



Contact us:

Mashiko Tourist Bureau

1539-2 Mashiko Mashiko-machi Haga-gun Tochigi-ken
TEL 0285(70)1120

Mashiko Society of Commerce and Industry

2044-1 Mashiko Mashiko-machi, Haga-gun, Tochigi-ken
TEL 0285(72)2398

Mashiko Pottery Cooperative

4352-2 Mashiko Mashiko-machi, Haga-gun, Tochigi-ken
TEL 0285(72)3107

Issued by

Mashiko Tourism and Commerce Section

〒321-4293

2030 Mashiko Mashiko-machi, Haga-gun, Tochigi-ken

TEL 0285(72)8846

FAX 0285(70)1180

<http://www.town.mashiko.tochigi.jp/>



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A Travel Guide

Annual Events

◆ Late April to Early May

Spring

Spring Mashiko Pottery Fair (Jonai and Sayado areas)

◆ June 24 to July 25

Summer

Ajisai (Hydrangea) Festival (Tahei Shrine)

◆ Late June

Kenka-sai (Offering Flowers Festival) and Pass-through-a-thatched-arch Festival (Tahei Shrine)

◆ July 23 to 25

Gion Festival (Kashima Shrine)

◆ July 24

Receiving Japanese sake from God' Ceremony (Tobancho Town)

◆ The First Saturday in August

Shishimai (Lion Dance) (Takao Shrines in Ashinuma)

◆ Mid-August

Mashiko Pottery Bon Sale (Jonai and Sayado areas)

Fall

◆ Late August to Early September

Mashiko Flame Festival (Togei Messe Mashiko)

◆ Late October to Early November

Fall Mashiko Pottery Fair (Jonai and Sayado areas)

◆ November 23

Industrial Festival in Mashiko Town (Mashiko Community Center)

Winter

◆ Early December to Early May

Strawberry Picking

◆ Early January

First Sale for Mashiko Pottery (Jonai and Sayado areas)

◆ Late February

Hatsuuma (Horse of the Chinese zodiac) Festival and A Big Earthenware Pot Party (sponsored by the Jonai Self-Government Committee)

As one of the pottery producing regions, Mashiko is known throughout Japan and in many foreign countries.

Mashiko rests gently amid the fields, which are on small hills and mountains. In spring, waterfowl fly down and can be seen on the pond, which in winter is covered with clear ice. Here we witness the grace of the four seasons that adorn the town in colors such as strawberries, Japanese persimmons, grapes and apples.

Mashiko also gives good memories for those who visit for the first time.



Sudagaiké Pond

'Mashiko Pottery' appeared in the background of the land and climate, as the above-mentioned, has smooth, glossy surface and is a thick container to the brim.

When you wrap it in your palm, its warmth gradually soaks into you.

Mashiko also gives us a great charm with its enterprising and local familiarity. This is because it has accepted many potters from inside and outside of Mashiko since the Taisho Period as their base of artisan movement. Every time you visit this town you will find new faces of Mashiko and come to a deeper understanding of its great artistic soul.



Soba Field

Mashiko: Famous Pottery Center in the embrace of nature

Mashiko Pottery



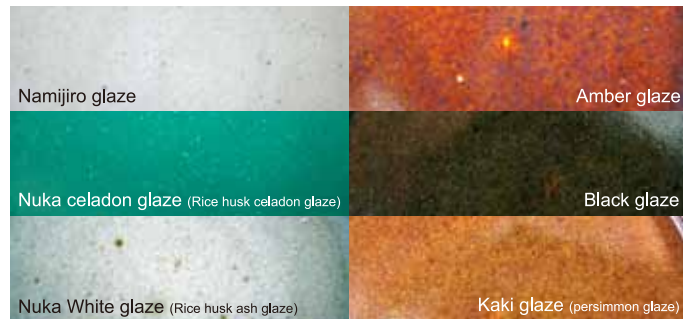
- ① Brush painting pottery ② Clay spirally wedged ③ Forming with clay by potter's wheel
 ④ The climbing kiln in Mashiko Museum of Ceramic Art
 ⑤ The room in The Mashiko Reference Collection Museum where Shoji Hamada worked
 ⑥ A vase Shoji Hamada produced

Thanking the Soil and Praying to the Flame

History of the Mashiko Pottery is said to have started in the late Tokugawa Period when Keizaburo Otsuka learned in Kasama to build the kiln. From that point Mashiko began producing tools necessary for daily life in Japan, such as pots for water, teapots and so on from pottery, becoming one of the leading pottery regions of the country. The success of this industry was due to Mashiko's proximity to the large Tokyo market and excellent clay for pottery.

In 1924, Shoji Hamada moved to Mashiko. He promoted the artisan movement with Muneyoshi Yanagi, who recognized 'beauty for use', strongly influencing the other craftsmen living in Mashiko. Gradually the pottery pieces created began to be 'works of art'. Many young and veteran potters move to Mashiko to set up their own kiln and create pottery in their own way.

The Source of Soil in Kitagoya



The Six Mashiko Glazes



Mashiko Pottery Fair

This fair, one of the usual events in Mashiko, has been held each year since 1966 and was selected as one of '100 most beautiful festivals in Tochigi Prefecture.' This fair is open twice every year: spring and fall. In spring about 400,000 people and in fall 200,000 come to enjoy this fair. This has become one of the greatest events throughout the town. Many smaller items used in daily life in Japan such as, teacups, chopstick rests and plates, to art works such as, pots and vases, are sold as special discounted prices for the fair. Agricultural products grown in Mashiko are also sold so that this event is more popular among the people coming to the fair.

● Mashiko-machi Tourist Bureau <http://www.mashiko-kankou.org/>



Jonai-zaka Street

About 30 vessel shops are on the street. Pottery placed in the doorsteps of these shops is simple and delight the eyes of those who come to this street. Thanks to the town's improvement plans, such as pavement and public restrooms we can enjoy walking comfortably on the street.

Pottery Experience

There are many ceramics classes offered in Mashiko so everyone can have the chance learn about making pottery. Not only do you have the opportunity to see a variety of pottery made by professionals, but you can create your own pieces as well.



● Mashiko-machi Tourist Bureau
<http://www.mashiko-kankou.org/>

Places to see



- ① Mashiko Museum of Ceramic Art (Togei-kan)
Selected pieces by potters whose works are representative of Mashiko, are exhibited in one room.
- ② Kihei Sasajima Museum
This museum exhibits the works of Kihei Sasajima, a woodcarving artist, who was born and raised in Mashiko.
- ③ Pottery Studio 'Togei Koubou' (reservations needed)
- ④ The Late Shoji Hamada's Residence (Designated as Cultural Pottery Asset in Mashiko)
- ⑤ The Tea Room where you can enjoy drinking coffee from your favorite cup
- ⑥ A Three-foot Earthen Drum made of Mashiko Pottery

(Each can be seen at the Mashiko Museum of Ceramic Art)(Togei Messe Mashiko)

Touch the essence of Mashiko



A Wood Carving by Kihei Sasajima

Mashiko Museum of Ceramic Art

(Togei Messe Mashiko)



Togei Messe in Mashiko is on the hill called, 'Pottery Hill' to the north of the Jonai-zaka Street.

In the museum, mainly the works noted in connection with the late Shoji Hamada, who was designated as a Living National Treasure, are exhibited as well as excellent ones produced by other potters living in Mashiko. Shoji Hamada's former residence has been relocated on the premises in front of the museum. The climbing kiln, which he used regularly, has been restored and relocated to the site. Nearby in the Pottery Studio you can experience pottery making for yourself.

<http://www.mashiko-museum.jp/>

Tel.0285-72-7555

Shoji Hamada Memorial Mashiko Sanko-kan

(The Mashiko Reference Collection Museum)

The museum features the pottery artist, the Late Shoji Hamada as well as the craft works he collected from foreign countries.

Tel.0285-72-5300

<http://www.mashiko-sankokan.net/>



Tsukamoto Memorial Art Museum



The pottery and art pieces produced by famous potters, who studied and graduated from Tsukamoto Pottery School are on display along with those of artists on exchange. These exhibitions reproduce, in part, the past 100 years of Mashiko pottery history.

Tel.0285-72-9002

<http://www.tsukamoto.net/>

Wagner Nandor Art Gallery

The works of Wagner Nandor, sculpture, pictures, pottery, and terra cotta, are displayed in the gallery.

Wagner Nandor is a sculptor who was born in Hungary. You can also see his studio where he produced his works in life, the dormitory and the teahouse here. The regular exhibitions are held twice in a year, in spring and in fall. Each period of the exhibitions is for a month.



Tel.0285-72-9866

<http://wagnernandor.com/indexj.htm>

Cultural Properties



① The Main Building of Saimyoji Temple The building was established in 1394 and designated as one of the Tochigi Prefectural and Cultural properties.

② The Rou Gate of Saimyoji Temple The Gate was established in 1492 and designated as one of the Japanese Important and Cultural Properties.

③ A Three-story Pagoda of Saimyoji Temple The Pagoda is one of the famous Four Oldest Pagodas in the Kanto and Koshinetsu areas.

④ Entsuji Temple The Temple, which opened in 1402, developed as a school and produced many famous priests.

⑤ Koya, Indigo Dyeing Studio This Studio was built in the middle of Tokugawa Period, designated as the Tochigi Prefectural and Cultural Property.

⑥ Anzenji Temple The Temple's floor makes a warbler-like chirp when walked on. The floor, the only one of its kind in the Prefecture, is specifically designed to alert occupants when someone steps on the floor.

Take a pilgrimage to the shrines and temples enjoying nature along the way

In Mashiko area there are many cultural properties dating back to the Muromachi and Kamakura Periods.

The Saimyoji Temple, on the high hill in Mashiko, has its Rou Gate, a three-story pagoda (designated as a Japanese Important and Cultural Property) and the only smiling King Emma in Japan.

These ancient unique sites provide a quiet atmosphere for visitors.

In the town of Obanosato, called 'Treasury for Nature', you can see the Jizoin, a Stone Buddhist Temple; the Lords of Utsunomiya's Graves; Okura and Tsuna Shrines. You can comfortably enjoy to this area as part of your visit to Mashiko.



Saimyoji Temple When you climb the stone steps up the hill, you will see the Rou Gate to this temple, a three-story pagoda and a large, copper bell on your left. The rare smiling King Emma in Japan will be on your right. Beyond the Rou Gate the main temple rises ahead at the back of the site.

The Rou Gate, the three-story pagoda, and the Zushi, or miniature shrine in the temple are all designated as the Japanese Important and Cultural Properties.

<http://fumon.jp/>



Jizoin Temple

This temple is said to have been built during Muromachi Period (about 600 years ago). The shape of the pole sides is an angle and inside of the temple is made of pillars and composes the Amidabutsudo-style planes. The temple is designated as the Japanese Important and Cultural Property.

The Lord Utsunomiya's graves

The Lord Utsunomiya's Graves have been passed on from generation to generation since the Third Lord Asatsuna retired and transferred their graves to this site. The graves of the first to the thirty-third Lord of Utsunomiya, Lord Masatsuna, have been buried here. These graves are designated as a Tochigi Prefectural and Cultural Property.



Tsuna Shrine



Okura Shrine

Tsuna and Okura Shrines

Tsuna Shrine was built by the Lord Asatsuna in 1194 and has been designated as a Japanese Important Cultural Property. Okura Shrine is said to have been built in 807. Its main Shrine has an 'ikken yashiro nagare zukuri', or a special kind of gabled roof covered with straw-thatched roofing and is designated as a Japanese Important Cultural Property.



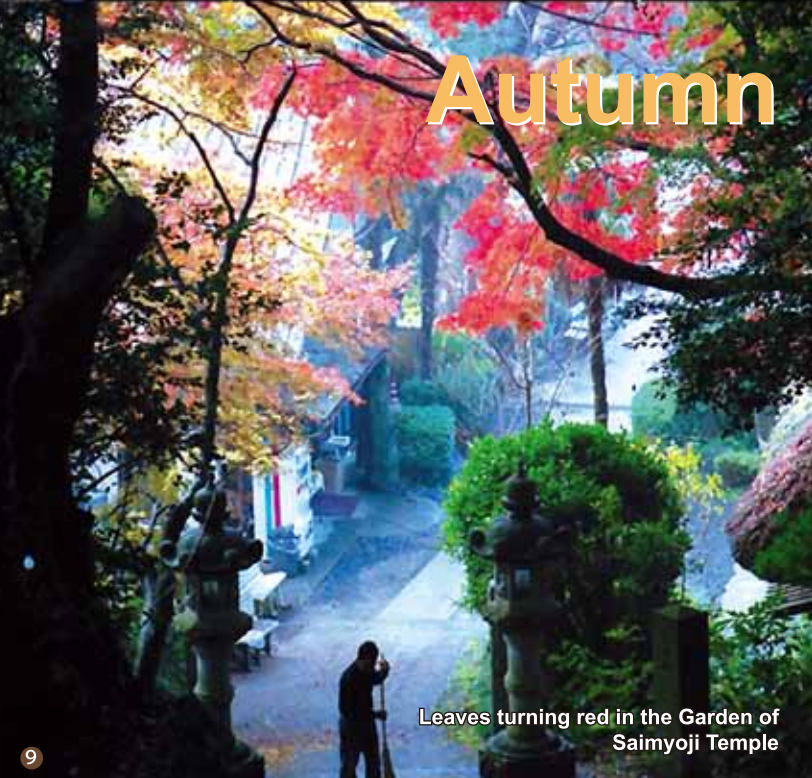
weeping cherry trees in the Garden of Komyoji Temple

Spring



golden-rayed lilies in the Hydrangea Park

Summer



Autumn

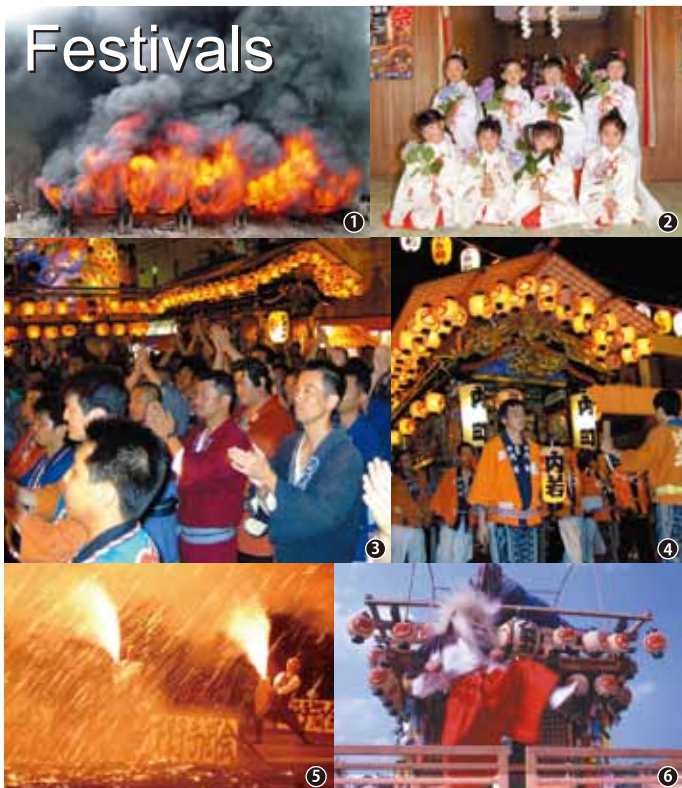
Leaves turning red in the Garden of Saimyoji Temple



Winter

the scene lightly covered with snow on Sudagaike Pond

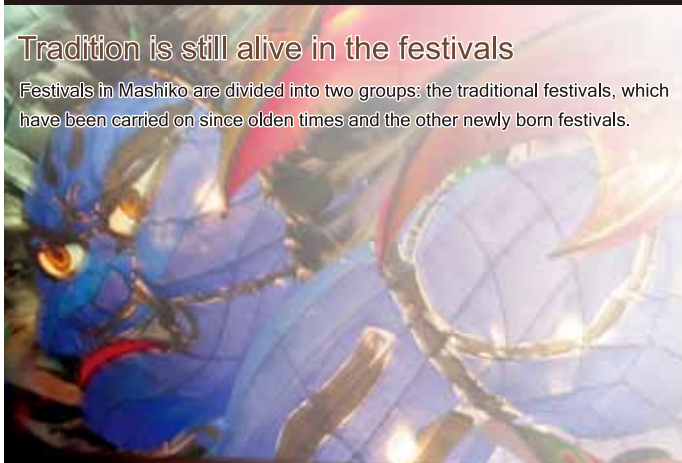
Festivals



- ① The climbing kiln used in the Flame Festival
- ② Kenka-sai, Offering Flowers Festival seen in Hydrangea Festival
- ③ Each float parading from the districts in Mashiko meet at the Kashima Shrine in the Gion Festival
- ④ Sculptured-type floats from all the districts parade in the streets of Mashiko
- ⑤ Hand-held Fireworks
- ⑥ Fox Dance of the Gion Festival

Tradition is still alive in the festivals

Festivals in Mashiko are divided into two groups: the traditional festivals, which have been carried on since olden times and the other newly born festivals.



Float in Jonai

Gion Festival

This festival is held for three days beginning on July 23 every year and coincides with the Festival of Yasaka Shrine. During this time omikoshi, or portable shrines and floats are paraded in Mashiko.

Described as one of the three biggest and funniest festivals, the 'Receiving Japanese sake from God' Ceremony is held on July 24. This is the ceremony for handing off the duties for the next Gion Festival to the new planning committee. Men from the neighboring 10 districts, who are assuming responsibility for then next year's festival, drink three times from a large (about 6.5 liters) sake cup filled by others.



●Kashima Shrine <http://www.kashimajinja.com/>

Lion Dance of Ashinuma

In the Kannon-do, the shrine to the Goddess of Mercy, offerings are dedicated to the Goddess through Lion Dances three times a year. This is commonly called 'Ashinuma Sasara'. A part of the ceremony is performed by dancing in a lion's mask in January and December. Then on the first Sunday in August the lion dance is again performed in addition to the other dances for the Ashinuma Sasara.



This ceremony is said to have started about 800 years ago when the Lord Taro Yoshiie Hachiman, who took up residence on Mt. Ontate, raised his retainers' morale by his stirring dance. This ceremony was abandoned for a time, but started again in 1972.

Ajisai (Hydrangea) Festival

About 7,000 hydrangea flowers will be in full bloom in Hydrangea Park for the festival. The Ajisai Festival is held from June 24 to July 25 every year. During this time Kenka-sai (Offering Flowers Festival) is open as well as the chinowa-kuguri, where a procession, including a big omikoshi (portable shrine) built on a pottery plate, passes through a thatched ring.



●Kashima Shrine
<http://www.kashimajinja.com/>



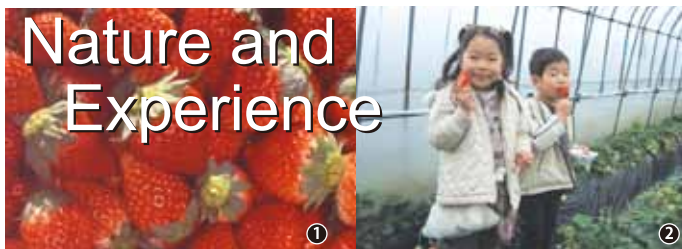
You can use the climbing kiln in Togeji Messe Mashiko to produce your own unglazed works and/or glazed pieces by pouring glaze onto them and then putting them back in the kiln.



Flame Festival in Mashiko

●Mashiko Society of Commerce and Industry
<http://mashiko.shokokai-tochigi.or.jp/>

Nature and Experience



- ① The Tochi-otomestrawberry, a very sweet and delicious variety grown in Tochigi Prefecture
- ② You can enjoy eating strawberries in 'Strawberry Tourist Farm', which is one of the largest scale tourist farms in the Kita-Kanto area.
- ③ Digging sweet potatoes on a tourist farm
- ④ Sweet potatoes which has just finished digging it.
- ⑤ Observatory equipped with one of the largest refracting telescopes in Japan
- ⑥ Restrooms, fully equipped training facilities and exhibition rooms (⑤,⑥ Forest in Mashiko)



Forest in Mashiko

This forest is about 31 hectares in area on the gentle hill in the mountain village, which is covered with deciduous, conifer and broad-leaf trees such as red pine trees, konaras, chestnuts and wild cherry blossoms.

The forest has a 4 kilometer hiking trail, a square covered with lawn, an apparatus for athletics, a rope bridge and an observation tower.

There is also a facility called 'Forest Inn Mashiko', which has restrooms, overnight accommodations, a restaurant and an observatory equipped with one of the largest refracting telescopes with an SD lens.



Ogoto Dam

This dam is used for agricultural purposes. It benefits the 400 hectares of rice fields in the southern area of Mashiko. Not only does it provide water for agriculture but also helps maintain the plants of the Forests of Mashiko recreational area, including the cherry and maple trees, nature trails and grassy areas.



Fruit Picking

In addition to strawberry picking at one of the largest fruit picking parks in the Kita-Kanto area, you can enjoy picking apples, pears, grapes and digging sweet potatoes.

●Mashiko tourist bureau
<http://www.mashiko-kankou.org/>

Experience Nature



Mashiko Forest Recreation Area

Let's go on to the country

Take a walk in the Yamamoto and Ogoto areas to enjoy the charm of a farming village.

What Yamamoto and Ogoto areas offer

Both Yamamoto and Ogoto area of Mashiko are above all, simple mountain villages surrounded by flourishing little farms. Having neither famous waterfalls nor mountains, they remain less influenced by the outside world, thus giving you the impression you have suddenly stepped back in Japan's past.

As you take the time to experience the village life, you may find that the rhythm of traditional village life in Japan is full of wonderful moments each season. As you meet and come to know the local people in their daily lives, you will likely catch yourself relaxing with the peaceful flow of village life.

Touching the clay, running after the glow of a firefly or harvesting crop together.....

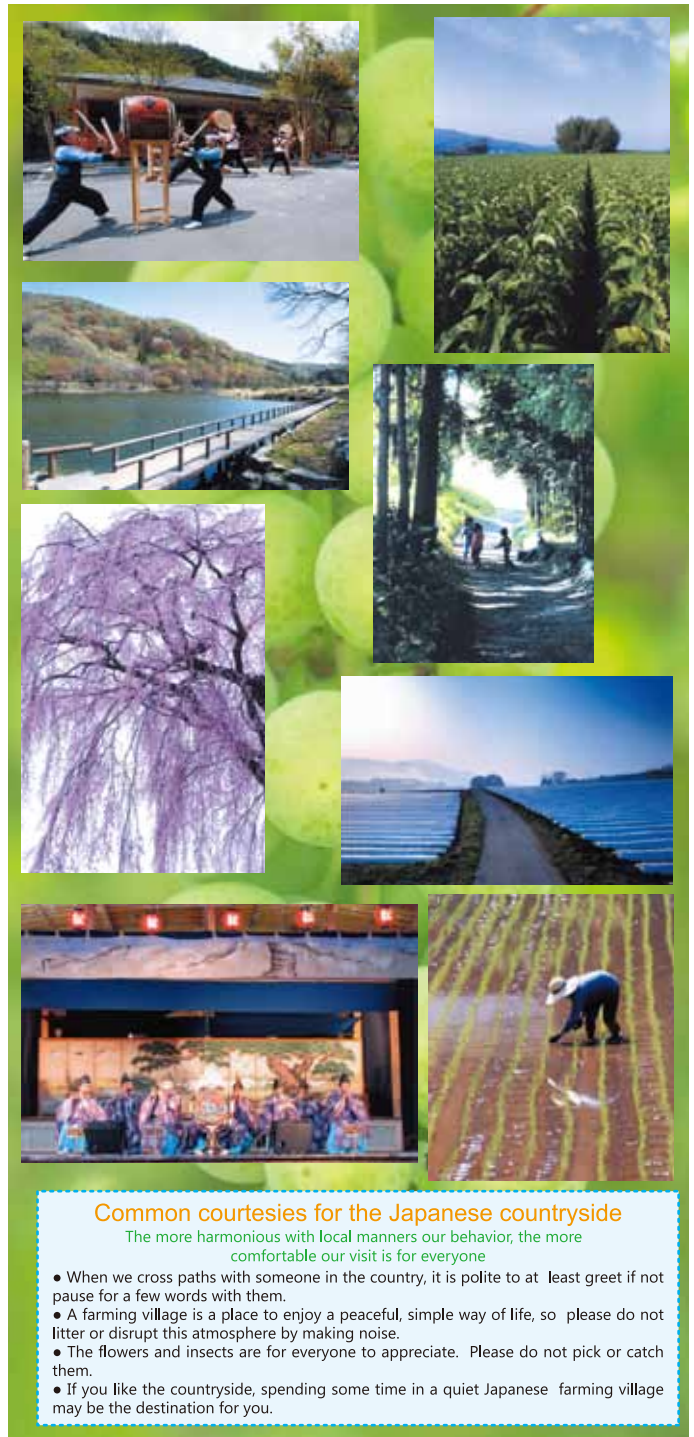
You will feel the wind and the light of nature. Take the time to truly experience ordinary village life in Japan.

You can experience:

'Closer to Nature' when you live or visit the farming village

'Having a farming' seen in each season

'History and Culture' finding in the farming lives



Common courtesies for the Japanese countryside

The more harmonious with local manners our behavior, the more comfortable our visit is for everyone

- When we cross paths with someone in the country, it is polite to at least greet if not pause for a few words with them.
- A farming village is a place to enjoy a peaceful, simple way of life, so please do not litter or disrupt this atmosphere by making noise.
- The flowers and insects are for everyone to appreciate. Please do not pick or catch them.
- If you like the countryside, spending some time in a quiet Japanese farming village may be the destination for you.

Making Pottery The Mashiko Way

Mashiko Pottery Complete



7 GLAZE FIRING·KILN OPENING

Decorated and glazed pots are fired in a traditional Japanese climbing kiln (norigama) using red pine wood for fuel. Temperatures can range from 1,200 to 1,300 degrees centigrade. Gas and oil burning kilns can also be found.

When firing is complete, about two days are necessary to cool the kiln. Pots are then removed. This is most exciting moment of pottery making.



6 DECORATION

Pigments used in decorating stoneware include iron, copper, manganese, cobalt, and chromium oxide. Recently, potters have begun to use new and different pigments that can be used with lower temperatures.



5 BISCUIT FIRING

Biscuit firing is a low-temperature preliminary firing process. Depending on the type of clay being fired, temperatures can range between 650 and 800 degrees centigrade.



1 DIGGING CLAY

The best clay for making pottery should not be too plastic or too flimsy, otherwise it could be difficult to throw, could crack during drying or could warp during firing.



2 PREPARING CLAY

Mashiko clay is dug from the mountains, not from under rice paddies. The dry clay is mixed with water in tanks. Coarser sediments settle to the bottom, and the top creamy-like layer is the clay proper. This slurry is dried and aged for later use.



3 WEDGING OR KNEADING CLAY

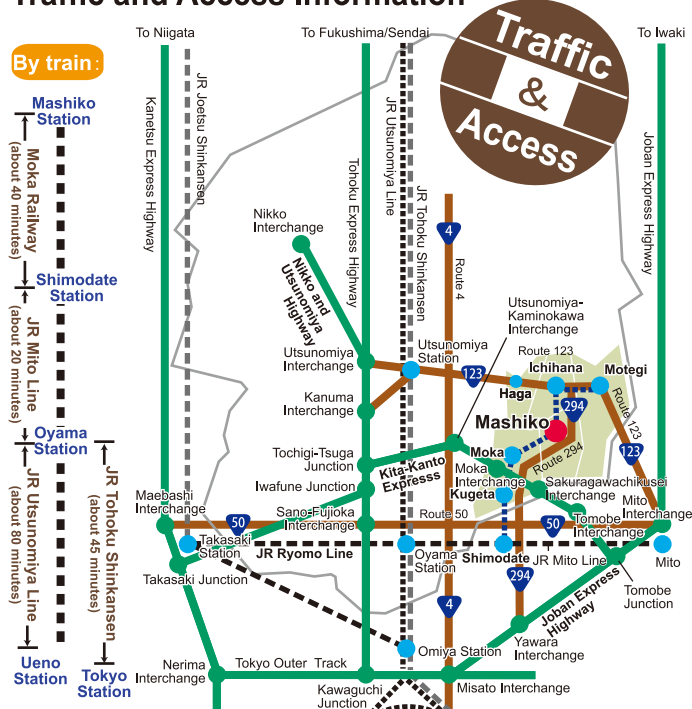
Before being used, clay must be wedged by hand, by machine or both. Properly kneaded clay makes throwing easier, so time and effort is put into the process.



4 THROWING POTS

In Mashiko, potters in general have used three kinds of wheels; hand-,kick-, and electric-wheels. Hand-wheels are rarely used today. Plaster moulds are also used for some shapes. Finished pots are dried, and then ready for biscuit firing.

Traffic and Access Information



By train:

Mashiko Station
Moka Railway (about 40 minutes)
Shimodate Station
JR Mito Line (about 20 minutes)
Oyama Station
JR Utsunomiya Line (about 80 minutes)
Ueno Station
Tohoku Shinkansen (about 45 minutes)
Tokyo Station

By train and bus

Mashiko
Toya Bus (about 60 minutes)
Utsunomiya Station
JR Tohoku Shinkansen (about 50 minutes)
Tokyo Station

Express Highway
Regular Road
Shinkansen
JR Line
Moka Railway

By bus:

You can take a bus leaving from the Westside No.14 of Utsunomiya Station for Mashiko Station via Toya Bus Service

By car:

If you take the 'Kita-kanto Express Highway', it is about:

- 15 kilometers from the Moka Interchange
- 18 kilometers from the Sakuragawachikusei Interchange

If you take the 'Joban Express Highway', it is about:

- 73 kilometers from the Yawara Interchange
- 36 kilometers from the Mito Interchange

If you take the 'Tohoku Express Highway', it is about:

- 62 kilometers from the Sano-Fujioka Interchange
- 36 kilometers from the Kanuma Interchange
- 35 kilometers from the Utsunomiya Interchange



SL(Steam Locomotive) Moka Railway