

When you study the Japanese language, you probably also try to learn about the culture and history of Japan. In this installment of Nihon O Manabu, we will explore places where you can study and experience the cultural traditions of Japan.

Scan the QR code for English translation.
<https://www.ajalt.org/english/about/magazines.html>



Cooling and Healing Sounds of Edo Fūrin

Shinohara Maruyoshi Fūrin

4-25-10 Higashi, Taito-ku, Tokyo Phone: 03-3832-0227
(1 minute walk from Exit A2 at the Shin-Okachimachi Station on Oedo Line. 6 minute walk from Naka-Okachimachi Station on Hibiya Line. 8 minute walk from Okachimachi Station on JR Yamanote Line.)

Edo fūrin are glass wind chimes that became popular during the Edo period. They feature beautiful artwork and cooling sounds. Instead of using a mold, craftsmen blow each piece of glass in the air and paint inside the blown globe. It takes around 10 years to perfect the skill of blowing great sounding chimes and three years to paint on the inside. Typical artworks feature goldfish, fireworks, dragon flies, or maneki neko, which are meant to bring good luck.

You can try your hands at glass blowing and fūrin painting

at Shinohara Maruyoshi Fūrin. You do not need to worry about the difficult task of glass blowing, because a craftsman will be standing by to help you. Sometimes, elementary school students visit for school trips. Give this traditional craft a try and create a one and only piece for yourself. Costs (tax include): 2200 yen for glass blowing and painting. 1650 yen for painting only. Reservation required.

Hours available for fūrin making: 10:30am to 4:00pm. Closed on Mondays and on holidays. <https://www.edo-fuurin.com/>



Ed-san and Sinead-san, who study Japanese at AJALT, tried making their own fūrin.



The first step is to listen to a craftsman describe the process of glass blowing and painting, as well as some history and background on Edo fūrin.



Each traditional artwork is meant to bring a particular type of good luck: goldfish for money, dragon fly for winning streak, and fireworks that disappear in the night sky for making illnesses disappear.



The next step is actual glass blowing!

Blow Molten Glass to Make a Kuchidama



5 Glass furnace is heated to 1300 degrees, Celsius.



6 Wrap a piece of molten glass around a thin rod shaped-tool called tomozao and blow it to the size of a 500 yen coin. This piece is called kuchidama, and it will be cut off later to form an opening.

Blow a Globe

Wrap more molten glass on kuchidama, blow slightly, and use a needle to pierce a hole for threading. Then blow harder to form a globe. Once the globe is ready, cut off the first kuchidama with a whetstone. Rough edges at the opening, which comes into contact with the tongue, will make for a better sounding chime.



Painting

Now it is time to paint on the fūrin.



9 Pick a subject and place paints on a paper palette.

Ed-san painted Mt. Fuji, while Sinead-san painted cherry blossoms.



10 It takes patience to draw inside the glass globe.



13 A special type of brush with split tips is used for coloring.

Finishing



14 Once the painting is done, thread the fūrin, and attach a tongue tube and a piece of paper to complete your creation.

We asked Ed-san and Sinead-san how they liked their first fūrin making.

Sinead-san

Fūrin making wasn't easy, but I had a lot of fun! I now understand it takes time to master the techniques.

Ed-san

I enjoyed learning about the history of fūrin. I heard it takes 10 years to master glass blowing. I guess I'll give it another try in 10 years. (Yeah, I will keep practicing during the next 10 years!) I want to visit this place again with my friends from Australia.



Thank you, Ed-san and Sinead-san!

※ Due to the pandemic, everyone will wear a mask, except when blowing the glass.

A Place for Kite Lovers

Tako no Hakubutsukan (Kite Museum)

Muromachi NS Bldg 2F, 1-8-3 Muromachi, Nihonbashi, Chuo-ku, Tokyo Phone: 03-3275-2704
(3 minute walk from Exit B6 at Mitukoshimae Station on Hanzomon and Ginza Lines, or 5 minute walk from Nihonbashi Station on Tozai Line.)

When it opened in 1977, Tako no Hakubutsukan was a tiny museum showcasing a private collection of Shingo Modeki, who founded Taimeiken yoshoku restaurant in Nihonbashi. It used to feature all things about kite, including Japanese and Western kites, ukiyoe artworks with kites, and even tableware with kite patterns. The museum is currently in a temporary location, because its original location is going through major redevelopment. Its displays have been streamlined and are now focused on Edo dako or kites created during the Edo period. Before the pandemic, the museum drew visitors from all over Japan and from abroad, many of whom were participants in kite flying competitions.

If you stand in the middle of Nihonbashi and look around, you will see a large banner for Tako no Hakubutsukan on the second floor of a building. Head straight toward this banner, and you will get there. You may be able to try your hands at making a kite (reservation required). You will use markers for drawing, instead of paint. (Cost: 1000 yen for a hexagonal kite and 400 yen for a stingray kite for children. No kite making on Mondays.)

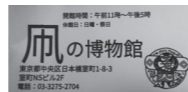
Hours: 11:00 am to 5:00pm Closed on Sundays and national holidays. Admission: 220 yen for an adult and 110 yen for an elementary and middle school student.



Edo dako created in the Edo period



The display is now streamlined and easy to navigate



Ticket for the museum

Fabric Dying from the Edo Period

Tokyo Somemonogatari Hakubutsukan

3-6-14 Nishiwaseda, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo Phone 03-3987-0701, Fax. 03-3980-2519
(15 minute walk from Takadanobaba Station on JR Yamanote/Seibu Shinjuku /Tozai Lines, 10 minute walk from Nishiwaseda Station on Fukutoshin Line, 2 minute walk from Omokagebashi Station on Toden Arakawa Line)

Edo komon is a type of fabric patterns, originally used for kamishimo, worn by the samurai in the Edo period, that became popular among regular people.

At Tokyo Somemonogatari Hakubutsukan, you can watch expert artisans dye traditional patterns and also try your hands at dying komon and Edo sarasa fabrics, which are the height of Edo chic. Tomita Sen Kougei, the company managing this museum, has been producing Edo komon and Edo sarasa fabrics since the Meiji period. In 1914, it opened a workshop near Kanda River to use the clean water essential for the dying. At the workshop, you will be able to observe various fabric printing processes and join a guided walk with detailed descriptions of dying work. You will also see Ise paper patterns that have been in production for 150 years. If you decide to try dying your own fabric using the tools used by the artisans, you have an option to get it made into a tote bag, a stole and so on.

Hours: 10:00am to noon; 1:00pm to 4:00pm (closed during lunch hour)
Closed on weekends, national holidays, year end and New Year, Golden Week, and Obon holidays
Admission: Free. Guided tour and workshop require reservation. Check with the museum on costs and time.



Workshop is full of long boards and deer-hair brushes used for dying



Edo sarasa dying work

You can make this Edo sarasa stole



Fun and Expansive World of Origami

Ochanomizu Origami Kaikan

1-7-14 Yushima, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo Phone: 03-3811-4025
(7 minute walk from Ochanomizu Station on JR Chuo/Sobu Lines, 5 minute walk from Ochanomizu Station on Marunouchi Line, 10 minute walk from Shin-Ochanomizu Station on Chiyoda Line)

The word origami is well known around the world, and many of you may have played with origami as kids. The world of origami is expansive and includes simple pieces made by children and elaborate works of art. You will learn a great deal about origami, when you visit Ochanomizu Origami Kaikan. Once you pass through the entrance featuring seasonal origami works, you can explore a gallery of art pieces from all over the world and see artisans dying handmade origami papers in a workshop. You will find a huge range of origami papers in the museum shop, including beautiful chiyogami and dying kits with Japanese papers. If you are lucky, you may run into an origami demonstration by the head of the museum. There are all types of events and seminars (for a fee) throughout the year.

Hours: 9:30am to 4:30pm Closed on Sundays, national holidays, and summer and year-end holidays.
Admission: free <https://www.origamikaikan.co.jp>



A wide range of origami works in the museum



Museum shop has a huge offering of Japanese papers and origami



Workshop with paper dying demonstration

©Ochanomizu Origami Kaikan

Great Sake from All Over Japan

Nihon no Sake Johokan (Japan Sake and Shochu Information Center)

Nihonshuzo Toranomon Building, 1-6-15 Nishi-shinbashi, Minato-ku, Tokyo Phone: 03-3519-2091
(3 minute walk from Toranomon Station on Ginza Line, 3 minute walk from Kasumigaseki Station on Chiyoda Line, 3 minute walk from Uchisaiwaicho Station on Mita Line)

Nihon no Sake Johokan sits on a corner of Shinbashi, also known as the Harajuku for oisan (middle-aged men). Go through a chic noren curtain at the door, and you are in sake nirvana. You will see a selection of best sake and shochu at this hot spot, which used to draw 30,000 visitors every year (around 10% from abroad) before the pandemic. There is an extensive display, as well as brochures in both English and Japanese on the process of sake and shochu making, their history, and recommended tasting methods. There is also a tasting area with tables and counters (fees apply). Take your time enjoying rare brands of sake and shochu or bring your friends for group tasting. It could be a great first stop on a night out in Shinbashi.

Hours: 10:00am to 6:00pm Closed on weekends, national holidays, year end, and New Year.
Admission: free
<https://www.japansakekyo.com>
Also check out the "SAKE ON AIR" podcast.

Notes:
Information here is as of April, 2022. Please call each store/museum or check the web sites before visiting.



Chic noren at the door

Sake available for tasting at the counter



Display of sake barrel, etc



Great selection of best sake