

The background image shows the interior of the Echizen Lacquerware Hall. It features a high ceiling with exposed wooden beams and rafters. Long fluorescent lights are mounted on the ceiling. In the foreground and middle ground, there are several long wooden tables displaying a variety of lacquerware items, including bowls, plates, and small containers. Some items are arranged in rows, while others are more scattered. In the background, there are shelves with more lacquerware and some informational displays. The overall atmosphere is warm and traditional.

Experience Echizen Lacquerware, a traditional national craft –Painting and chinkin experience guided by a craftsman–

Concept:

Come and experience the various charms of Echizen lacquerware, which has a history spanning more than 1,500 years, at Urushi no Sato Kaikan (Echizen Lacquerware Hall). Make your own original lacquerware under the direct guidance of a craftsman.

Echizen lacquerware is a traditional lacquerware produced mainly in the Kawada region of Sabae City, Fukui Prefecture, and first emerged around 1,500 years ago. The area has long been home to many lacquer tappers, and lacquerware production has been cultivated in an environment where high-quality timber is available. Towards the end of the Edo period, techniques such as “chinkin” from Wajima and “maki-e” from Kyoto were introduced, and Echizen lacquerware was imbued with brilliant and elegant decorative qualities. New machinery and techniques were introduced during the Taisho period, and nationwide demand for Echizen lacquerware grew, and today, Echizen lacquerware boasts a domestic market share of more than 80% in the food service and commercial-use lacquerware market. Echizen lacquerware was the first Fukui Prefecture craft to be designated as a traditional national craft, and its techniques and beauty are highly regarded both in Japan and abroad.

Sabae City (Fukui)

Sabae City, the birthplace of Echizen lacquerware

Sabae City is known as the birthplace of Echizen lacquerware, which has a history that spans 1,500 years. According to one theory, the production of lacquerware was encouraged by King Oodo (later Emperor Keitai, the 26th emperor of Japan), who commissioned a local lacquerware craftsman to repair his crown and was impressed by the quality of the workmanship. The production of Echizen lacquerware is based on a well-established division of labor, with specialized craftsmen in charge of each step of the process, including wood preparation, lacquering, and decoration. Sabae City is surrounded by mountains, which maintain humidity and temperatures suitable for lacquerware production, which helped it to thrive. The city also has an abundance of high-quality lumber, which led to the growth of lacquerware manufacturing. The name of the city derives from the fact that the arrows used to defeat bandits along the Hokuriku Road in ancient times were shaped like the tail of a mackerel.

Urushi no Sato Kaikan (Echizen Lacquerware Hall)

Urushi no Sato Kaikan houses exhibits showing the manufacturing process of Echizen lacquerware and historical records, and at the craftsman's workshop, traditional artisans demonstrate how to make lacquerware. Visitors can create their own original lacquerware through three different hands-on experiences: painting, chinkin (gold inlay), and fuki-urushi (wipe lacquering). This is a valuable place where visitors can experience the charm of Echizen lacquerware, and is well worth a visit for those interested in traditional crafts as well as families.



The evolution of painting techniques

The origin of Echizen lacquerware dates back to the Kofun period, when King Odo (later Emperor Keitai, the 26th emperor of Japan), had his crown repaired by a lacquer craftsman in the Katayama area. The lacquerware of this period was mainly black-lacquered, with simple designs. Towards the end of the Edo period, a maki-e lacquerware craftsman was invited from Kyoto, and the maki-e technique was introduced to the area. Maki-e is a technique that involves sprinkling gold or silver powder on patterns drawn in lacquer. It added elegance to Echizen lacquerware, increasing its decorative value, and Echizen lacquerware became an increasingly common sight on special occasions.

Painting experience

The Echizen lacquerware painting experience is an activity that allows participants to paint their own designs on lacquerware. You can paint your own designs, or use the prepared paint templates for an assured and enjoyable experience. Finished pieces can be taken home right away, making this the perfect way to create memories with family and friends. Through this experience, participants will have an invaluable opportunity to come up with their own original creations while experiencing traditional crafts.



Chinkin technique

The chinkin technique was brought to Echizen from Wajima near the end of the Edo period, and added a brilliant decorative touch to Echizen lacquerware. This technique involves carving patterns on the surface of lacquerware and inlaying gold powder or gold leaf in the carved patterns with lacquer, resulting in a finished product that is both robust and aesthetically pleasing. During the Edo period, the use of lacquerware in Buddhist rituals and daily life increased, and products made using the chinkin technique were especially valued as luxury items. Echizen lacquerware came to be used for a wide range of purposes, from purely utilitarian items to crafts with decorative value.

Chinkin experience

The chinkin experience is an activity that allows participants to experience the traditional technique of carving patterns on the surface of lacquerware and inlaying gold powder or gold leaf in the carved patterns with lacquer. Participants can enjoy the process of coming up with their own designs, carving patterns on the surface of lacquerware, and inlaying gold powder in those patterns. Through this experience, participants will be able to experience a traditional Japanese craft and create their own original lacquerware, as well as have a great opportunity to learn about the process of making lacquerware as well as its culture by observing craftsmen's techniques from up close.

