

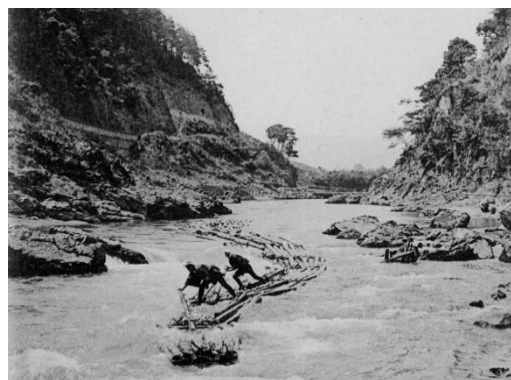
Hozu River

保津川



Transport on the Hozu River

The Hozu River, flowing 13 kilometers south out of the wooded mountains west of Kyoto, has been a vital waterway in the region for more than 1,200 years. Initially used to transport timber, the river played a vital role in bringing goods to Kyoto and, eventually, to Osaka. The water transport system was used until the end of the nineteenth century, when it was supplanted by rail transport.



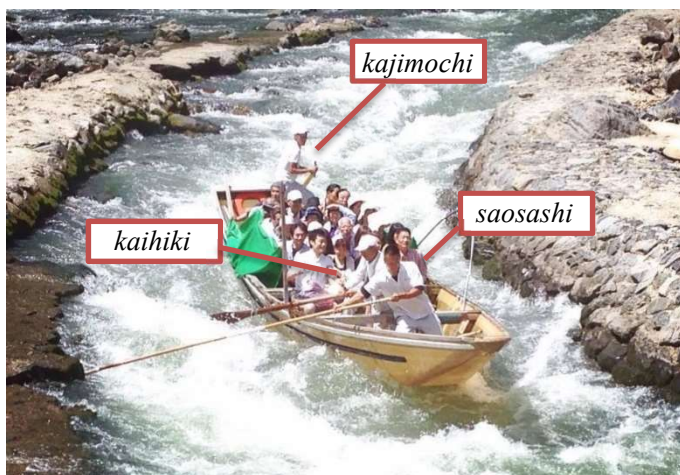
The earliest recorded use of the river dates to 784, when skilled raftsmen called *ikadashi* used the river to transport lumber to the new capital of Nagaokakyo, in what is now southwestern Kyoto Prefecture. It was not until in 1606, when the riverbed was dredged, that passage by boat became possible. The dredging was spearheaded by the merchant Suminokura Ryōi (1554–1614), who had amassed a great deal of wealth through trade with neighboring countries, including what is now Vietnam. By financing the five-month project, Ryōi facilitated the emergence of a domestic transport business that benefited farmers, merchants, and the local rulers. The boats that plied the Hozu River carried timber, goods, and rice from Tamba (now Kameoka) to the city of Kyoto. Today, those boats carry passengers rather than cargo, but the transportation business continues unbroken.



Even after the Hozu River was opened for passage by boat in the seventeenth century, the local *ikadashi* could not be persuaded to abandon the use of their rafts. Instead, Ryōi brought in boatbuilders and *sendō* (boatmen) to Arashiyama to teach the local farmers. To navigate the river, the boatmen developed a specialized boating method with three positions that has remained unchanged since its conception 400 years ago.

Sightseeing on the Hozu River

Navigating the sharp turns and rapid currents of the Hozu River requires a specialized boating method with boatmen in three positions: the *kaihiki*, *kajimochi*, and *saosashi*. The *kaihiki*, or rower, sits toward the front of the boat; the *saosashi* stands at the bow with a long bamboo pole (*sao*) to push the boat away from rocks; and the *kajimochi* is positioned at the back of the boat, where he can control the rudder (*kaji*) and make course corrections.



As fewer and fewer goods were transported on the Hozu River, the boatmen shifted from moving cargo to moving people. The river became a popular destination for visiting royalty, in particular members of the British royal family. In 1881, Prince Albert Victor (1864–1892), grandson of Queen Victoria, rode down the river with his younger brother George (1865–1936), who would later become King George V of England. King George's son, Prince Edward VIII (1894–1972), himself visited in 1922, and several more members of the royal family have visited since. Purportedly, they regarded a trip down the Hozu River as being second only to visiting Mt. Fuji. In 1901 and 1902, renowned British photographer Herbert Ponting (1870–1935) captured the Hozu River boatmen as they ferried passengers down the river, and along with the repeated royal visits, these photographs brought international attention to the area.

A trip down the Hozu can be made at any time of the year. Cherry blossoms decorate the ravine in spring, and scores of Japanese maples color the mountainside in autumn. The spray of the rapids offers relief from the heat in summer, and in winter, a trip through the icy waters is made cozy by warm stoves and tents arranged on the boats.



[Address]
2 Shimo Nakajima Hozu-Cho Kameoka, Kyoto Prefecture
[Price]
Regular boat: Adult 4,100 yen, Children (4 years of age – elementary school students) 2,700 yen *both include tax
[Closed]
Year-end, New Year Holidays and some designated days for safety inspection
[Access]
8-minute walk from Kameoka Station on the JR Sagano Line
[Website]
<https://www.hozugawakudari.jp/>



国土交通省
観光庁

この英語解説文は観光庁の地域観光資源の多言語解説整備支援事業で作成しました。
This English-language text was created by the Japan Tourism Agency.