

Minamata Disease Municipal Museum

Studying the Occurrence of a Terrible Disease to Help
Create a Better Future for the Region
Respect Life – Learn From Mistakes – Live Life Fully

-Teaching the World from the Lessons Learnt From Minamata Disease -

The Minamata Disease Museum was built with the aim of acquiring and preserving valuable data related to Minamata disease, a pollution-caused illness. The memories of this Terrible disease would not fade away and the lessons and experiences of this disease may be conveyed to the world. In order to have no one else suffer from the terrible consequences of Minamata disease again, the Minamata Disease Municipal Museum offers displays on the history and current status of the disease as well as the pain and discrimination that Minamata disease victims had to endure. Talks by storytellers are also offered.

Since its opening in January of 1993, roughly 800,000 people have already visited the museum (numbers taken in 2012). These visitors are not only from Japan but are also from some 175 countries and regions all across the globe have visited the museum to learn more about the pollution, the environment and civil rights.

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Hours 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM
(Doors close at 4:30 PM)

Closed Mondays
(or the following day if Monday falls on a holiday)
New Years (December 29th to January 3rd)

Entrance Fee Free

Parking Free
(Spaces available for 15 buses
and 272 passenger vehicles)



Museum Tours (30 to 60 minutes)

Groups must make reservations in advance.

Storytelling Sessions (60 minutes)

Reservations Necessary

Audiences have an opportunity hear the firsthand personal experiences from the victims of Minamata Disease. (Only groups of 10 or more will be free of charge.)



Minamata Memorial

The Minamata Memorial is a place to offer prayers to the victims of Minamata Disease and convey the tragedy of environmental pollution and the sanctity of life to future generations, as visitors vow to never allow a tragedy like Minamata disease to happen again.

The Minamata Memorial was established in conjunction with the Minamata Disease Museum.

Transportation Access

Personal auto 	Minami-Kyushu Expressway - From the Ashikita interchange	30 minutes
	Kyushu Expressway - From the Kurino interchange	70 minutes
	From Izumi City in Kagoshima Prefecture	20 minutes

Shinkansen (Bullet train) 	From JR Hakata Station	70 minutes
	From JR Kumamoto Station	25 minutes
	From Kagoshima-Chuo Station	33 minutes

From the nearest train stations to the Museum
• From Kyushu Shinkansen Shin-Minamata Station 15 min. by car (6.3km)
• From Hisatsu Orange Railway Minamata Station 7 min. by car (2.5km)



Minamata Disease

Minamata Disease is caused by mercury poisoning due to the dumping of mercury contained industrial wastewater into Shiranui Sea by Chisso Minamata Factory.

Fish and other marine products were contaminated by this mercury, which was then unwittingly consumed by local citizens. In 1956, the outbreak of the disease was confirmed in Minamata City, but the cause of the illness remained unknown. However, even after suspecting that industrial wastewater was the cause of the illness, there was no suspension of the dumping. Japan was in the period of rapid economic development, and the damages which caused by Minamata disease grew.

There used to be an abundance of fish in the Minamata Sea, which was often said that fish actually gushed from the water. People in this region enjoyed a truly idyllic existence, blessed by the bounty of the sea. However, this tranquility was suddenly shattered by a terrible disease, which the causes were unknown and effective medical treatment was unavailable to apply, and this lead to local residents die one after another. As the breadwinners died from the disease, family members and the fishing community soon fell into poverty. Minamata disease also affected pregnant women' wombs, leading to the heart-breaking tragedies of babies born with this terrible disease.

At first, victims were prejudiced against from misconception that the disease was contagious, and discriminatory comments such "Don't go out, or you'll spread the disease" could be heard regularly. Often referred to as "Chisso's caste town", Chisso also elicited strong support and victims were routinely shunned. What's more, victims, who were also residents of Minamata City, were ignored by other local residents, and this further leads to chaos between victims and non-victims in Minamata City. Victims also had a difficult time finding employment and consummating marriages due to the misconception that Minamata disease was an endemic and infectious disease. Meanwhile products bearing the name of Minamata were not be able to sell, as Minamata was increasingly recognized by the rest of the country.

In 1968, distribution of wastewater from the Chisso factory was finally being stopped; however, twelve years had already gone by since the outbreak of the disease. The same year, the national government finally admitted that Minamata disease was a pollution-caused illness originated from

Chisso Minamata Factory.

Victims in failing health and families in bereavement after losing their loved ones take part in legal battles and negotiations with Chisso and the national and local government from every corner of the country. These were desperate attempts to extract sincere apologies and medication. There was also an issue of victims who could not be recovered from damages because they were not recognized as Minamata disease patients. The system of recognition was being examined, as it showed that the standards for certifying were too rigid.

Even though Chisso's responsibility was made clear at the trail, the government did not create any strict standard or regulation against wastewater. Furthermore, confrontations involving the government's responsibility for the escalation of damages in the trial became a protracted affair. In 1990, the court recommended that the victims were mostly aged and medication was needed to assure that they would receive a prompt relief. Accepting this recommendation, the government presented a resolution to the issue in 1995.

From the resolution, most victims could receive a relief while still alive, most organizations' groups reluctantly abandoned their dissent and consented to the government's plan. This was a painful decision. However, an organization located in Kansai region wanted to continue pressing forward until the government was found guilty. This group continued their litigation and finally, a judicial decision was reached finding the national and prefectural governments guilty in 2004.

In 2009, the Special Procedures Act for "Providing Relief to Minamata Disease Victims and Resolving the Issue of Minamata Disease" was fond, leading to recognition of more extensive damages than previously admitted. In 2010, concrete relief measures offered to victims including monetary compensation, and over 65,000 victims ended up applying for the relief. There was a lot of anger involved, but human life and health could still not be recovered. Confucius said, "A man who has committed a mistake and doesn't correct it, is committing another mistake." From Minamata disease, we know how important it is to recognize and reflect upon the mistakes that caused this terrible disease so we don't repeat this deadly mistake in the future. For Minamata, this is a matter of human life and dignity.

Introduce methods to control pollution in Minamata Bay