

Boathouses of Ine

Introduction to Funaya

A total of 230 *funaya* (boathouses) line the 5-kilometer coast of Ine Bay, giving the fishing village here a distinctive beauty found nowhere else in Japan. They were built to function as boat garages, and each traditionally had a boat ramp leading directly into the water. Many of the *funaya* are still used in this way. Although the main residence is separate—it is usually located directly behind the boathouse—modern *funaya* have a second floor that is often used as additional living quarters or storage space.

The boathouses of Ine have collectively been selected as an Important Preservation District for Groups of Traditional Buildings, and special care has been taken to maintain their appearance. Many of the buildings have traditional charred Japanese cedar siding and dark tiled roofs.

The protected geography of Ine Bay is the primary reason the *funaya* were built so close to the water. The bay's narrow inlet faces south, away from the Sea of Japan, and is partially shielded by a small island. The tidal range is only 30 centimeters per day, with a yearly sea-level difference of a mere 70 centimeters, and the waters are extremely calm.

History

People have lived in Ine since at least the fifth century, but originally settlements were located midway up the coastal mountains. Although the sea has always been an important food source for local residents, it was not until the eighteenth century that people began moving their homes next to the shore and building boathouses in order to make fishing more convenient.

The original *funaya* had thatched roofs and were one-story wooden structures tall enough to hang fishing nets, with inward-sloping walls. Increasingly modern construction methods were adopted as *funaya* were rebuilt over the years, and the buildings we see today are larger, with straight walls and tiled roofs. The oldest remaining boathouse was built in 1863, and visitors can enter if accompanied by a guide.

How to Enjoy Ine

Ine residents have lived along the sea for multiple generations, and although the area is popular with tourists, the majority of Ine's boathouses remain private property. Please

respect their privacy and do not photograph residents without permission or trespass during your visit.

A small number of boathouses have been transformed into guesthouses where visitors can spend a relaxing evening looking out over the bay. Cruises, rental bicycles, and walking tours are also offered for visitors to explore the area further. There are a number of activities that relate to the fishing industry, including a fishing tour with local fishermen, a sashimi-making workshop, and a knot-tying workshop which includes a Japanese glass float souvenir. Fishing boats return in the early morning with the day's catch, and since there are no fishmongers in town, residents can buy fish directly, before it is shipped to market. Local inns and restaurants also get their fish from the local fishing port, so they are always serving the freshest possible seafood. Funayanosato Park has a lookout point that offers stunning views of the bay, as well as restaurants and a souvenir shop.