

niponica

Discovering
Japan
no.

30

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Special Feature

The Colors of Japan Resonating with the Soul



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The Colors of Japan Resonating with the Soul

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Cover: The colors of the flaming vibrant autumn leaves tinge both the water surface and the soul of the onlooker.
Tsutanuma Lake, Aomori Prefecture

niponica is published in Japanese and six other languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish) to introduce to the world the people and culture of Japan today.
The title *niponica* is derived from "Nippon," the Japanese word for Japan.

Photo: amanaimages

no.30 R-030312

Published by: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan
2-2-1 Kasumigaseki,
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-8919, Japan
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/>



Colorful fallen leaves on a Japanese garden washbasin (for purifying the hands) covered in moss.

Special Feature

The Colors of Japan Resonating with the Soul

The colors of the four seasons, woven by abundant nature. The use of traditional colors, cultivated over many years. Japan has a myriad of colors that resonate with the soul.

Let us guide you to Japan's world of varied and profound colors,
created by subtle changes of tone.

Colors in Time

Enjoying the gradual change of scenery over the course of time.



▲ Dawn breaks on the sacred Mount Fuji. Draped in a majestic aura, morning arrives.



► A tranquil morning moment as the dim sunrise reflects off of the snow-blanketed garden. Kenrokuen Garden, Ishikawa Prefecture

▼ A refreshing daytime spectacle with the autumn leaves sparkling in the mist of the splashing waterfall. Oirase Gorge, Aomori Prefecture



◀ Bathed in the afternoon sunlight, the bountiful evergreen forests drop their shadows on the quiet water surface, creating an exquisite contrast of light and shade. Kujukushima Islands, Nagasaki Prefecture



Photos: amanaimages

▼ Under the brilliant clear moon, the white castle walls with more than 400 years of history, emerge in the darkness of night.
Himeji Castle, Hyogo Prefecture



▲ Vast grounds, with six ponds and thirteen manmade hills. The elegant and colorful panorama shimmers on the water surface at sunset.
Ritsurin Garden, Kagawa Prefecture



◀ Hachiman-zaka Slope runs straight to Hakodate Port. When it is time for the lamps to light up, the trees lining the street twinkle brightly.
Hakodate, Hokkaido Prefecture

Colors in the Town



▲ Iwataro's weeping cherry, over a hundred years old.

Cherry Blossom Pink



Gero
(Gifu Prefecture)

Located in the Chubu area (central Japan), Gero has an elevation difference of approximately 2,800 meters between the north and south of the city, so scenery awash in cherry blossom colors can be enjoyed sequentially at different spots for about a month from the end of March. There are many old trees with intimate ties to the community, for example, “Iwataro’s weeping cherry” that is said to be named after an ancestor who planted it, and the “Nawashiro-Zakura” that is named after the old legendary custom of people waiting for this tree to bloom as a signal to start preparing rice seedlings (*nawashiro*).



The Tanokami (rice field god) Festival is known as a sign of spring. Young dancers wear colorful *hanagasa*, which are hats decorated with flowers.

Photos courtesy of: Gero City, Gifu Prefecture



▲ Ouchi-juku in the winter, with its dazzling snow.

Snowy White



Ouchi-juku
(Fukushima Prefecture)

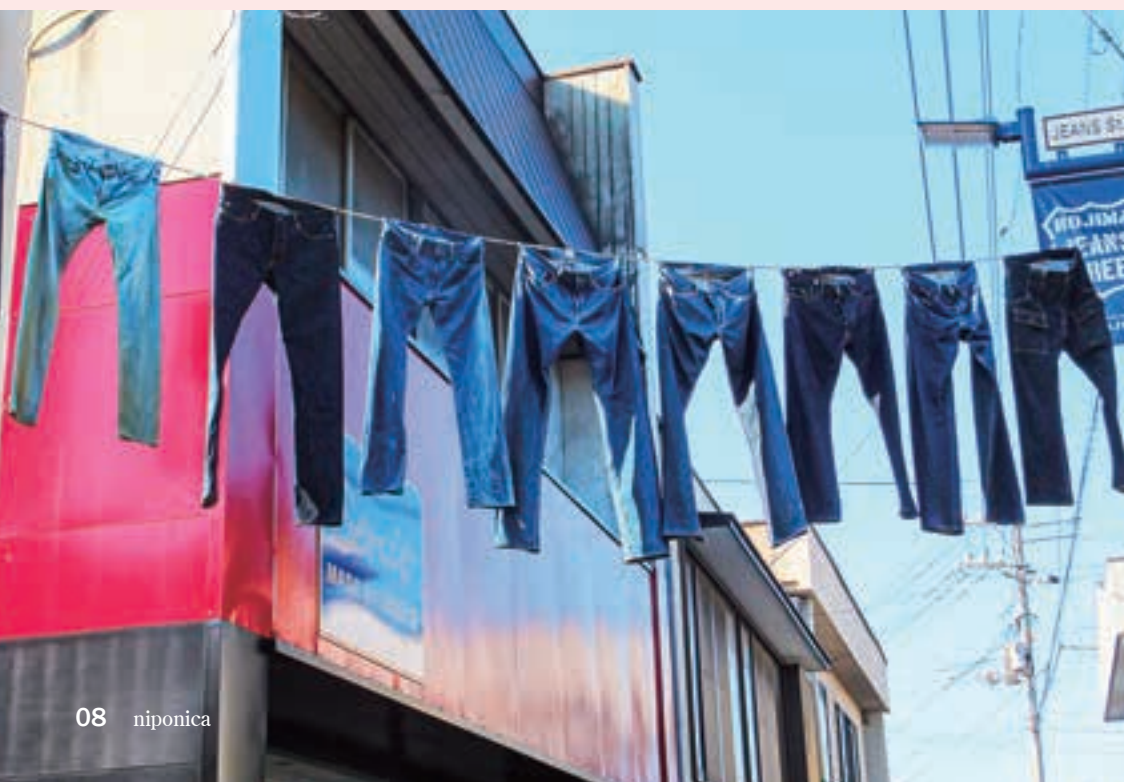
Amid the cold air, the sloping silhouettes of snow-covered thatched roofs give a sense of warmth. Ouchi-juku has remnants of its former status as a “post town” where travelers would rest during their long journeys, with homes lined up along a road in a landscape that has not changed for over four centuries. To protect the legacy of this region for future generations, the town created a resident charter with three fundamental rules prohibiting sale, leasing, and demolition. The community also strives to learn and pass on roof-thatching techniques to preserve the scenery.

*On December 2020, “Traditional skills, techniques, and knowledge for the conservation and transmission of wooden architecture in Japan” has been inscribed on the UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, which includes the roof-thatching.

Photo courtesy of: Ouchi-juku Tourism Association

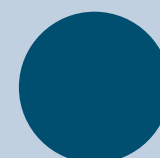


With craftsmen called *kayate* taking the lead, all residents cooperate in rethatching the roofs.



◀ Kojima Jeans Street stretches for about 400 meters and is lined with stores operated by local manufacturers among others.

Indigo



Kojima
(Okayama Prefecture)

In Kurashiki City, which overlooks the Seto Inland Sea in Western Japan, Kojima Jeans Street boasts a unique presence. It is known as the first location in Japan to produce jeans and continues to be a center of true artisanship. The color of indigo is meticulously layered and deepened by immersing fabrics in dye, wringing, exposing to air to oxidize, and then repeating. Dyed with skilled artisanship, this blue is said to have depth and is long-lasting with resistance to fading.

Photos courtesy of: The Kojima Chamber of Commerce and Industry, JAPAN BLUE Co., Ltd.

Photo: PIXTA

An indigo artisan dyes the warp threads to be used on handlooms.

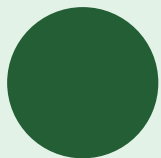


©JAPAN BLUE



▲ The beautifully-green Yakushima is known as a habitat to cedars indigenous to Japan.

Green



Yakushima
(Kagoshima
Prefecture)

On Yakushima, you can discover mystical, deep green forests covered with moss. As you reach the 500-meter elevation mark, Yakushima cedars (defined on the island as trees that are at least 1,000 years old) begin to intermittently appear. Of the confirmed Yakushima cedars, the famous Jomon cedar is said to be the oldest, estimated to be between 2,000 to 7,200 years old. Many indigenous animals inhabit this timeless green land, such as Yakushima monkeys.

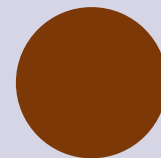


Yakushima monkeys relaxing on the roadside.



▲ The wood brown townscape brims with charm.

Wood Brown



Narai-juku
(Nagano
Prefecture)

Lined with about 300 homes, Narai-juku is one of the longest post towns in Japan. In the Edo period (1603–1868), the town prospered with travelers coming and going on Nakasendo Road along the Narai River in Nagano Prefecture of central Japan. The townscape stretches for approximately one kilometer, with wood brown buildings of unique architecture that combine functionality and artistry, emanating a timeless and profound mood.

Photo courtesy of: Shiojiri City, Nagano Prefecture



Every June there is a reenactment of a procession of tea carriers carrying Uji tea from Kyoto to be presented to shoguns during the Edo period.



◀ Fushimi Inari Shrine is an icon of Fushimi.

Vermilion



Fushimi
(Kyoto Prefecture)

This town with Fushimi Inari Shrine, which is memorable for its bright vermilion *torii* gates that seem to extend to eternity, is also a famous *sake* district of Japan. Producing *sake* requires a great amount of water, and as a home to bountiful high-quality natural springs, Fushimi is the backdrop to many legends about water. When *kanzukuri* (cold brewing) is at its peak in the winter, the warm aroma from breweries steaming rice wafts through the town.

Photo courtesy of: Gekkeikan Sake Co., Ltd.

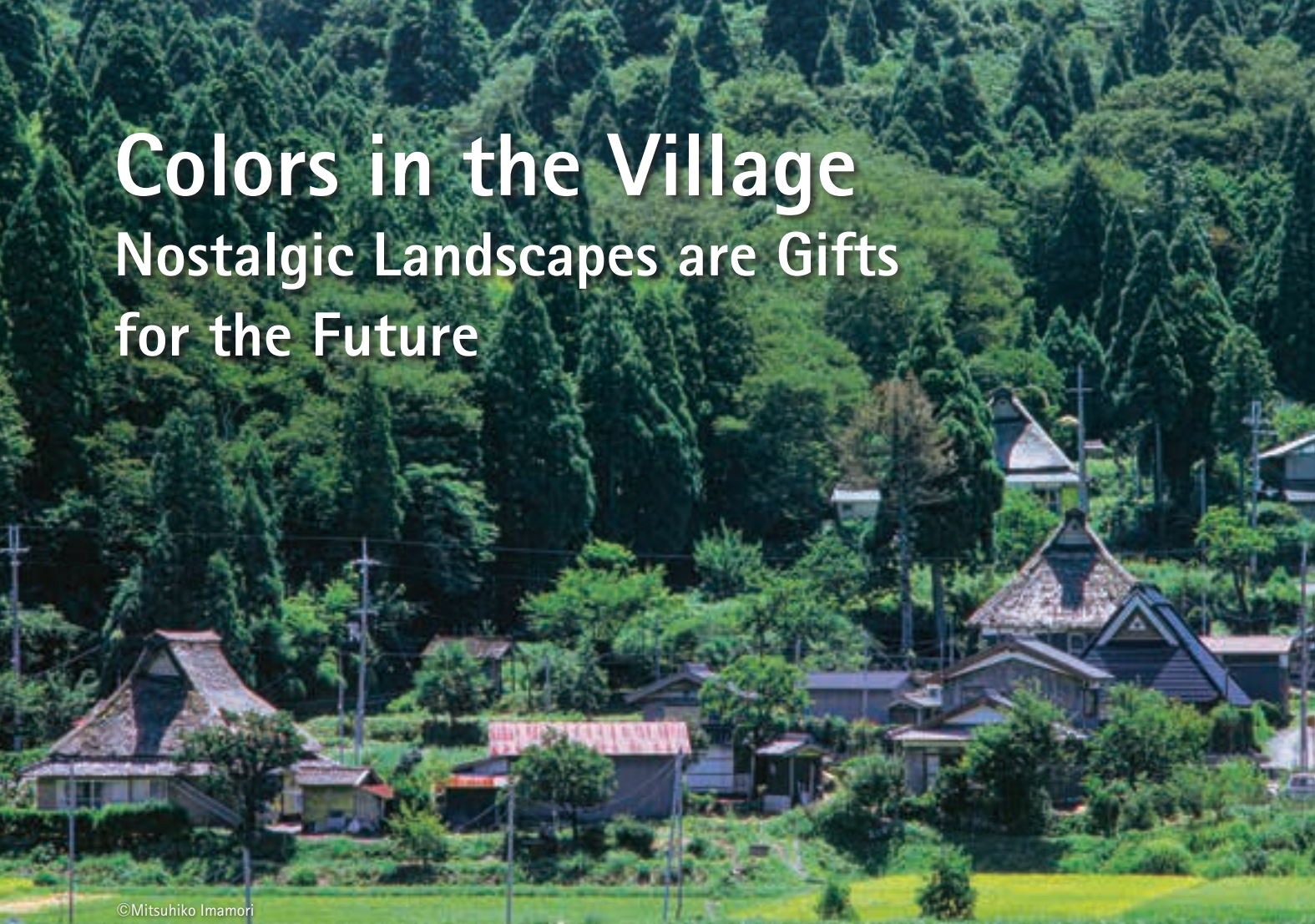
Photo: PIXTA



The fermentation before becoming *sake* is called *moromi* (*sake* mash). This is fermented over a period of approximately 20 to 30 days.

Colors in the Village

Nostalgic Landscapes are Gifts for the Future



©Mitsuhiko Imamori

A very familiar view of the *satoyama*. The mountains in the background tower protectively over the houses. This is surrounded by a mixed forest, while green fields can be seen in the open terrain toward the foreground.

Photography: Imamori Mitsuhiko

For the Japanese people, the word *satoyama* (literally meaning “village and mountain”) resonates warmly and invites nostalgia, evoking memories of their own hometown. *Satoyama* are regions where an environment has been formed through a moderate approach by people to nature, and there are, for example, rice paddies, streams, fields, and mixed forests. Here, the coexistence of people and nature has shaped the life wisdom and skills that have been passed down over the generations.

For example, people used the *satoyama* to collect energy and resources such as firewood and building materials, and food such as wild vegetables. By protecting the habit of various flora and fauna, they also developed a unique ecosystem. This has linked to biodiversity in the *satoyama*, and their rich bounties are precious assets to the people of Japan.

However, in recent years, the decreasing population of rural communities as well as other factors have brought about the neglect and deterioration of the *satoyama*, causing landslides and negatively impacting wildlife through reduced biodiversity. To preserve the *satoyama*,

which are cherished natural environments that must be maintained for future generations, we must find new ways of engagement that harmonize with the lifestyles of people, such as through initiatives that link to local industries.

Concerned with the conditions of the *satoyama*, the photographer Imamori Mitsuhiko has settled near Lake Biwa, the largest freshwater lake in Japan, in Shiga Prefecture. His ongoing focus has been to capture the activities of people who live there, as well as to portray living things such as flowers, trees, and insects in their natural environment. He popularizes and advocates for the importance of life in the *satoyama* by depicting the charm of villages—a familiar and nostalgic sight to the Japanese people—in a poetic fashion. “I don’t consider myself to be shooting the demise of the *satoyama*,” says Imamori. “These are landscapes for the future.” Rather than simply considering it to be a subject of sentimentality, he may be envisioning the true form of the *satoyama*: a space of symbiosis for all life.



①



②

① Rice field ridges are created in the spring. These are like levees, made by creating mounds of soil between rice fields. Hoes are used to meticulously knead and heap the soil so that water does not flow out.

② *Shibugaki* (a type of persimmon) are hung under the eaves to become *hoshigaki* (dried persimmons). The drying process removes the astringency, making the fruit sweet and delicious.



③



④

③ During winter in the *satoyama*, handmade straw arts and crafts were traditionally created. Today, this is done as a hobby so as not to forget the techniques.

④ An evenly-woven durable stool.



©Mitsuhiko Imamori

An old persimmon tree that signals the arrival of the fall harvest season in the *satoyama*.



©Mitsuhiko Imamori

Terraced paddy fields in the fall, radiating in gold as the ears of rice are bathed in sunlight and ready to be harvested.

Photographer Imamori Mitsuhiko

A leading photographer of the *satoyama*. Based in his atelier with a view of Lake Biwa in Shiga Prefecture, he shoots photos with themes of both natural surroundings and the relationship people have with nature. He has also often traveled to and documented remote regions from tropical rainforests to deserts throughout the world, and is highly acclaimed internationally as well. He has been recognized with many awards, including the Regional Cultural Merits Award from the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan.



The Legacies in the Colors of Japan

● Written by: Kitamura Hitomi (Curator, National Crafts Museum)

The names of the traditional colors of Japan often contain references to a craft item or point to a deep relationship to its production. These ingenious names reveal the discerning and careful awareness Japanese people have had towards the colors around them.

In modern society, as we become increasingly buffeted by inorganic, identical objects, such as televisions, computers, and mobile phones, the delicate textures and profound tones of traditional crafts, which have been cultivated through history, have gained a stronger presence in our lives in recent years.

Let's take a closer look at this thoughtful and refined Japanese sensibility to colors through crafts—treasures preserved across generations.



Black and Red: Classic Colors of Japanese Lacquerware

When picturing the unique colors of Japanese lacquerware, black and red likely come to our mind (photo 1).



Tsuishu Yozei XX <Low table, six-petaled flower design> 1915, National Crafts Museum
In this work, the unique black and red of *urushi* are superbly appropriated. While preserving the technique of carving out patterns from *urushi* that has been painted in layers, Tsuishu added modern shaping instincts for his work.

Red was the first of the lacquers to arrive in Japan—this was about 9,000 years ago, around the early Jomon period (circa 7,000 to 12,000 years ago).

Red was considered sacred as the color of fire, blood, and the sun. In the Jomon period, combs and vessels were given multiple coats of red *urushi* (Japanese lacquer, which is a natural resin coating processed from sap) for superstitious reasons. In the later Yayoi period (100–300 AD), black *urushi* became mainstream, supposedly because the superstitions of the Jomon period had faded by then and more importance was placed on the shape and function of vessels.

There are two groups of red *urushi*; they differ in the origin of the pigment component. One is cinnabar, which uses red pigment with mercury sulfide as its main component, and the other is Bengala, which is a brownish-red pigment made by firing red clay that contains Ferric oxide. Bengala pigment is used not only for Japanese lacquerware, but also for painting ceramics and buildings.

Black *urushi* is made by adding iron powder and soot that is fine carbon powder generated by the incomplete combustion of pine resin, oils and fats, and the like.

Mumyoi ware, which is made in Sado Island, Niigata Prefecture, is pottery made from the local red clay

2



Ito Sekisui V, <Mumyoi *Neriage* Plate with Flower Patterns> 2015, private collection.

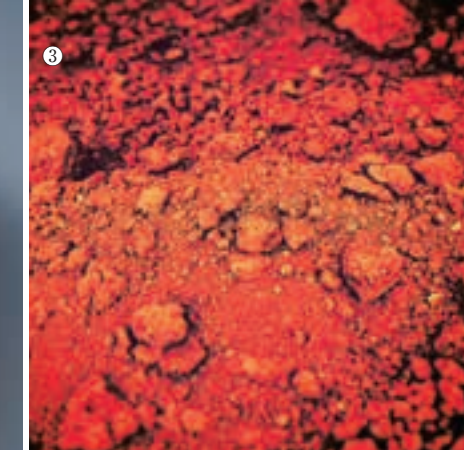
containing iron. Ito Sekisui V, a current master potter, uses vivid red clay and yellowish clay collected in Sado to create fine color gradations on beautiful works that resemble textiles (photo 2). The powerful vitality that people likely sensed in red in ancient times seems to be pulsing deep within this magnificent pattern.



Blue: As Seen in Pottery, Dyeing, and Weaving

The color of glaze on pottery changes greatly before and after firing. Glaze is made by dissolving clay with water and then blending with wood ash, straw ash, or metallic elements as coloring. For this reason, the liquid is gray and cloudy before firing, but after being applied to the vessel and fired in the kiln, it remarkably transforms to

3



Sado red clay collected in the vicinity of Aikawa Gold & Silver Mine.

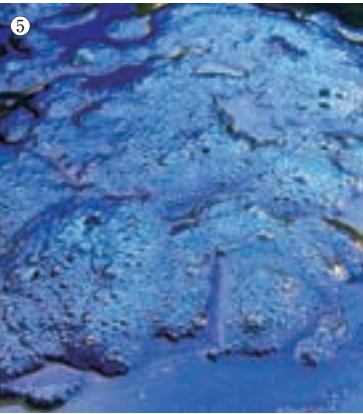
hues such as clear blue, jade green, or even pale pink. Potters repeatedly fire numerous test pieces in the kiln, striving to control the slightest change of tone to the utmost limit.

One type of ceramic that intrigues many potters is celadon. Iron (ferric oxide) in glaze has a chemical reaction to fire and takes on a color ranging from a bright light blue to a greenish blue. Celadon that is a crystal-clear blue similar to clear skies after the rain especially is a highly-sought and illusive treasure among collectors. Because perfectly fired celadon was offered only to those with high status, the color of celadon was also referred to as *hisoku* (hidden color), with the connotation being that it was beyond the reach of the general population and not allowed to be easily seen.

4



Shimizu Uichi <Large bowl, celadon> 1973, National Crafts Museum
Countless cracks from what is called "crazing" develop in the glaze, creating an indescribable effect.



Dye solution for indigo dyeing.
Photo: amanaimages

With reverence for the connotations of the word *hisoku*, dyeing and weaving artist Shimura Fukumi sees this color in the context of textile, related with the tones of indigo that materialize in the indigo dyeing process. Toward the end of *aidate* (the process of fermenting indigo dye in preparation for dyeing threads and the like), indigo weakens and loses its blue color, while faintly coloring other threads in a color that is a cross between ultramarine and pastel blue (a midtone between a deep purplish blue and a soft whitish blue). *Aidate* is



Shimura Fukumi <Kimono, "Lapis Lazuli Blue", *tsumugi* silk> 1976,
National Crafts Museum
Comprises light and dark blues achieved with *aidate*.

analogous to a person's life of being born, growing up, and aging, and only when we safely arrive at the final chapter can we witness the "profound, enigmatic color" (Shimura Fukumi, 1982, *One Color, One Life*, Kyuryudo) that she cherishes.



Brown and Purple: The Trend Colors of Edo

The browns and grays that were in vogue during the Edo period (1603–1868) were available in such a rich variation of tones that they were colloquially referred to as "*shijyuuhatcha-hyakunezumi*" (literally meaning 48 browns, a hundred grays). As clothing prohibitions were strict according to social status at the time, one catalyst to create delicate and subtle colors was the strong desire among those who loved fashion to set themselves apart within those restrictions. The techniques and sensibility to finely dividing color tones for dyeing had been polished over the history of Japan since ancient times.

For example, purple held the highest position in the era of Empress Suiko (reigning 592–628 AD) and could not be worn without the permission of the Empress. In *Engishiki*, a Heian-period (794–1185) book of Japanese laws and customs that was completed in 927 AD, colors were segmented with not only dark and light purple, but also with a grayish dark purple. Further, the materials



Miyagawa Kozan I <Vase, Japanese
irises design, underglaze enamels>
c. 1897–1912, National Crafts Museum
Iris blue is one of Japan's traditional
colors.



Suzuki Chokichi <Twelve Bronze Falcons, Falcon #8> 1893, Important Cultural
Property, National Crafts Museum
The colors are divided, with silver feathers on the back and copper feathers on
the under neck to belly.

for dyeing were regulated in detail. By the Edo period, purple's implication of Imperial Court status had faded and was dyed in an array of tones such as a vivid purple (using gromwell root as a dye), a reddish-purple Kyoto purple, a bluish-purple Edo purple, and so on, enjoyed by samurai families and townspeople alike.

The Japanese sensibility of distinguishing subtle color gradations applies not only to clothing, but to the smallest ornamental details. Technology developed greatly to color the metal fittings that embellish the sword carried at the waist while bringing out its intrinsic properties. For example, it became possible to make silver-copper alloy in different shades of gray by changing the ratio of silver. This was applied to render metal as the feathers on birds and to create monochrome landscapes as if painted with ink on paper. This technology blossomed in the field of export crafts from the Meiji period (1868–1912) onward.

Photos (p.14 *Washi*: Japanese traditional handmade paper): PIXTA

Kitamura Hitomi: Curator, Head of Crafts Section, Crafts Department, National Crafts Museum. She specializes in modern craftwork history. Recent exhibitions include "Marcel Breuer's furniture: Improvement for good" (The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, 2017) and "Masterpieces of Modern Crafts from the Museum Collection—Special Display: Modern Tea Caddies" (Crafts Gallery, The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, 2018).



Itaya Hazan <Vase, incised peonies
design, underglaze color and mat
glaze> 1922, National Crafts Museum
Colors surface from under the
translucent glaze.



White: A Modest Color Expression

Incidentally, it is impossible to create pure white *urushi* because of its material properties. When white is desired, the outstanding function of *urushi* as a bonding agent is used instead to adhere external materials such as shells and eggshells. When using shells, the inner mother-of-pearl layer with its rainbow reflection is thinly sliced for use. By applying mineral paint or other paint on the back, the color is softly revealed through the shell as if looking through a veil. This technique is called *fusezaishiki*, literally meaning "concealed color", and was used to decorate the mirrors and penknives preserved at the Shosoin Repository.

With methods similar to *fusezaishiki* also used for Japanese paintings and ceramics (photo 9), it is evident that Japanese people were interested in this type of exquisite effect. The presence deep within is enigmatically hinted through the white radiance of the shell. This is a clear example of the sensibilities of the Japanese people, who consider subtleness to be a virtue.

Craftsmanship Glowing in Gold

An Artisan of Gold Leaf Hammering



Gold leaf is vital to traditional crafts such as fans.

Gold leaf is made by flattening an alloy of pure gold with minuscule traces of silver and copper to a thickness of approximately 1/10,000 of a millimeter. This has been used to magnificently decorate architecture, sculptures, arts and crafts, as well as many everyday items. The techniques of finely stretching valuable gold are the key to gold leaf, predominantly produced in Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture, today.

Matsumura Kenichi is an artisan who has been creating gold leaf for more than 40 years in Kanazawa. He reveals that “craftsmanship is another word for perseverance”—producing gold leaf requires tenacity, involving countless repetitions of the same processes.

A technique called *entsuke* has a tradition of over four centuries in Kanazawa, with a key characteristic of it being that a specialized foil-beating paper is used to hammer and stretch the gold leaf. It is said that the quality of the foil-beating paper determines the final grade of the gold leaf, thus artisans invest significant

time in preparing this. *Washi* (Japanese traditional hand-made paper) manufactured with a special soil blend is soaked in straw lye or other medium, dried completely, and then soaked again. This cycle is repeated numerous times. When the foil-beating paper is complete, the surface is the epitome of smoothness and ideally suited to stretching the gold leaf.

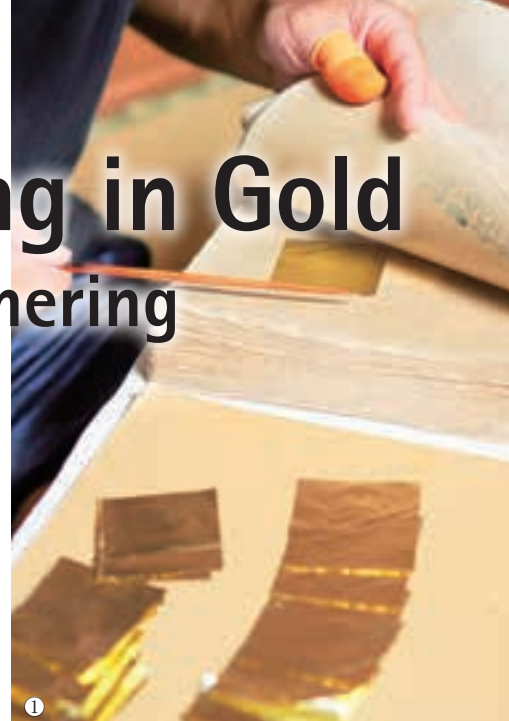
It's in the next step that the gold-leaf artisan flexes his skill by flattening the gold leaf to an astounding thinness. He cuts and divides gold leaf that has already been flattened by machine, inserts each piece between 1,800 sheets of the foil-beating paper, and then hammers it with a machine for about half a day. He will then transfer each gold leaf individually into more foil-beating paper and hammer this some more with a machine. The artisan relies on his intuition during the long hours it takes to machine-pound the gold leaf to this extreme thinness. The task is complete when he trims them into standard 109-millimeter squares to finish.



The artisan's accumulated experience and skills are indispensable to hammer gold leaf that is thin enough to be translucent.



Making foil-beating paper is the deciding factor in gold leaf production, requiring a long and painstaking process.



1. The cut and divided gold leaf sheets are individually inserted between 1,800 sheets of foil-beating paper.



2. The bundle of paper enveloping the gold leaf is wrapped in leather and hammered with a machine.



3. After transferring to another stack of foil-beating paper, this is thinned by more machine hammering.



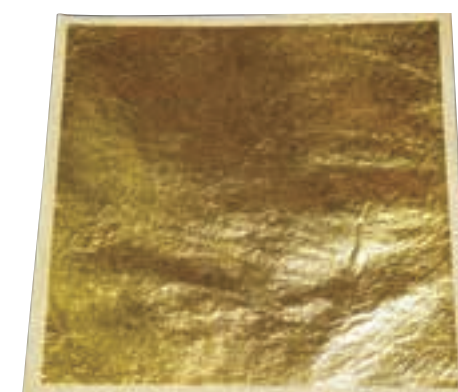
4. After being flattened to its limit, the gold leaf sheets are sorted.



5. One sheet is trimmed at a time with a square frame-like blade.



6. The delicate gold leaf can crumple at the touch of a finger, so traditional implements made of bamboo are used to insulate from static electricity.



Finished gold leaf.

Matsumura was born in Kanazawa and trained under his late father, who was also a gold-leaf artisan, to hone his craft. “There are no written manuals in the world of the hereditary craft,” he says, looking back on his days of training. “Back then, we were told to make skills our own through observation. I learned by watching over his shoulder and imitating him to absorb the techniques into my body.”

“Gold leaf has always and still is produced around the world, but Kanazawa’s gold leaf reflects light gently and has a unique warmth,” Matsumura says, with a tenderness in his eyes.

He is now working to pass on the craft to the next generation. Instilled with the great enthusiasm of artisans, the radiance of gold leaf will never fade.

*On December 2020, “Traditional skills, techniques, and knowledge for the conservation and transmission of wooden architecture in Japan” has been inscribed on the UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, which includes the production of *entsuke* gold leaf.

Photography: Takishima Yoji Photo: PIXTA

Matsumura Kenichi, Traditional Kanazawa Gold Leaf Craftsman

Aiming to pass on the craftsmanship he inherited from his father, Matsumura established the Association for the Conservation of Traditional Production Techniques of Kanazawa Gold Leaf and assumed the post of chairman. He works actively to share and maintain *entsuke* gold leaf for the next generation, along with his second son Noriyuki, who is also a gold leaf artisan. He has won numerous awards, including the Skill Encouragement Award from the Ishikawa Association of Traditional Industry Promotion in 1989 and the Commissioner for Cultural Affairs Award, Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan in 2019.



Visiting Beautiful Dazzling Sunsets

In the fleeting moments before sunset, a dramatic and magical view is on display. It's time to go and see a stunning, precious sunset unlike anywhere else.

Photos: amanaimages



秋田

Akita

Oga Peninsula (Oga City)

A spectacular evening landscape awaits in Shiosezaki on the southwestern-most tip of this peninsula. There is a rock that is affectionately called "Godzilla Rock" because its silhouette bears a resemblance to the fictional giant monster of the same name from Japanese films.

Chichibugahama Beach (Mitoyo City)

When the tide is low and there is no wind to form ripples on the water surface, the tide pools (pools of water) on the sand become like mirrors. Visitors enjoy reflections of the sky made in the pools, making this a popular spot on social media as well.



香川

Kagawa

Saga

佐賀

Yobuko Ohashi Bridge (Karatsu City)

Beautiful Yobuko Ohashi Bridge resembles a line of harps. The vista of the setting sun centered on the 728-meter bridge speaks directly to the hearts of all travelers.



神奈川

Kanagawa

Hayama (Miura District)

In the moment when the sun sets near the summit of Mount Fuji, sunrays sparkle like diamonds to create an effect referred to as "Diamond Fuji." This special view can be seen just a few days out of a year in the spring and fall.

新潟

Niigata



Nanaura Beach (Sado City)

Nanaura Beach is known for its scenic beauty, with an exceptional view of the sunset from Cape Nagate at its center. This stretch of coastline offers a rich diversity of scenery with its assortment of unusually-shaped rocks and breathtaking vistas bathed in a scarlet light.

Hokkaido

北海道



Nusamai Bridge (Kushiro City)

Kushiro is said to have one of the world's top three sunsets. Nusamai Bridge is especially celebrated for its superb view of the sunset, which is said to be particularly gorgeous during the fall and winter months when the air is clear.

Colorful mainstays of the dining table

Tsukemono



Beautifully colorful *tsukemono*.

Tsukemono refers to a dish of any of a variety of ingredients like vegetables, fruits, wild plants, mushrooms, seafood, seaweed, or meat pickled with salt, soy sauce, vinegar, rice bran, miso, and malted rice among others. While maintaining the inherent flavor of the ingredient, *tsukemono* has a nice salty accent that goes perfectly with the delicate flavor of rice. This is a beloved and indispensable dish to any dining table in Japan, where rice has long played the role of staple food.

There are different types of *tsukemono*. For example, some are made by fermenting, while some are flavored with seasonings. Even the same ingredient can be enjoyed in different flavors by varying the time of pickling. The fresh texture of the pickled food can be savored as *asazuke* (lightly-preserved pickles) made in a short time; however,

furuzuke (old pickles), which have been matured over a long time and have developed a more robust flavor, can be saved for a long period.

In Japan, each region makes its own *tsukemono* using local specialties and produce to improve their taste. In Hokkaido, there is *nishin-zuke* made by pickling slices of dried herring with cabbage and so forth using malted rice; in Akita Prefecture, there is *iburigakko* made by pickling smoked *daikon* radish with rice bran; Nagano Prefecture offers *nozawana*, a pickled leaf vegetable with a fresh texture; Tokyo has the slightly sweet *bettara-zuke* (pickled *daikon* radish); Kyoto is known for its refreshingly sour *suguki-zuke* (pickled local turnip); and Kagoshima Prefecture has *papaya-zuke* made by pickling papaya fruit with miso or soy sauce. Variations abound, with more than 600 types of *tsukemono*

Photography: Takishima Yoji Photos: PIXTA



By pickling fresh vegetables, we can savor the tastes of seasonal vegetables.

said to exist throughout the country.

The value of *tsukemono* as a health food is regaining appreciation in recent years. Vegetables pickled with rice bran, *nukazuke*, are especially being noticed for their rich fiber content. *Nukazuke* uses a bed of fermented rice bran, *nukadoko* mixed thoroughly with salt and water. Vegetables such as cucumbers, eggplants, and *daikon* radish will ferment as they are pickled in this, creating a unique

flavor. *Nukadoko* is said to be packed with plant lactobacillus and to be effective for improving the intestinal environment and supporting beautiful skin and immunity. It is also rich with vitamin B1, which is believed to promote recovery from fatigue.

Comparing the tastes from the different regions is one way to enjoy traditional *tsukemono*. Enjoy the appetizing aromas and textures while partaking of the plentiful power of *tsukemono*.



Flavors can be modified for individual preference by adding *kombu* (kelp), chili pepper or others to the *nukadoko*.



Vegetables are taken out of the *nukadoko* once they become soft.



After rinsing off the rice bran, the vegetables are cut to bite-size and served on a plate.



Around June, several thousand hydrangeas, including the mountain hydrangea native to Japan, are in full bloom, immersing Meigetsuin in a gorgeous blue.

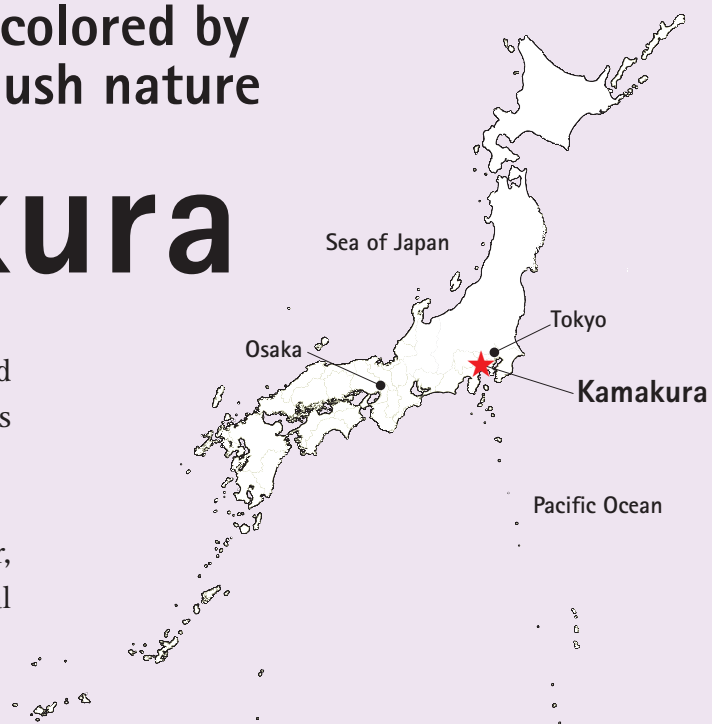


A historical town colored by
a dazzling sea and lush nature

Kamakura

Surrounded by mountains to the east, west, and north and the sea to the south, Kamakura offers the delights of nature throughout the city: from both mountains and sea.

With many elegant temples and shrines to discover, let's stroll through Kamakura, the ancient capital of the shogunate.



Sugimoto-dera Temple is said to be the oldest temple in Kamakura. The moss stairway is exquisite.



The expansive space unfolds with the autumn scenery of Engakuji Temple.



Tranquil time flows in the Japanese garden of Jomyoji Temple.

Kamakura was the first city in Japan for which a shogunate was established for its development from the end of the 12th century through to the 13th century. It has a rich history, having prospered as the center of Japan in all aspects from politics to culture. The charm of strolling through Kamakura is being able to visit Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples, which have witnessed this long history, while admiring the transitioning views of the four seasons. To enjoy this fully, we recommend starting from Kita-Kamakura Station. Many famous temples are in that vicinity, including Engakuji Temple, which is famous for its spring cherry blossoms and autumn foliage, and Meigetsuin, which is fondly called Hydrangea Temple; an array of flowers can be enjoyed throughout the year.

As you head south toward Kamakura Station while taking in the sights of the ancient capital, you will find the majestic Tsurugaoka Hachimangu Shrine, bustling with worshippers and tourists. The shrine is a central presence of Kamakura and could be considered the source of its culture. Many traditional events are held here, including the New Year festival on January 1 and the *yabusame* ritual of brave horseback riders dressed in Kamakura samurai-style hunting suits performing archery.

From Tsurugaoka Hachimangu Shrine, let's head east along Kanazawa Kaido Road, around which you will find numerous stately temples and shrines. Sugimoto-dera Temple is an ancient temple, and its history can be gleaned from the moss-covered stone steps and thatched roof. Expansive views of the city can also be



The Kamakura Farmers' Market. Kamakura vegetables are grown in rich soil surrounded by the mountains and sea, and said to have a distinctly robust flavor.



There are many farmer families at the market with three generations on hand.

enjoyed from the grounds. Jomyoji Temple is spacious and perfect for a relaxing walk, while its tea ceremony room by the main temple offers a soothing view of the Japanese garden.

For a rustic feel of Kamakura's four seasons, you should stop by the farmers' market near Kamakura Station. You can buy seasonal Kamakura vegetables from more than 20 farmers who set up shop in rotation. Homes and local restaurants have benefitted from the Kamakura Farmers' Market since it first opened in 1928. Fresh, colorful vegetables go on sale from 8am daily, and the market bustles with customers all day until it closes in the evening.



▲ The *yabusame* ritual has an 800-year tradition.

◀ Tsurugaoka Hachimangu Shrine is a central presence of Kamakura.



The view from the mountain behind Komyoji Temple. The lovely Mount Fuji is also visible.



Yuigahama Beach with its stretch of beautiful sandy beach.



The slightly downward-facing expression of the Great Buddha of Kamakura is striking.

In the area around Kamakura Station, you can't miss the energy of Wakamiyaaji Street, which is the approach to Tsurugaoka Hachimangu Shrine, and its parallel Komachidori Street. In addition to a broad range of shopping choices including traditional souvenirs, you can drop into one of the many casual restaurants or buy a snack to nibble on while strolling.

If you head west from Kamakura Station toward Hase, you will eventually arrive at Kotoku-in Temple, which is dedicated to the national treasure copper statue of Amitabha Buddha, known popularly as the Great Buddha of Kamakura. This is a must-see highlight of Kamakura and it is said that construction started circa 1252. Measuring 11.3 meters high and weighing 121 tons, you will certainly be amazed at its colossal scale.

Now, let's walk some more to the south, aiming for the beach. The mouth of the Nameri River divides the beach, with Zaimokuza Beach to the east and Yuigahama Beach to the west.

Zaimokuza Beach has very clear waters and a beautiful shallow shore. Standing magnificently in this

area, is Komyoji Temple. Behind it is Mount Tensho—a popular spot with stunning views. Being close to Tokyo, Yuigahama Beach is lively with crowds in the summer. The coast stretches to the west with spots such as Inamuragasaki and Shichirigahama that have stylish cafes and more. Along the coastline with the blue sea and skies in the backdrop, the nostalgic-looking local Enoden train runs through the town. This delightful sight looks like a page out of a picture book.

A popular dish that Kamakura is famous for is the *shirasu* (whitebait) rice bowl. Fresh *shirasu* rice bowls can be savored from mid-March through the end of the year, when *shirasu*-fishing is permitted. When boiled with water and salt in a kettle, it is called *kama-age* (kettle-boiled) *shirasu*. *Shirasu* rice bowls that combine the smoothness of soft, fluffy *kama-age shirasu* and the juicy texture of raw *shirasu* are delectable.

An array of colors can be enjoyed through the seasons in Kamakura. Brimming with charm, you'll want to revisit here again and again.



The *shirasu* rice bowl at Akimoto restaurant has two layers, with raw *shirasu* on the top and *kama-age shirasu* underneath. The exquisite combination can be savored with rice.



This is served only with *shirasu* caught fresh that morning.



The Roast Beef Restaurant Kamakurayama was established 50 years ago. The taste of the meticulously cooked roast beef is another icon of Kamakura.

Photos courtesy of : Tsurugaoka Hachimangu Shrine, Italian Tomato Co., Ltd.
Photos: PIXTA



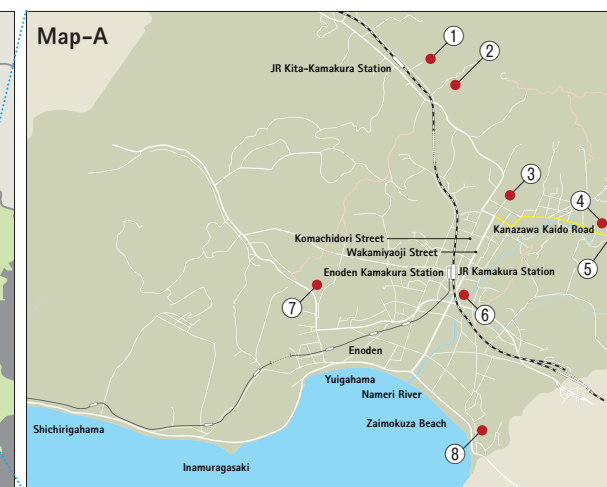
Komachidori Street is always vibrant with many tourists.



Colorful *mochi* (rice flour) ball sticks from Sakura no Yumemiya sweets shop.



The local Enoden line is famous throughout Japan.



Kamakura area map

- ① Zuirokusan Engakuji Temple
- ② Fugenzan Meigetsuin
- ③ Tsurugaoka Hachimangu Shrine
- ④ Daizozan Sugimoto-dera Temple
- ⑤ Tokasan Jomyoji Temple
- ⑥ Kamakura Farmers' Market
- ⑦ Kamakura Daibutsu Kotoku-in Temple
- ⑧ Tenshozan Renge-in Komyoji Temple

Access

- Tokyo (Approx. 60 min. by JR Yokosuka Line) ➔ Kamakura
- Haneda Airport (Approx. 30 min. by Keikyu Airport Line) ➔ Yokohama (Approx. 25 min. by JR Yokosuka Line) ➔ Kamakura

Contact information

Department of Commerce Tourism Kamakura City
<http://www.city.kamakura.kanagawa.jp/visitkamakura/en/>

Souvenirs of



Japan 21

Toting the Evolution of Design Folding Umbrellas



This polyester umbrella boasts an ultra-water-repellent coating and 99.99% UV protection, so it can be used in both sun and rain.



A slim type, less than 2.5 centimeters wide when folded.



A colorful umbrella series with adorable animal faces as the handles.



The 12-rib type with extra ribs.



Folding umbrellas have collapsible ribs making them more compact than conventional umbrellas and can conveniently fit in your bag. In Japan, people almost always use umbrellas on rainy days, and these types of umbrellas are popular because they give peace of mind should there be a sudden shower.

A range of types are available, from ultralight umbrellas weighing less than 100 grams, to slim ones that are less than 3-centimeter wide when folded, with an array of colors that are delightful to choose from.

Umbrellas commonly have six to eight ribs, but some sturdier types have more to improve their resistance against the wind. Umbrellas with a larger number of ribs resemble traditional Japanese umbrellas; some complete this look with special designs.

Many Japanese women carry parasols on hot summer days. The main objective of a parasol is to protect the skin against the sun, but the value of a parasol to prevent heatstroke is gaining a renewed appreciation in recent years. Materials are fortified to block not only ultraviolet rays, but also heat and light. Most parasols are also given a water repellent finish so they can also be used as rain umbrellas.

Rain or shine, it's nice to carry a folding umbrella to always go out with a sunny mood.

Courtesy: SMV JAPAN Co., Ltd., Shu's selection Co, LTD.

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