

Funaya (Waiting Hut)

In the days before fast ferries and timetables, this thatched hut provided protection from the elements for fishermen preparing to put out to sea and people waiting for boats to and from Ishigaki and other islands. Rebuilt in its original form in 2018, the *funaya* (waiting hut) is an example of traditional construction techniques from a time when almost all roofs were thatched.

One benefit of such roofs was that in case of serious storms and other disasters, people could survive by taking handfuls of reeds to burn inside the hut and warm themselves. The smoke made the thatched roof stronger.

The *funaya* illustrates the island spirit of working together, as the re-thatching of the roof was performed mostly by young people as a way of learning traditional skills. Island elders tell of occasions when locals bearing rope and timber would arrive unbidden ahead of violent storms and work to make the roof secure. Thatched roofs were used throughout the island until a decree in the late nineteenth century permitted common folk to build with tile. The tiled roofs you see everywhere today were restricted to the wealthy and powerful before that time.