

## **Iwami Ginzan and Yunotsu**

The old road on your left passes through mountains and deep forests on its way to Yunotsu, a port town on the Sea of Japan that played an essential role in the history of Iwami Ginzan. In the sixteenth century, Iwami Ginzan was often called the “hot-spring silver mine” (*yuno ginzan*). This nickname refers to the symbiotic relationship between the mine and Yunotsu, which was known only for its hot springs prior to the discovery of silver in the area in 1527.

After the silver mine was established, Yunotsu flourished both as the main port supplying the mine and as a trading hub with ties to China, the Korean Peninsula, and other countries. In the latter half of the 1500s, the narrow inlet of Okidomari next to Yunotsu was used to ship silver from the mine to markets both in Japan and overseas. At that time, around 10 percent of all the silver traded around the world came from Iwami Ginzan.

Although the Tokugawa shogunate ended the transport of silver via Yunotsu after assuming control of Iwami Ginzan in the early 1600s, the

town remained the mine's main source of supplies and a local center for maritime trade throughout the Edo period (1603–1867). The layout of modern-day Yunotsu dates back to this period of affluence, as do some of its oldest buildings. The town's two remaining traditional hot-spring bathhouses evoke bygone days.