

# FUKUI

Deep.  
Crafted.  
Layered.

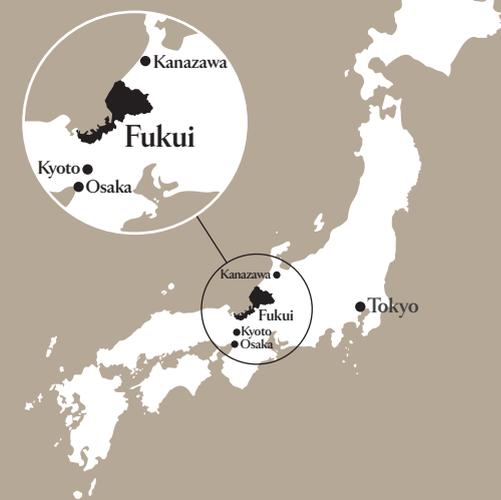




# CONTENTS

- 02 **Inside Fukui**  
Why visit Fukui Prefecture.
- 04 **Elemental Beauty**  
What to see and experience in Fukui.
- 06 **Zen**  
A hub for Zen Buddhism and temple life.
- 08 **Paper**  
Fukui's legendary *washi* paper-making world.
- 10 **Crafts**  
Fukui's rich craftsmanship culture, old and new.
- 12 **Sake**  
Fukui's pure water and a hub for all things sake.
- 14 **Sea**  
Surf communities on southern beaches.
- 16 **Access**  
How to get to Fukui.
- 17 **Information**  
Where to go, shop, sleep, eat.

# INSIDE FUKUI



Fukui spans Japan's rugged western coastline, flowing alongside the Sea of Japan. The scenic region is easily accessible, just a few hours by train from Tokyo, Kyoto, Kanazawa and Osaka cities. At a time when tourism levels are hitting record heights across Japan, Fukui is a hidden gem. Deep, calm and layered, it's a place to explore and discover, rest and retreat – and experience a rare taste of real Japan.

The image shows a rugged, layered rock formation, likely a sea stack or cliffside. The rocks are grey and brown, with distinct horizontal and vertical fracturing. A large, dark, rectangular opening in the rock face suggests a cave or tunnel. In the foreground, a small waterfall cascades over a rock ledge into a pool of dark water. The overall atmosphere is one of ancient, elemental beauty.

# ELEMENTAL BEAUTY

**T**he stillness of Zen. Time-etched rocks. A touch of *washi* paper. Pure mountain water. A sip of sake. And the sound of the sea. Wander off the trodden path to touch the quiet beauty of Fukui. This nature-soaked prefecture is filled with sacred mountains, ancient lakes and craft towns. Fukui's layers – elemental, unique, timeless – define its essence. Written into its rugged rocks are ancient stories dating back to the age of dinosaurs (Fukui is famously home to Japan's highest concentration of dinosaur fossils). Fukui is also the spiritual heart of Zen Buddhism; while a rich crafts and manufacturing heritage (paper, knives, lacquer, glasses frames, sake) is imprinted into its DNA; and laid-back surf communities pepper scenic southern beaches. These raw layers create a living harmony of craft and landscape, spirit and beauty – a singular expression of deep Japan found only in Fukui.



# ZEN

The sun is just rising – but the monks at Eiheiji Temple have long been awake, praying, chanting, meditating, cooking and cleaning. One of Japan’s largest temples, Eiheiji – also known as Temple of Eternal Peace – is a spiritual pulse point for Zen Buddhism.

Founded by Zen master Dogen in 1244, Eiheiji – one of two head temples of the Soto Zen sect – spans an atmospheric complex of traditional architecture, with wooden staircases and tiled rooftops cascading down a mountainside, all wrapped in seasonal trees.

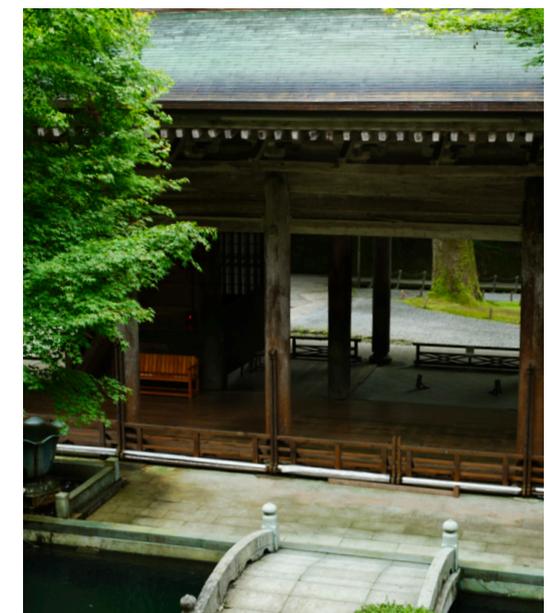
Far more than a sacred relic, Eiheiji is an important working temple, humming with the daily rhythm of around 100 trainee monks residing there (poetically known as *unsui* or “clouds and water”).

As a result, it offers an unusually authentic glimpse into Zen life – from the deep scents and sounds of early morning prayer sessions; to the silent cleaning of wooden corridors.

The immersion is deepened further at the temple’s hotel Hakujukan. A modern riff on traditional temple life, it’s home to 18 contemporary Japanese-style rooms, plus public baths, a serene tatami mat space overlooking a garden, a restaurant – and even a special concierge service, which can arrange access to

Eiheiji’s pre-dawn service, a near hypnotic-experience steeped in rich incense and sutra reading.

In short? It’s a perfect setting for an authentic taste of Zen life – offering a rare glimpse into the timeless wisdom of this ancient temple complex.



# PAPER



It's soft and durable, textured and organic – and deeply tethered to Fukui's ancient mountains, pristine forests and pure rivers. *Washi*, traditional Japanese handmade paper, has long been synonymous with Echizen, a scenic nature-steeped region in northern Fukui Prefecture. One of Japan's most important *washi* regions, Echizen's timeless processes, rituals and methods are anchored in a rich paper-making history dating back more than 1,500 years.

Nature is a key protagonist: a temperate, rainy climate combined with pure, flowing river water from the nearby Ryohaku Mountains create the perfect conditions for producing strong, high quality *washi*, renowned for its texture and translucency.

Today, dozens of *washi* makers are based in Echizen, producing traditional items (screens, lanterns, sacred decorations) and contemporary objects (from bags to notebooks) while collaborating with global designers, architects and artists.

At Taki Seishi, a family-run business dating back to 1875, innovation is tempered with tradition

(their *washi* is wrapped across the serene Kerry Hill-designed lobby ceiling at Aman Tokyo). Hideaki Taki, seventh generation at the helm, is making paper. Baseball cap in place, sunlight streaming through factory windows, he gently, quietly tilts a large screen from side to side, the natural *kozo* mulberry fibres forming a translucent sheet of paper, before skilfully decorating with water sprays.

Another hub is 80-year-old RYOZO paper mill, home to a paper shop as well as an atmospheric workshop where visitors can try their hand at making *washi* – creating fibre paper sheets with the guidance of longtime masters. Ask any papermaker in Echizen what is most special about the region's *washi*, there is typically one reply: "The goddess." At the heart of Echizen's paper culture is Kawakami Gozen – aka the Paper Goddess, who taught villagers the art of *washi*-making 1,500 years earlier and today continues to reside at nearby Otaki-Okamoto Shrine.

Still and serene, the shrine is a deeply respected part of daily life in Echizen – and a powerful local symbol of Fukui's sacred ties between nature and craftsmanship, paper and community.



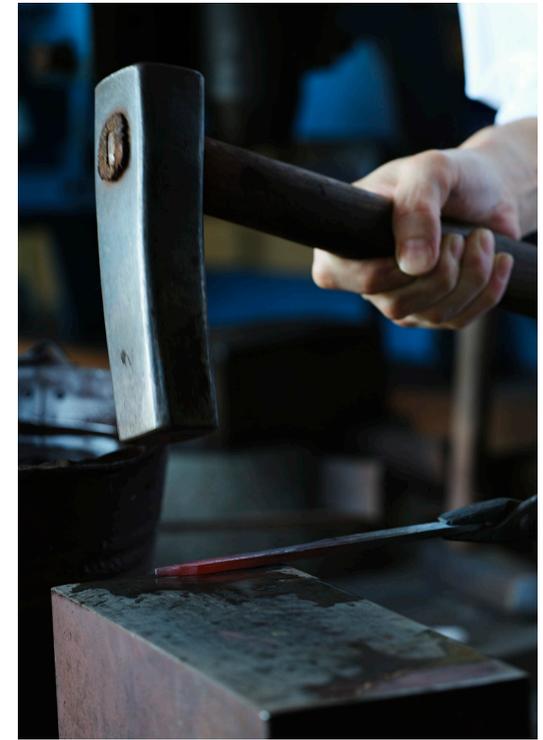
# CRAFTS

Lacquerware. Eye glasses. Ceramics. Knives. Textiles. Fukui has long been famed for its high-quality manufacturing, with countless expert hubs producing a raft of objects, crafted with beauty and precision, for everyday life.

Anchored in temple and samurai heritage, Fukui's crafts culture reflects a centuries-old harmony between humans and a natural landscape abundant in seas, mountains and pure flowing water.

In more modern times, Fukui's legendary eyeglass frames have shifted into focus; skilled artisans in Sabae city fuse technical precision and modern design with fine craftsmanship to produce around 96 per cent of Japan's eyewear.

Further deepening Fukui's making culture is Renew, a lively annual festival involving more than 100 crafts workshops and factories opening their doors across Echizen and Sabae.



Meanwhile, a new generation of Fukui innovators are smoothly steering the region from the past to the future. Among them is visionary Tatsuhiro Sekisaka, 12th generation of a family lacquerware business founded in 1701.

Sekisaka taps into the region's deep lacquerware heritage to produce original creations for modern life – from wooden boxes to trays – as imagined in collaboration with contemporary designers such as Gen Suzuki and Junichiro Yokota.

He also helms a new Fukui-based brand called SARO, exploring the potential of craftsmanship for contemporary lifestyles, as reflected in the clean smooth lines and curves of a flatware collection by Swiss designer Carlo Clopath.

Sekisaka's lifestyle store ataw is a highlight: minimalist and light-flooded with an industrial edge, wrapped in green rice fields in rural Echizen.

The space showcases contemporary lacquerware and design collaborations by Sekisaka and SARO, alongside expertly curated design objects from Fukui and beyond – from glasses and everyday items to art pieces.

For Sekisaka, his creative impetus is simple: "Fukui's lacquerware industry is very complex, it uses a lot of wood and resin and different specialists for dozens of different processes. We want to explore these techniques to make new products for modern life today."



## MADE IN FUKUI



### GLASSES

For more than 120 years, Sabae has been an eyewear hub – today, famously blending centuries-old metalworking with titanium technology to craft lightweight, durable frames.



### ECHIZEN LACQUERWARE

A prized local craft dating back 1,500 years, around 80 per cent of Japan's commercial restaurant lacquerware is produced in the Echizen area.



### ECHIZEN KNIVES

Forged and finetuned over centuries, *Echizen Uchihamono* knives layer steel precision with hand craftsmanship.



### ECHIZEN POTTERY

Ceramics made in Echizen – one of Japan's six ancient kilns – are timelessly earthy and strong, expertly crafted from iron-rich local clay.



### ECHIZEN CHESTS

Fukui is also famed for its *tansu* – handcrafted wooden chests defined by precise joinery and durable design, fusing functionality with centuries-old craftsmanship.

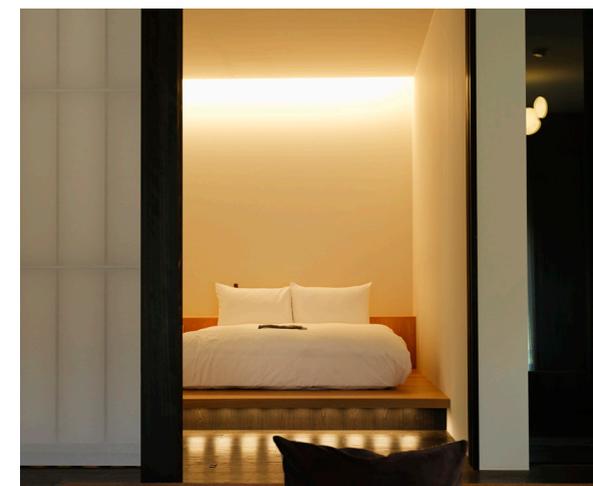
# SAKE

Pure water. Fukui's culture of making sake is rooted in the flow of water – fresh, timeless and abundant – through mountains, green rice fields and sparkling rivers. This spirit is reflected in ESHIKOTO, a contemporary complex celebrating all things sake, wrapped in nature in Eiheiji town.

Created by centuries-old Ishidaya Nizaemon, the company behind Kokuryu Sake Brewery, ESHIKOTO is the embodiment of its name, which means “good things” in ancient dialect.

ESHIKOTO is a place to eat, drink and sleep, in a series of modern architect-designed spaces – all harmonised with a full immersion in the sake world. Tastings (and shopping) unfold at Ishidaya ESHIKOTO Store; while French-inspired treats are served in serenely white *wasabi*-wrapped Apéro & Pâtisserie acoya.

A black-walled structure called Garyu is home to cathedral-like wood ceilings and at its heart, a clean-lined transparent cellar containing sparkling sake. Soba Yamaya and HAREYA bakery are other onsite spots to visit.



Best of all? It's possible to check in and sleep over (in style) for a full sake immersion. Kanshukuen ESHIKOTO is a collection of eight spacious private villas. Inside, minimal contemporary design is fused with the warmth of traditional Fukui crafts, from ceramics to paper.

Bathrooms steal the show – deep pool-like bathtubs are filled with hot spring water, slidable walls

opening to offer deeply relaxing soaks-with-a-view across the surrounding landscape of rivers, rice fields and mountains.

And of course, sake is always on the menu – both at Bar TOKI, a serene flow of water around its contemporary white walls; and restaurant Japanese Cuisine En, with its wood counter and creative local cuisine.

# SEA

Towering cliffs, ancient rocks, green rice fields, crafts villages – and endless layers of blue sea. All roads lead to the sea in Fukui. For millennia, its coastline, sweeping and scenic, has been shaped by the powerful waters of the Sea of Japan.

Fukui's connection to the sea is steeped in heritage, culture and commerce: the coastal region Wakasa is the starting point of the Saba-Kaido (Mackerel Road), an ancient network of trading routes connecting Fukui directly with Kyoto.

Today, Wakasa is home to a growing surf culture. Takahama is one such hub, with its curved beaches lined with pine trees and mountains, blazing sunsets skies and big wintertime swells.

Coastal highlights include Surf Hotel II Mare, a contemporary seven-room hotel with clean-lined interiors and sea views; while nearby Wakasa-Wada beach is another popular spot.



Inspired by the idea of community, local surfer Shungo Imai helms Familiar Beachside Village, home to a buzzy café and guesthouse (with its own craft beer). “Here, the atmosphere is relaxed and peaceful, there is a local feel, good seafood and crab in winter and the sunsets are beautiful,” he says. “Surfers are coming here to find good waves in the winter. The community is growing.”



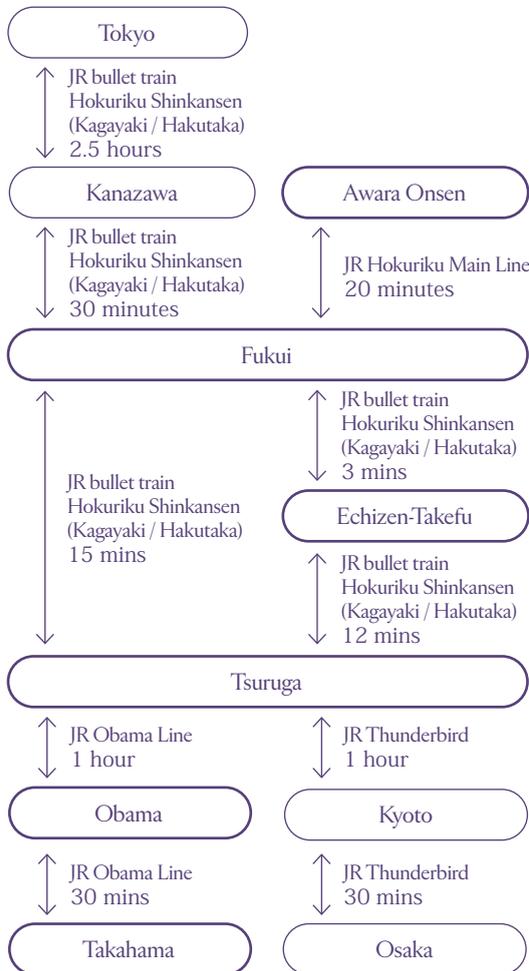
Every winter, the coastal waters of Fukui bustle with the arrival of a prized delicacy: Echizen crabs, known as *Echizen-gani*. Famously sweet, pure and packed with *umami*, these legendary male snow crabs are caught in the waters of the Sea of Japan between November and March every year. The crabs are deeply entwined with Fukui life and a symbol of the region: they are celebrated in local festivals, served to the Imperial Family and so prized that each crab is marked with a yellow tag of authenticity on its claw. Best of all? They are always tasty – whether boiled, grilled or served as deep rich crab paste rice bowls known as *kani-miso-don*.



# ACCESS

Fukui Prefecture flows alongside the Sea of Japan, on the country's western coastline. The region can be accessed easily by both train networks and by car. It is located a few hours by bullet train from Tokyo. Positioned just south of Kanazawa and north of Osaka and Kyoto, Fukui is also within easy reach of these three cities.

## TRANSPORT



## MAP



# INFORMATION

## CRAFTS

### Sekisaka

Centuries-old family lacquerware company, running ataw design store and SARO brand.

### RYOZO paper mill

Wasbi paper mill, offering immersive workshops exploring the world of Japanese paper-making.

### Taki Seishi

Family-run *wasbi*-making company behind a raft of high-profile creative projects.

### Takefu Knife Village

A knife-making hub, showcasing centuries of traditional metal craftsmanship, alongside a shop.

## SEE

### Eiheiji Temple

A major Zen Buddhist temple, offering an immersive glimpse into the lives of monks.

### Sotomo Sightseeing Boat Cruise

A boat ride exploring Fukui's rugged coastal cliffs and caves, etched with history.

### Varve Museum

A geological museum, designed by architect Hiroshi Naito, showcasing Fukui's ancient layers of sediment.

### Familiar Beachside Village

A local surf hub on Wakasa Wada beach, with a laid-back restaurant and craft beer.

## EAT

### Ryotei Kaikatei "Sou-An"

Creative modern Japanese cuisine in Fukui City, an airy glass-wrapped space by Kengo Kuma.

### Hinohana at Villa Fuu

An intimate counter restaurant in Takahama with modern artworks and fresh local seafood.

### Thee Coffee

A crafted retro feel in Fukui's only jazz *kissaten* cafe on a historic street in Kumagawa.

### Unagiya Moemon

Delicious freshwater *unagi* eels charcoal grilled on rice, overlooking Lake Mikata.

## SLEEP

### ESHIKOTO Kanshukuen

Luxury lodges with open-air baths, curated crafts and sake experiences at ESHIKOTO.

### Hakujukan

An immersive hotel at Eiheiji Temple, offering a deep taste of Zen life.

### Yao Kumagawa

A collection of renovated houses in a historic post town along an ancient trade route.

### Surf Hotel Il Mare

A modern beach hotel with sweeping sea views in Takahama.

[For more information](#)

