

## **Ebisu Jinja Shrine**

Ebisu Jinja Shrine is the oldest shrine in Mitarai. It dates back to 1666, when the town was founded. Ebisu is the Shinto deity of fishermen and is said to bestow bountiful catches and safe sailing. He is often depicted holding a fishing rod in his right hand and a sea bream in his left. One local legend states that this shrine was built to commemorate a miraculous event: a fisherman noticed a strange light that appeared in the water close to the Chisago Breakwater each night, and when he tried fishing in the illuminated water, he hauled up a statue of the deity Ebisu.

Due to the close relationship between ships and merchants, Ebisu is also worshipped as the deity of commercial prosperity and is one of the Seven Deities of Good Fortune (Shichifukujin). Rows of warehouses for storing the goods brought by merchant ships to Mitarai were built in the vicinity of the shrine, and subsequently this area became the most prosperous part of the town.

The shrine's torii was built at the edge of the pier, where it faces out to sea to greet arriving merchant ships, whose crews could pay their respects directly upon arrival. In recent years, this torii has gained a reputation as beneficial for matchmaking, and it is said that if you stand facing the sea and shout a wish through the gate, it will come true. Additionally, a small shrine alongside the worship hall contains a "stone of rejuvenation" (*wakagaeri no ishi*). The magical stone is believed to return to this spot no matter how many times it is thrown into the sea, and it is believed to have the miraculous power of similarly returning youth and vitality to people who pray to it.

Ebisu Jinja's main sanctuary (*honden*), where the deity resides, was constructed in 1723; the current worship hall was rebuilt in 1746. Both structures were designated Important Cultural Properties of Hiroshima Prefecture by the national government in 1996.