

## About Sagiura

For the residents of Sagiura, a town of some 200 homes clustered around the banks of a natural harbor, life has always revolved around the sea. The first settlers to the area were drawn to Sagiura Harbor by the hills that shelter and surround it, keeping out fierce ocean winds, and Kashiwa Island, which acts as a natural breakwater.

During the mid-Edo period (1603–1867), Sagiura became a major port-of-call for merchant vessels traveling the Sea of Japan. Local wholesalers and shipping agents prospered from the trade of salt, rice, Pacific herring, and other goods. The town's prosperity peaked during the Meiji era (1868–1912), when deposits of copper were discovered nearby, allowing the local industry to expand into mining.

When the coastal sea trade later declined, the town lost its importance as a commercial port, but residents of Sagiura remain connected to the sea—the town's primary business is now fishing. During the Gongen Festival, held every July 31, residents board their boats and sail in a procession to Kashiwa Island, where they offer prayers to the island deities for safety and a bountiful catch.

The area's remarkable coastline, with islets, grottos, and sea caves that are carved into sheer cliffs, has been designated part of the Daisen-Oki National Park.

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