

【Tea Ceremony Experience】

A traditional Japanese tea ceremony involves many intricate steps and encompasses the entire process of lighting a small fire, brewing tea, serving, and drinking. The Hikone Castle Museum tea ceremony experience contains only the most enjoyable part of the tea ceremony: drinking the tea! As in a full tea ceremony, the powdered green tea (*matcha*) is accompanied by traditional Japanese sweets. When participating in the tea ceremony experience, follow the steps below:

1. First, you will receive a small plate with a Japanese-style confection (*wagashi*) to prepare your palate for the bitterness of the *matcha*. Rather than eating it in a single bite, cut the sweet into bite-sized pieces with the utensil provided and eat a little at a time.
2. The server will bring you a bowl of *matcha*, with the decorative feature of the bowl facing you.
3. Slowly pick up the bowl with both hands. While still holding it in your right hand, place the bowl in the palm of your left.
4. Hold the bowl in front of you, just below eye level.
5. Cup the side of the bowl with your right hand, and (still resting on your left palm) slowly turn it clockwise until the feature is facing away from you.
6. Drink the tea slowly in several sips.
7. Reverse the motion of step 5, rotating the bowl counterclockwise until the front feature is facing toward you.
8. Pause to admire the artwork on the bowl.
9. Return the bowl gently to the table.

Giving a small bow will signal to the staff that you are finished and communicate your gratitude.