

Mino Washi Tools Museum Fukube

Mino Washi Tools Museum Fukube records the traditional way life in the Mino area. The museum is housed in the former Kataji Elementary School, which closed in 2002 after the number of children in the area declined. Opened in 2018, the museum exhibits tools used for making washi paper, as well as tools used in local farming and sericulture. Several rooms of a farmhouse from the postwar period have been recreated, immersing visitors in the lifestyle of Mino's farmers and artisans. Several functioning items in the museum—including a water pump, a grindstone, and a rice-polishing machine—allow visitors to experience a bygone way of life.

The museum covers two floors of the former school. The first-floor exhibition, displaying tools for making washi paper, is free of charge. Historical photographs of papermaking and reproductions of illustrations from the Edo period (1603–1867) show that the papermaking process has changed little over the centuries.

An admission fee is charged for the exhibitions on the second floor, which has four rooms. Displays include papermaking tools and historical photographs, farming equipment, and a reproduction of parts of a 1930s farmhouse. The large number of tools for making washi attests to the fact that until the mid-twentieth century, the majority of households around the museum were papermakers. One room holds a collection of items from the twentieth century, including rotary telephones, tape recorders, record players, and cameras that may be nostalgic to some visitors and unfamiliar to others.

Mino Washi Tools Museum Fukube is open from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (closed Tuesdays). Volunteers are on hand to explain the exhibits (in Japanese). Some of the volunteers are retired papermakers.