

Life at Iwami Ginzan Today

The Iwami Ginzan Silver Mine has been inactive for more than a century, but the town of Omori, formerly the administrative and commercial hub of the mine, remains a vibrant community. Although the population of Omori has dropped to around 400 from a high of tens of thousands during the mine's peak period, residents have managed to reverse the town's decline through a number of successful initiatives in recent decades.

One key undertaking has been to find new uses for many of the old buildings in the historic district, which is protected from development. For example, the Abe House, which was built in 1789 and is one of the largest extant samurai residences in Omori, is now a hotel operated by the Gungendo shop, café, and gallery. Gungendo is housed in a renovated Edo-period (1603–1867) townhouse nearby, where visitors can purchase clothing and local food, view artwork, and sit down for lunch or a snack while gazing out at the garden. Other historic structures have been modified to accommodate offices and workshops.

Local companies such as Gungendo and Nakamura Brace, a prosthetics manufacturer, have been instrumental in the revival of Omori by providing employment opportunities. Increased employment, combined with the relaxed small-town atmosphere and proximity to nature, has motivated people to relocate to Omori from elsewhere in Japan.

Notable sights in town include the Kumagai House, a two-story mansion built in 1801 for a family that for centuries was the richest and most influential in Omori; the site of the former Iwami Ginzan magistrate's office, the base for shogunate representatives who supervised the silver mine and the surrounding area during the Edo period; and the Ido and Kigami shrines, believed to protect the town and its residents from misfortune. Omori is easy to explore on foot or by electric bicycle. E-bikes are available for rental in Ginzan Park.