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KANAZAWA

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04

A Short Journey to Meet Artisans in Kaga,
Where Crafts Come to Life

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Kutani Ware



Kazuto Shimizu
Yamanaka Lacquerware Artisan

Yamanaka Lacquerware



Yuji Sato
Woodturner / Owner, mokume

Woodturning



Just 18 Minutes by Shinkansen from Kanazawa Station A Short Journey to Meet Artisans in Kaga, Where Crafts Come to Life

Against a backdrop of the sea, mountains, and hot springs, Kaga has nurtured its own distinctive crafting culture. In workshops closely tied to everyday life, artisans carry out their crafts with vitality as their life's work, which is unique to Kaga.

Just 50 kilometers west of Kanazawa, Kaga is surrounded by natural beauty—the sea, mountains, and hot springs—and preserves a unique Japanese lifestyle and culture that has disappeared from many urban areas.

The city's Yamanaka Onsen area is famous for Yamanaka lacquerware (called Yamanaka-nuri in Japanese), which has a history of around 450 years. This area boasts the largest production of Japanese lacquerware nationwide. Meanwhile, the Yamashiro Onsen area has been home to Kutani ware (called Kutani-yaki in Japanese) for around 200 years, a tradition that continues to inspire generations of outstanding artists.

Both Yamanaka lacquerware and Kutani ware are officially recognized as Traditional Crafts of Japan.

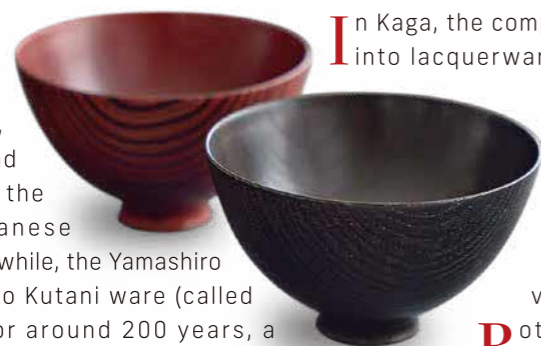
Their techniques are carefully handed down from master to apprentice, and from parent to child. Even the pieces you see in galleries and shops in Kanazawa often involve artisans from Kaga, although their names are not on the labels.

In Kaga, the complex processes that turn raw wood into lacquerware, and clay into Kutani ware, are shared among specialized artisans, who form a distinctive crafting community. This is one of the city's defining identities. In recent years, young people from overseas have also begun visiting the city to learn these skills.

Both the Yamanaka and Yamashiro Onsen areas feature atmospheric townscapes centered around their hot springs, and simply strolling through the streets is a pleasure. Yet, by stepping just a little deeper, the crafting culture begins

to reveal its depth. Visiting an artisan's workshop allows you to truly experience a fulfilling way of life, where work and daily life are deeply interconnected. Taking part in a hands-on crafting experience will deepen your understanding of the materials and techniques, culminating in a one-of-a-kind souvenir of your journey. Specialty shops offer handcrafted objects designed for contemporary life, and many restaurants serve meals on Yamanaka lacquerware or Kutani ware, which allows visitors to experience the appeal of the craft through all five senses.

Compared to the hustle and bustle of tourist destination Kanazawa, time in Kaga moves at a slower, quieter pace. A journey centered on crafting allows visitors to experience long-cherished local values, filled with fresh discoveries and lasting impressions.



Traditional Craft Museums in Kaga City

If you visit Kaga, We recommend that you take time to explore its authentic traditional crafts.

Discover Kutani porcelain and Yamanaka lacquerware, shaped by skilled artisans and centuries of history, offering a true glimpse into Japan's refined cultural heritage.

Kutaniyaki Art Museum

The Kutani-yaki has evolved to cover a wide range of distinctive styles and approaches that are presented in this museum. While the works of Kutani-yaki are showcased in the exhibition rooms, every corner of the museum has also been decorated with Kutani porcelain stone tiles.



Daishoji Area

Open: 9:00-17:00 (last entry: 16:30) / Closed: Mondays (open if Monday is a national holiday) and occasional temporary closures / Access: 550 m from Daishoji Station / CANBUS Stop: #32

Yamanaka Urushi-za / Ishikawa Prefectural Institute for Yamanaka Lacquerware

Yamanaka Urushi-za exhibits and sells traditional lacquerware products which highlight the beauty of wood grain, to tea utensils decorated with gold and silver lacquer, and modern lacquerware for contemporary living. Next to the building you can experience bowl woodturning at Ishikawa Prefectural Institute for Yamanaka Lacquerware (reservations are required). The institute is the only training centre in Japan that teaches the disciplines of woodturning and lacquering. An important collection of works is displayed in the exhibition room.



Yamanaka Onsen Area

Open: Weekdays: 9:30-16:30, weekends and national holidays: 9:30-16:30 / Closed: Wednesdays (open if Wednesday is a national holiday) and the year-end and New Year holidays / Local Bus Stop: Tsukatani / CANBUS Stop: #17

Kutani-yaki Kiln Museum

The museum is a home to remains of a historic kiln built during the Edo period (1603-1868) to revive Kutani-yaki porcelain production, which had once disappeared. It is now exhibited as a National Historic Site, preserved in the same condition in which it was discovered. In addition to the historic kiln, the site includes the oldest existing climbing kiln, built nearly 90 years ago.



Yamashiro Onsen Area

Open: 9:00-17:00 (last entry: 16:30) / Closed: Tuesdays (open if Tuesday is a national holiday) / Local Bus Stop: Yamashiro Onsen Higashi-guchi / CANBUS Stop: #23

Rokuro-no-Sato Arts and Crafts Hall

Yamanaka lacquerware, from its earliest origins, has always been distinguishable by its woodturning techniques. Try your hand at woodturning at Rokuro-no-Sato Arts and Crafts Hall, where you can make your own bowl, which can be delivered to your accommodation in Japan. It is about 5 minutes by car from Yamanaka Onsen, in a neighbourhood that has retained its traditional atmosphere and is home to a Yamanaka lacquerware woodturning craftsman.



Yamanaka Onsen Area

Open: 9:00-17:00 / Closed: Wednesdays and national holidays / Local Bus Stop: Sugatani / CANBUS Stop: #19



Book Unique Cultural Experiences

While visiting Kaga City, participating in the experiences listed below will help you enrich your journey, and gain a deeper understanding of the local traditions and culture. All experiences require advance booking, so please contact the operators to check availability. Scan the QR code on the right to explore experiences available in Kaga City. The prices shown include tax.



<https://visitkaga.jp/experiences>



Traditional Craft Workshop Tour

This exclusive tour with a knowledgeable guide offers visits to woodturning and lacquering workshops, where artisans create Yamanaka lacquerware.

Area: Yamanaka Onsen
Price: 9,900 yen/person
Booking: 7 days or more in advance
Operated by: CRAFTOUR



Woodturning Workshop

Run by a woodturner, mokume is a place where you can take part in a woodturning workshop and create your own wooden bowl, which will be delivered to your home.

Area: Yamanaka Onsen
Price: 16,500 yen/person
Booking: 1 day in advance
Operated by: mokume



Tea Ceremony Matcha Experience

A matcha experience at this former samurai residence allows guests to use Yamanaka lacquerware tea utensils, which makes the experience more meaningful.

Area: Yamanaka Onsen
Price: 3,500 yen/person
Booking: By 3 p.m. the day before
Operated by: Mugen-an



Japanese Sweets Wagashi Making

Visit a traditional, family-run "wagashi" shop, and take part in a hands-on experience where you will learn the techniques of crafting a variety of delicate Japanese sweets.

Area: Yamanaka Onsen
Price: 7,700 yen/person
Booking: Please enquire
Operated by: Sankaido



e-Bike Tour Satoyama Journey

Embark on an exciting e-bike tour with a certified cycling guide to explore Kaga's rural landscape, including Higashitani, the nationally designated preservation area.

Area: Yamanaka Onsen
Price: 16,500 yen/person
Booking: 3 days in advance
Operated by: Kominka Marebito



Jimikisha Rickshaw Ride

An experienced rickshaw driver with in-depth knowledge of Yamanaka Onsen will take you on a spring to explore the local area. Available in spring and autumn.

Area: Yamanaka Onsen
Price: 9,000 yen/person (30 mins)
Booking: 2 weeks in advance
Operated by: KIOKU



Kimono Dressing Experience

A kimono specialist will select a piece that best suits you and teach you how to wear it. Enjoy a stroll through the onsen town wearing a beautiful kimono.

Area: Yamashiro Onsen
Price: From 5,300 yen/person
Booking: 2 days in advance (7 days in advance for a group of 4 or over)
Operated by: Kagayui



Kutani-yaki Porcelain Painting

You will be guided by a Kutani-yaki artist as your teacher and use the same pigments employed in their professional work. Your work will be delivered to your accommodation in Japan.

Area: Yamashiro Onsen
Price: From 1,800 yen/person
Booking: Sign up at the shop
Operated by: Coco Gallery



The World of Traditional Japanese Sweets "Nerikiri"

Join this experience to learn about the process, ingredients, and tools used to make traditional Japanese sweets, nerikiri. A matcha whisking experience is included at the end.

Area: Yamashiro Onsen
Price: 11,000 yen/person
Booking: 1 day in advance
Operated by: Kashi tsukasa YOKOYA



Kayaking and SUP on the Lake

Lake Shibayama is the perfect spot for family-friendly and beginner-friendly water sports. An experienced instructor will guide you through everything from warming up to floating on the water.

Area: Katayamazu Onsen
Price: From 6,000 yen/person
Booking: 3 days in advance
Operated by: Shibayama Slow



Samurai Spear Experience

Become a samurai in Daishoji, Kaga. This rare experience lets you practice a martial art with over 300 years of history using Japan's longest 3.6-meter spear. Prices vary depending on the plan.

Area: Daishoji
Price: 8,800-22,000 yen/person
Booking: 10 days in advance
Operated by: Kobudo-Bushinkai



Private Guided Tours

Strolling through the area with a local guide is the best and most enjoyable way to discover its people, customs, and culture. Get in touch with KIOKU to explore even more of what Kaga has to offer.

Area: Any area of your choice within Kaga City
Price: From 33,000 yen/group (2-4 people)
Booking: 1 week in advance
Operated by: KIOKU



Stretching from the Sea of Japan's curving coastline up into rugged, mountainous terrain, impossibly picturesque Kaga City enjoys the best of all worlds. Flourishes of the area's rich historical, cultural and artistic heritage are everywhere to be seen. From relaxing hot springs and magnificent vistas, to natural wonders and the freshest seafood around, Kaga offers it all.



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Visit KAGA Area

18 mins by Shinkansen from Kanazawa!

