious cultural heritage site in Asia, where advanced manual mining and smelting techniques were practiced for over 250 years, from the late 16th to the mid-19th century, during a period when mechanization of mining was progressively emerging in other parts of the world.

The management system and social organization established by the Tokugawa Shogunate on Sado Island, from the 17th century to the mid-19th century, allowed for the extraction and processing of significant amounts of high-quality gold that met global standards during the 17th century. This is proved in the mining area and settlement organization.

The Gold of Sado Island: Backbone of the Tokugawa Shogunate's Finances ~The Mining Town of Unprecedented Success~

Gold mined on Sado Island was used to mint koban coins. This was unique among domestic mines in Japan. The koban coins were brought to Edo, where they formed the backbone of the Tokugawa Shogunate's finances.

The Shogunate placed great importance on the gold mines of Sado Island. As a result, it made significant investments and implemented measures to improve the working environment, enabling gold production to be carried out efficiently over a long period of time.

In particular, Aikawa Town, once a tiny fishing village, became a center for mining operations. When gold was discovered, Aikawa Town was further developed into a prosperous mining town with a systematic land allotment and well-planned streets. The town became one of the country's largest, with a population of up to 50,000 people.



Drawing of Aikawa from the Edo Period
("Okamatsu Bugyo ryoko zu"
Magistrate Okamatsu's travel, Property of Daian-ji Temple)



"Sado Koban" coin
[Dutch National Numismatic
Collection, Amsterdam]