

Kinosaki Straw Crafts

Kinosaki Onsen has a long history in the production and creation of *mugiwara zaiku* (“wheat straw craft”) objects. Approximately 300 years ago, a traveler who came to stay in Kinosaki compensated his hosts by making items using this unique straw craft. Over the years, the straw craft evolved from small trinkets such as colored straw flutes and spinning tops to include larger items like intricate boxes and decorative pieces.

The technique of this craft involves using various strips of colored wheat straw that are either woven or cut and arranged in geometric or other patterns. The straw is used to decorate and cover a number of different items, including boxes, paper fans, and even postcards.

Mugiwara zaiku even gained an international recognition thanks to German physician Philipp Franz von Siebold, who brought back to Europe various examples of Japanese crafts, including Kinosaki *mugiwara zaiku*, from his travels in 1830. These can now be viewed at select museums in Europe, including the National Museum of Ethnology in the Netherlands and Museum Five Continents in Germany.

Visitors to the area can try their hand at *mugiwara zaiku* at the regular workshops held at the Kinosaki Straw Craft Museum. A number of shops in the area also carry these beautiful items, which make great souvenirs and mementos from Kinosaki Onsen.