

Paper Experiences at Mino Washi Paper Museum

The best way to appreciate Mino paper is to make it. Visitors can experience the process at Mino Washi Paper Museum, using the same materials and tools as professional papermakers. Three papermaking workshops, each of which takes less than an hour, are held several times a day, with advanced reservation.

Mino-ban: making Mino paper

The Mino-ban workshop teaches basic papermaking. It begins with a demonstration of the process, from adding finely pulped *kozo* bark fibers and *nebeshi* (a viscous substance which helps disperse the fibers) to water to make the pulp slurry, to forming a sheet of paper using a fine bamboo screen. Participants can then make their own paper. A bamboo screen is clipped into a wooden frame, which is used to scoop up the pulpy water. The frame is rocked gently from side to side and then back and forth without spilling the water. The process is repeated several times until a fine layer of fibers is evenly deposited over the screen.

The paper is sometimes decorated with dried leaves or colorful paper shapes. The finished sheets are dried on a large metal heater. It takes about 20 minutes to produce a full sheet of paper (33 x 45 cm), and around 5 minutes for the paper to dry.

Rakusui-shi: creating water-patterned paper

This workshop follows the main steps for making Mino-ban paper. Before drying the paper, plain water is used to make patterns on it. Paper cutouts or a patterned metal screen can be used to partially mask the paper before spraying it with water.

The pulp becomes thinner where it is hit by water. Areas covered with paper cutouts, or the screen are left thicker, creating a reverse watermark or pattern. Simple water spray patterns can also be created without masking.

It takes around 30 minutes to make a piece of paper using the *rakusui* technique, and around 5 minutes for the paper to dry.

Hagaki: making postcards

Participants in this workshop make six washi postcards. The steps are the same as for Mino-ban paper except that a frame divided into postcard-size spaces is used.

The pulpy water is scooped and drained quickly, to allow a thicker layer of paper to form. The postcards can be decorated with dried leaves or colored paper shapes. More of the pulp liquid is ladled over the postcards to seal in the decorations.

The postcards are thicker than regular paper and take longer to dry. It takes around 40 minutes to make the cards and around 15 minutes for them to dry.

Deeper immersion

Mino Washi Paper Museum offers in-depth workshops and courses for those considering a career in papermaking. One-day workshops and one-month courses help participants refine their skills and learn more about the industry. Many of the professional papermakers in Mino got their start with a one-month course at the museum. Courses require Japanese-language ability.