



Learn the Techniques of Master Craftsmen! Original Crafting Experience: Wakasa Lacquerware & Wakasa Agate Carving

Concept

Experience the profoundness of Wakasa's traditional crafts through live demonstrations by master craftsman and hands-on creation of original Wakasa lacquerware and Wakasa agate carvings.

The Wakasa region, which borders on the Sea of Japan, is blessed with stunning ria coastlines and rich natural beauty. Historically known as *Miketsukuni* (the Imperial Food Province), it has flourished as a center of food culture. The region is also home to traditional crafts such as Wakasa lacquerware, Wakasa agate carving, and Wakasa washi paper, which have been passed down through generations. At Wakasa Koubou, we offer experiential programs designed to preserve and share these traditional crafts with future generations. Visitors can enjoy live demonstrations by skilled artisans and participate in activities such as polishing Wakasa lacquered chopsticks or Wakasa agate carvings.

Why not create your own unique piece while immersing yourself in the rich culture and craftsmanship of Wakasa?

Obama City (Fukui)

Nature and Culture of the Wakasa Region

The Wakasa region borders on the Sea of Japan and is home to Wakasa Bay, known for its stunning ria coastline. This area blends rich natural landscapes with a deep cultural heritage and is especially renowned for its fresh seafood and traditional crafts.

The city of Obama has long been known as *Miketsukuni* (the Imperial Food Province), supplying ingredients to the imperial court and fostering a rich food culture. Additionally, the Wakasa region has preserved traditional crafts such as Wakasa lacquerware, Wakasa agate carving, and Wakasa washi paper, which continue to be passed down through generations.

The Connection Between Wakasa's Traditional Crafts and Nature

Wakasa's rich nature has played a significant role in the development of its traditional crafts. For example, Wakasa lacquerware is known for its designs that capture the beauty of the sea, incorporating natural materials such as pine needles, eggshells, and seashells to create intricate patterns. Similarly, Wakasa agate carving is a delicate craft that makes use of natural materials, with works created by polishing natural raw agate stones. These traditional techniques have been passed down through generations of skilled artisans and continue to be highly prized today.



Wakasa Agate Carving

Wakasa agate carving has a history of over 300 years and was designated a national traditional craft in 1976. The most distinctive feature of this craft is its vibrant, deep red color, which is created through a process known as “tempering.” By heating the raw agate stones, a chemical reaction occurs within the material, transforming its color into a vivid red hue. Wakasa agate carving spans a wide variety of products, including accessories, ornaments, and tea ceremony tools. These items not only add beauty and color to everyday life but are also highly regarded as fine pieces of decorative art.

Wakasa Lacquerware

Wakasa lacquerware is a type of lacquerware produced in the area around Obama City in Fukui Prefecture. Its origins date back to the early Edo period (1603 to 1868), when the beautiful seabed of Wakasa Bay was depicted in designs. One of the distinctive features of Wakasa lacquerware is the use of natural materials, such as eggshells, seashells, and pine needles, to create intricate patterns. The *togi-dashi* technique, which involves layering lacquer and then polishing it to reveal the patterns beneath, gives the ware its unique elegance and rich texture. Additionally, because each piece is crafted entirely by a single artisan, the individual characteristics and personal touch of the craftsman are often reflected in the final product. Wakasa lacquerware has also led to the development of Wakasa lacquered chopsticks, which now account for the majority of lacquered chopstick production in Japan.



Wakasa Koubou

Wakasa Koubou plays a crucial role in preserving the traditional crafts of the Wakasa region and passing them down to future generations. At the workshop, visitors have the opportunity to create their own unique, original pieces and experience the charm of traditional crafts firsthand. Wakasa Koubou is cherished not only by tourists but also by local residents. We invite you can also immerse yourself in the local culture and heritage of the region while learning traditional crafting techniques.

Original Crafting Experience: Wakasa Lacquerware & Wakasa Agate Carving:

At the workshop, you can enjoy the following experiences (duration: 90-120 minutes):

1. Watch a Live Demonstration by Skilled Artisans

Artisans who have carried on the traditional crafts of Wakasa Obama will showcase their techniques in a live demonstration.

2. Wakasa Lacquerware: Chopstick Polishing Experience (approx. 40 minutes)

Polish and complete your own set of Wakasa lacquered chopsticks, which feature embedded materials such as abalone shells and eggshells. The chopsticks will be finished and handed to you with a semi-gloss finish.

3. Wakasa Agate Carving: Agate Polishing Experience (approx. 40 minutes)

Polish agate stones using two types of sandpaper and create your own accessories or other original piece.

