

TRADITIONAL CRAFTS OF YAMANASHI

Timeless traditional craftsman methods

Nationally designated traditional crafts born of Yamanashi Prefecture's lengthy history and natural features.  
Incredible craftsmanship fostered by traditional techniques still being passed down.



Approval No.R2-163  
Crafts with this mark have been designated as Traditional Crafts by the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry



Koshu crystal and precious stone carving



Sublime brilliance. Polished aesthetics.

Kofu's relationship with crystal began with the discovery of crystal ores deep in the Shosenkyo Gorge on Mt. Kinpu. Later between 1830 and 1843, the invention of emery polishing paved the road for crystal jewelry. The tough nature of crystal makes it time-consuming to work with. Prayer beads, obi buckles, obi clips, and other products increased in quality and flourished in domestic markets, particularly around the time of the Nixon shock in 1971. Their quality is still ever-increasing.



Koshu inden, lacquered deer leather



Complex and varied patterns

Surrounded by mountains on all sides, Yamanashi Prefecture (Koshu) possesses the deer and lacquer required to create Koshu inden: lacquered deer leather. In the mid-19th century, production of this material, primarily in the area around Kofu Castle, hit its peak. As noted in the novel Tōkaidōchū Hizakurige by Jippensha Ikku, this material was made nationwide and beloved by fashionable Edo-ites (modern day Tokyo). Today, those past production methods survive only in Koshu inden lacquered deer leather. It makes for supple, strong, light, and endearing bags with patterns in lacquer.



Koshu hand-carved seals



Carvings offered in prayer

Yamanashi Prefecture's seal stamp industry is another result of the discovery of large, high-quality crystal ores near Mt. Mitake. The industry is known to have existed as least as long back as the mid-19th century, from which a "shopping guide" for the capital city of Kofu mentions wood carvers selling such seals. Designs use the most beautiful seal script to emerge over Chinese characters' 4000-year history. Everything from the seals' design, masking, inking, rough carving, and fine carving is done by hand with traditional tools and methods.

## Koshu Amehata Suzuri

Jet black beauty that captures the writer's imagination



On a pilgrimage to Mt. Minobu in 1690, Amemiya Magouemon found a black river stone in the Hayakawa riverbed and made an inkstone from it. Since then, their crafting process was refined, and grew to fame after one was gifted to the shogun Tokugawa Yoshinobu. The stones were found to outmatch even inkstones from China, and continue to be made in great numbers to this day.

## Koshu Oishi silk textiles

The gentle touch of artisanal silk



The oldest mention of Gunnai silk is in a 915 record mentioning it as being presented to the Imperial Court. This silk is light, strong, soft, and of course smooth, but still differs in nature from textiles like Pongee silk. By the mid-19th century, it was given in payment of taxes, and widely sold by merchants and Mt. Fuji worshippers. Improvements were made such that it eventually became the Oishi silk we know now.

## Nishijima Tesuki Washi

Beautiful paper lost in time



Derived from paperbush, smooth, glossy, and perfect for calligraphy, this kind of paper was first created by order of the local feudal lord, Takeda Shingen. Its domestic production accelerated nationally in the wake of WWII, with Nishijima Washi seeing much growth in particular. Even now, this handmade paper is recognized as having the perfect absorbency for writers and as a good natural material for lampshades, wedding stationery, and more.

## Koshu warrior/koi streamers

Streamers made as a wish for children to grow



These kinds of streamers were first raised in celebration of the seasonal Boy's Day event sometime in the 18th century, when Japan's internal struggles looked to be things of the past. Cotton yarn dyeing took off in the Fuji River basin, and the same methods and designs are used to this day. Yarns dyed with nationally produced ingredients are washed in the cold water of Fuji River, creating unique hues.

## Koshu Onigawara

A guardian of happiness, now in revival



The Kagami area in Minami-Alps City is near the Midai river delta with exposed fine-grain clay and quality water, enabling the production of roof tiles. Their tiles use traditional methods of folding, mold ridging, and polishing, and their facial expressions are a ward against disaster. Each handmade creation's expression is unique, and they're popular for having both the fierceness of demons and the gentleness of Noh masks.

## Oyako Daruma

The feelings of parents in daruma form: dreams, love, hope



Koshu daruma dolls date back 400 years ago, and are said to have been first modeled after Takeda Shingen. Unlike most daruma dolls, these are white and depict "child" darumas, with the parent's eyes painted such that they meet a worshiper's eyes when placed in a home shrine. The child's eyes, however, are centered, perhaps on a hopeful dream. Few daruma dolls in Japan are created with this kind of intention.

## Ichikawa Daimon Tesuki Washi

Traditional paper produced over 1000 years



Records from the late eighth century note Kai as the home of this paper's production. Ichikawa's washi paper was used by Tendai Buddhists to copy sutras and by the locally ruling Takeda clan. Its patronship spread all the way to the shogunate by the Edo period (17th to mid 19th centuries). Its ingredients include paper mulberry and oriental paperbush, and is used for crafts and drawing.

## Yamanashi gem cutting

The glitter and warmth created by master skill



The history of Yamanashi gem cutting spans the discovery of crystal ores to the boom in crystal crafts, to the production of beads and later carvings, and now brooches. Advancements in grinding techniques has made all manner of accessories possible, but only skilled hands can take crystal ore that far. Jewelry is a core industry of Yamanashi, and its concentration of related businesses make for unique creations.

## Fuji Katsuyama Suzutake crafts

Delicately woven and mildly fragrant suzutake



Suzutake is a kind of bamboo that grows naturally near the second station on the trail up Mt. Fuji and is known for its pleasant aroma. It's used to make intricately woven and strong baskets, used as both vessels and as decorations. Suzutake weaving is mentioned in Kai Province almanacs dating back to 1814, but suzutake strainers were made even before then. Beautiful as they are useful.

## Koshu Fireworks

Creating a moment of magic



Koshu Fireworks originated from beacon fires used during the time of Takeda Shingen and fireworks displayed during the Edo period. In addition to visually stunning fireworks, there are also many sound-only fireworks that are set off to signal festive events. While continuing to preserve traditional techniques, various advancements have been made to the shape and color of fireworks. Including the famous "Shinmei Fireworks Festival," Koshu Fireworks beautifully decorate the night sky at various firework displays across the country.