

## **Yunotsu Port**

The town of Yunotsu faces a cove that offers protection from the Sea of Japan's fierce waves and harsh north winds. Around 20 meters deep, the cove has favorable natural features that helped the settlement become a local center for maritime trade in medieval times and ushered in Yunotsu's greatest period of prosperity in the latter half of the 1500s. That was when the warlord-led Mohri family built a harbor and coastal fortifications in the cove, using Yunotsu as a base for taking control of the Iwami Ginzan silver mine and the surrounding region. The Mohri were successful, and Yunotsu soon flourished both as the main port supplying the silver mine and as a trading hub with ties to China, the Korean peninsula, and other faraway lands.

The town enjoyed further prosperity during the Edo period (1603–1867), when it became a node on the *kitamaebune* shipping route along the Sea of Japan coast, connecting the northern island of Hokkaido with the mercantile city of Osaka on the Inland Sea. The *kitamaebune* trade provided the impetus for several local families to enter the shipping industry and amass significant fortunes. After the opening of a railway station here in 1918, the fortunes of the port waned, and it is now used mainly for fishing. Few indications of its former prosperity remain, but the view from the edge of the town across the bay has changed little over the centuries.