

## **Sagiura's Townscape**

The entire town of Sagiura evokes life in a different era. The town's houses are adorned with traditional architectural elements, and its streets, many of them too narrow for cars, look much as they did in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Seen from the rise on the eastern edge of town, the red-tiled roofs of Sagiura seem to cluster together between the sheltering hills and the harbor. Not far down a path from the rise is a short tunnel into the hillside that was constructed in 1933 and connects Sagiura with the neighboring district of Udo. To the left of the tunnel entrance are a stone monument and small altar containing a carved fragment of the Lotus Sutra that was discovered during the tunnel's excavation.

Near the tunnel mouth is the Shioda house, owned by a family that once managed the Iwami Silver Mine. Note the exquisite sculpture of a red-crowned crane below its eaves, crafted early in the Taishō period (1912–1926) by a family employee. Just down the hill is a storehouse dating from the end of the Edo period (1603–1867). Its walls and outermost door are constructed of thickly plastered clay that offers excellent fire protection.

Several of the houses fronting the harbor have bamboo-slat walls that cover their northern faces to protect and insulate them from cold winter winds coming off the water. The Edo-period Shiwakuya warehouse nearby was once owned by a prosperous salt merchant. Now open to the public, it houses the local art gallery and café.