

## Iwami Ginzan World Heritage Center

The World Heritage Center is the gateway to Iwami Ginzan—visitors stop here to get their bearings before exploring the silver mine and its surroundings. Located just outside the World Heritage zone, the center houses a museum that provides a comprehensive introduction to the history of the mine. Visitors can learn about, among other things, the discovery of Iwami Ginzan in 1527, the revolutionary impact of the *haifuki* (cupellation) method of refining that allowed for mass production of high-quality silver, the life of miners and their families in the Edo period (1603–1867), and how silver produced at Iwami Ginzan influenced the global and Japanese economies.

The displays, which include dioramas, video, and interactive exhibits, impart background knowledge that makes a visit to the mine a more rewarding experience. A variety of hands-on programs are also offered, including a workshop for making silver accessories, a chance to sift through sand in an effort to discover a few small bits of silver, and, for ambitious visitors, an introduction to the science behind the *haifuki* method.

After viewing the exhibitions, visitors can receive sightseeing advice tailored to their specific interests at the information desk. The World Heritage zone extends across a vast area, so it is advisable to plan a route at the center beforehand. As parking within the zone is limited, visitors are asked to leave their cars at the center and continue to the town of Omori by shuttle bus. Electric bicycles can be rented at Ginzan Park in Omori. Alternatively, visitors can take a walking path from behind the center up to a scenic overlook and then continue to Omori on foot. Free maps for this and other walking routes are available at the information desk.