

Wajima Kobo Nagaya Workshops

Visitors can visit five wooden buildings near the center of Wajima house which house the *kobo* (workshops) of Wajima lacquerware artists and watch some of the processes, from turning on a lathe or carving the wooden base pieces to adding the final decorative touches.

Two buildings separated by a lane contain workshops and studios. Visitors can enter some of the workshops to see the processes up close and talk with the artisans. At the Kiji Kobo, an artisan turns wooden bowls on a small lathe. Zelkova wood is commonly used because it is durable yet easy to carve.

At the Nuri Kobo, visitors can see the process of coating and priming the wood using a paste of Wajima *jinoko* powder (diatomaceous earth), which helps to smooth and strengthen the material before the lacquer is applied. Parts that are vulnerable to damage, such as the thin lip of a bowl or cup, are also reinforced with cloth before priming and lacquering.

As applying the *nuri* (lacquer) requires a completely dust-free environment, visitors cannot enter the workshop, but they can watch the process through a window. Across the lane are small studios where local lacquerware artisans create new works.

A third building contains a gallery and shop, and a workshop where visitors can decorate a square of lacquered wood or a pair of chopsticks, using either *maki-e* (“sprinkled picture”) or *chinkin* (gold inlay) techniques. For *maki-e*, the lacquer is employed as an adhesive, with gold or silver powder applied to the design before the lacquer dries. For *chinkin*, a sharp metal tool is used to incise a design on the lacquered surface of an object. Gold powder is then rubbed into the lines creating an inlaid gold design. Participants can practice their designs on paper before committing them to lacquer.

Experience workshops are available from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Closed on Wednesdays.) Registration for the experiences ends at 3:30 p.m.