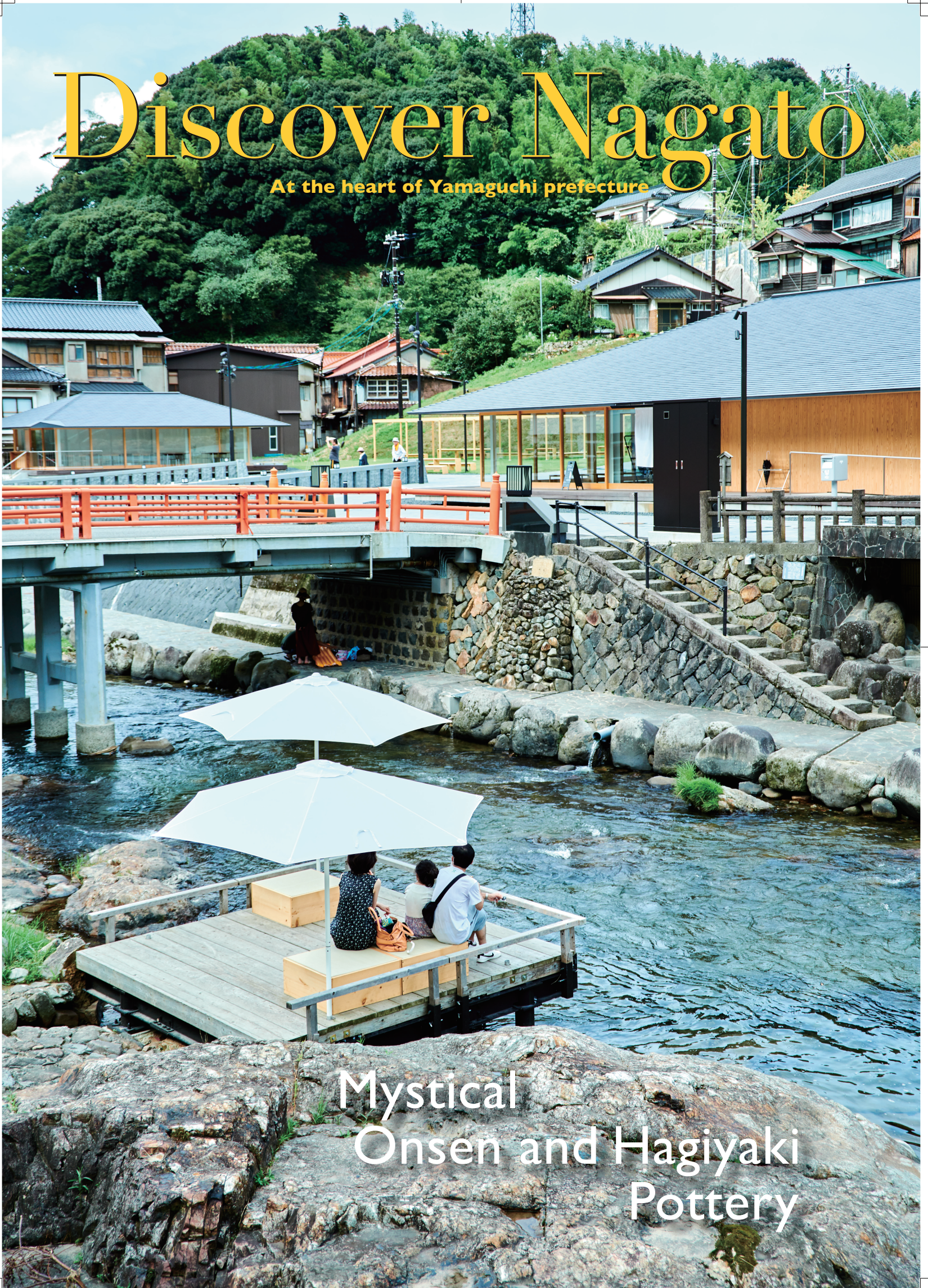


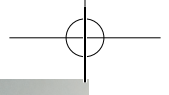


Discover Nagato

At the heart of Yamaguchi prefecture



Mystical
Onsen and Hagi-yaki
Pottery



Onto Onsen

Address: 2265 Fukawa-Yumoto,
Nagato City, Yamaguchi Prefecture
Tel: 0837-25-4100

Business hours: 10:00 - 22:00

Closed: 3rd Tuesday of every month
(may vary during holidays)

Admission: 900 for adults and 400 yen
for children (aged 4 to 12).

Children under the age of 3 are free of
charge.

www.onto.jp

This is the men's bath at the Onto Onsen. The figure of Sumiyoshi Daimyojin sits atop the bedrock from which the hot spring water flows. The *Shimenawa* woven straw piece comes from the Sumiyoshi Shrine in Shimonoseki, Yamaguchi Prefecture. The women's bath is located just on the other side of the wall, and features roughly the same design.



Overview and History

Onto Onsen

The Nagato-Yumoto Hot Spring is one of the most famous hot spring resorts in Yamaguchi Prefecture. The Onto hot spring that symbolizes the resort is enriched by a complexity of history and legends. Let's unravel the mysteries together.



The Onto Hiroba (Plaza) is located almost at the centre of the resort along the Otozure river. The Onto hot spring is on the right, and the Onto Shoku restaurant on the left.



Keijo Iwata, 53rd head priest of Taineiji Temple. The cemetery located on the temple grounds contains a stone called the Sumiyoshi Daimyojin no Zazenishi, or Zen Meditation Stone of Sumiyoshi Daimyojin.



Left: The Onto hot spring before the renewal in 2020. The onsen has always served as a symbol of the hot spring resort and a place to relax for the local residents.



Right: The Onto hot spring in the late 1950s.
Photo: Kenichi Murakami (Nagato City Board of Education)

A famous hot spring gifted by the god Sumiyoshi Daimyojin

The Otozure river flows through the middle of the Nagato-Yumoto hot spring resort. The Onto Onsen located on its banks has been part of the daily lives of the residents for at least 600 years. Legend has it that one night, the third head priest of Taineiji Temple, Joan Shuzen, was walking the temple grounds, not far from the Onto hot spring, when he came upon a man engaged in Zen meditation on a rock. Shuzen asked the old man his name, and the old man answered with a Waka poem, "I am the God Sumiyoshi in the hidden place, now and of old, where the wind blows through the pines," and his true form was revealed to be the God Sumiyoshi Daimyojin of Ichinomiya in the Province of Nagato. Shuzen invited the old man into the temple, and instructed him in the Way of the Buddha. Then, in 1427, when the old man was given a brocade robe by Shuzen, he said, "I have brought forth a hot spring. Please use it if you like," to repay the kindness, and he transformed into a

dragon and flew up into the sky. Today, the source of the hot spring remains in the possession of Taineiji Temple. So what is legend and what is fact? We spoke with Keijo Iwata, the 53rd head priest of the temple, to find out. "Taineiji Temple is a temple of the Soto School founded in 1410 by local lord Washizu Hirotada, a member of a branch of the Ouchi Clan. The Ouchi Clan had amassed great riches through trade with China and Korea and as. Sumiyoshi Daimyojin is a god who protects travel across the sea, it is possible that the Ouchi Clan colluded with Taineiji Temple and Sumiyoshi Shrine to construct the story for political purposes." A stone statue of Sumiyoshi Daimyojin which has been passed down through the ages sits in the Onto bathhouse. Throughout, one can sense hints of why this hot spring is known as Shinju-no-yu, or A God's Bath. Ancient records of temple activities in the Temple's possession, mentions many episodes on the 'hot spring gifted by the God Sumiyoshi.' So surely Onto has been known as a sacred hot spring for many centuries."



Onto Onsen is shown in front, while the glass building on the other side of the Onto Plaza is the Onto Shoku dining building. Both structures are single story so as not to interrupt the scenery in the hot spring resort. Visitors can also spend a leisurely moment on the long porch, called an Engawa.

Architecture

Architecture that embodies the legend of Shinju-no-yu

The Sumiyoshi Shrine sits atop the hill over the Onto Onsen. The renovations of the hot spring have resulted in a new scenic view created together with Sumiyoshi Shrine and the Otozure river.

The sky opens wide before you when you descend the bamboo grove stairway (Chikurin-no-Kaidan) to the green lawn of the Onto Plaza, accompanied by the soothing murmurs of the Otozure river resonating in the air. With the Onto hot spring on the left and the Onto Shoku restaurant on the right, the structures blend seamlessly into the nature around them, becoming a natural part of the landscape. We spoke with one of the architects, Shohei Oka, to learn more.

"The Onto hot spring waters bubble up from the bedrock covering the ground, so the conditions here are quite special. In ancient times, people likely bathed in the standing pools of water where it bubbled up from the bedrock. Accordingly, we designed baths to accept this naturally flowing water to recreate that natural approach."

When you get into the baths, before you is the natural bedrock as it has always been, and you can watch the water flow from it. The water is a simple alkaline hot spring (pH 9.62). The hot spring water flows from the bedrock at 39° C, making it soft and gentle as it embraces your skin.

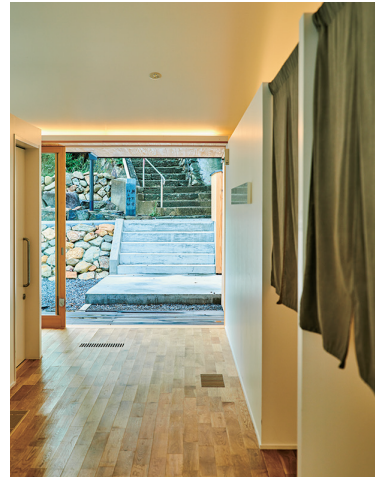
"Also known as Shinju-no-Yu (A God's Bath), Onto is located

right next to Sumiyoshi Shrine. Accordingly, we decided that it would be best to design the buildings, so they become a part of the shrine. Thus, the Chiyobashi Bridge in front of the Onto hot spring is like the entrance to a sacred place. Passing from the door to the watch room is a stairway that leads up to Sumiyoshi Shrine. This represents a new path for worshippers visiting the shrine." "Three of the walls around the rest area are full length glass. And the dining building across from it is also an almost identical construction. The plaza, Otozure river, and dining building come together to form a single space because we extended the eaves to add a long porch, or Engawa, along the building."



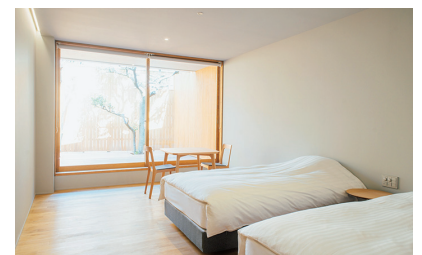
Top: A spacious open rest area. The Tatami mats placed on the floor allow guests to go barefoot. Here, refreshments such as beer and soft serve ice cream are also available. The furniture is by Antipoeme, a furniture brand from Kagawa Prefecture.

Bottom: The corridor passing in front of the watch room leads to a stairway to Sumiyoshi Shrine.



The Shohei Oka Architectural Office is a joint venture run by Shohei Oka (center), Yuko Hirose (left), and Tomotaka Yasui (right). The firm is involved in community development to increase community value, such as their project to open the Busshozan Hot Spring in Takamatsu City, Kagawa Prefecture.

The designer of Onto also designed new guest rooms at a local inn



The Shohei Oka Architectural Office was also involved in the renewal of the Gyokusenkaku Inn. The guest rooms were designed as simple spaces in which the terraces continue naturally from the rooms. The rooms are floored with chinquapin wood grown and harvested in Nagato.



Onto Shoku
The Onto Shoku restaurant offers a menu of healthy dishes including a delicious Egg-Chicken over rice using local tender Choshu chicken, thick handmade tofu and local vegetables.

Data
Address: 2270-5 Fukawa-Yumoto, Nagato City, Yamaguchi Prefecture
Tel: 0837-25-4333
Business hours: 11:00 - 22:00 (21:00 last order)
Closed: Wednesdays
www.ontoshoku.jp



365+1 BEER
This craft beer brewery was launched in 2021 after renovating an old pharmacy. Run by husband and wife Takanao and Ayaka Ariga 365+1 Beer offers six standard brews and several seasonal beers.

Data
Address: 1247-2 Fukawa-Yumoto, Nagato City, Yamaguchi Prefecture
Business hours: Please check Instagram for details: [sanrokuroku_beer](https://www.instagram.com/sanrokuroku_beer)



Right: Kazuyo Yokoyama, the second-generation proprietor. **Left:** The cafe offers a comfortable space with its plastered walls, riverside wood deck, and atmospheric antique furniture. The cafe exhibits and sells ceramics selected according to a theme of items that can be used every day.

A cafe where you can enjoy Hagi ware creations by young potters

Cafe & Pottery Oto
This cafe and gallery occupy a 50 year-old renovated wood framed home standing on the side of the Otozure river. The cafe exhibits and sells ceramics by three local artists who operate the Hagi ware Fukawa kiln. Works by these artists are also used to serve the handmade sweets and drinks served in the cafe space. The proprietor is sure you will be pleased with any dish on the menu.

Data
Address: 1261-12 Fukawa Yumoto Nagatoshi, Yamaguchi
Tel: 0837-25-4004
Open: 10:00-16:00
Closed: Wednesday, Thursday
Instagram: @oto_cafe



Unique Dorayaki sweets made with citrus fruits

Akebono Cafe
This cafe, attached to Hoshino Resorts KAI Nagato, is open to all visitors whether or not they are staying at the inn. The cafe offers three types of Dorayaki sweets: Azuki, Natsu Mikan, and Yuzukichi.

Data
Address: 2229-1 Fukawa-Yumoto, Nagato City, Yamaguchi Prefecture
Tel: 0570-073-011 (Kai Reservation Centre)
Business hours: 11:00 - 16:00 (subject to change)
Closed: No regular holidays www.kai-ryokan.jp/nagato



Right: Kawara Soba (single serving). The crispy noodles placed over the hot Kawara tile are also delicious. **Left:** Proprietor Misae Okazaki.



Kawara Soba and bar

Daigo Nagaya
Owner Daigo Kimura renovated this historic wooden building on his own. Kawara Soba Yanagiya, a noodle restaurant, occupies the first floor, while The Bar Nagato occupies the second.

Left: Bartender Daisuke Kuroda. **Middle:** The moody bars sits on top of the Kawara Soba restaurant. **Right:** With 30 years experience, Kuroda mixes a great cocktail



Enjoy a quiet drink while gazing out on the quietly flowing Otozure river.

The Bar Nagato
Owner Daisuke Kuroda has been bartending for about 30 years and serves cocktails made with local fruit, rare whiskeys or anything else your heart desires. "I would be more than pleased if the time spent here becomes a memory of your vacation.", he explains

Data
Address: 2F, Daigo Nagaya, 1325-1 Fukawa-Yumoto, Nagato City, Yamaguchi Prefecture
Tel: 070-4426-8169
Business hours: 18:00 - 24:00 (Last order)
Closed: Mondays
yumotoonsen.com/food/the-bar-nagato

Uncompromising flavor achieved through trial and error

Kawara Soba Yanagiya
This shop has long pursued the ultimate taste of Kawara Soba, a local noodle dish in Shimonoseki, Yamaguchi Prefecture. The result of those efforts, and the pride of the chef, is a richly flavorful bowl of green tea soba topped with Kinshi Tamago (strings of scrambled egg), savory beef, and local green onions from Nagato. They also offer Mitarashi Dango sweets at the front of the shop.

Data
Address: 1F, Daigo Nagaya, 1325-1 Fukawa-Yumoto, Nagato City, Yamaguchi Prefecture
Tel: 080-9185-3070
Business hours: 11:00 - 19:00 (Last order: 18:30)
Closed: Tuesdays, Third Wednesday
Instagram: @yanagiya.yumoto



Benches and planters
Benches and planters are installed to match the environment around the Otozure river to make your strolls through the area more comfortable. Why not grab a bench to enjoy a break while you gaze on the river?

Local Flavour; Nagato Yakitori



Tsukune (ground chicken), Kimo (Liver), Momo (thigh). Proprietor Sakurako Aomura. Takeout also available.



Data
Address: 1272-6 Fukawa Yumoto, Nagato City, Yamaguchi Prefecture
Tel: 0837-25-3660
Business hours: 11:00 - 14:30 (Last order: 14:00), 17:00 - 22:00 (Last order: 21:30)
Closed: Thursdays
Instagram: @_sakurashokudou_

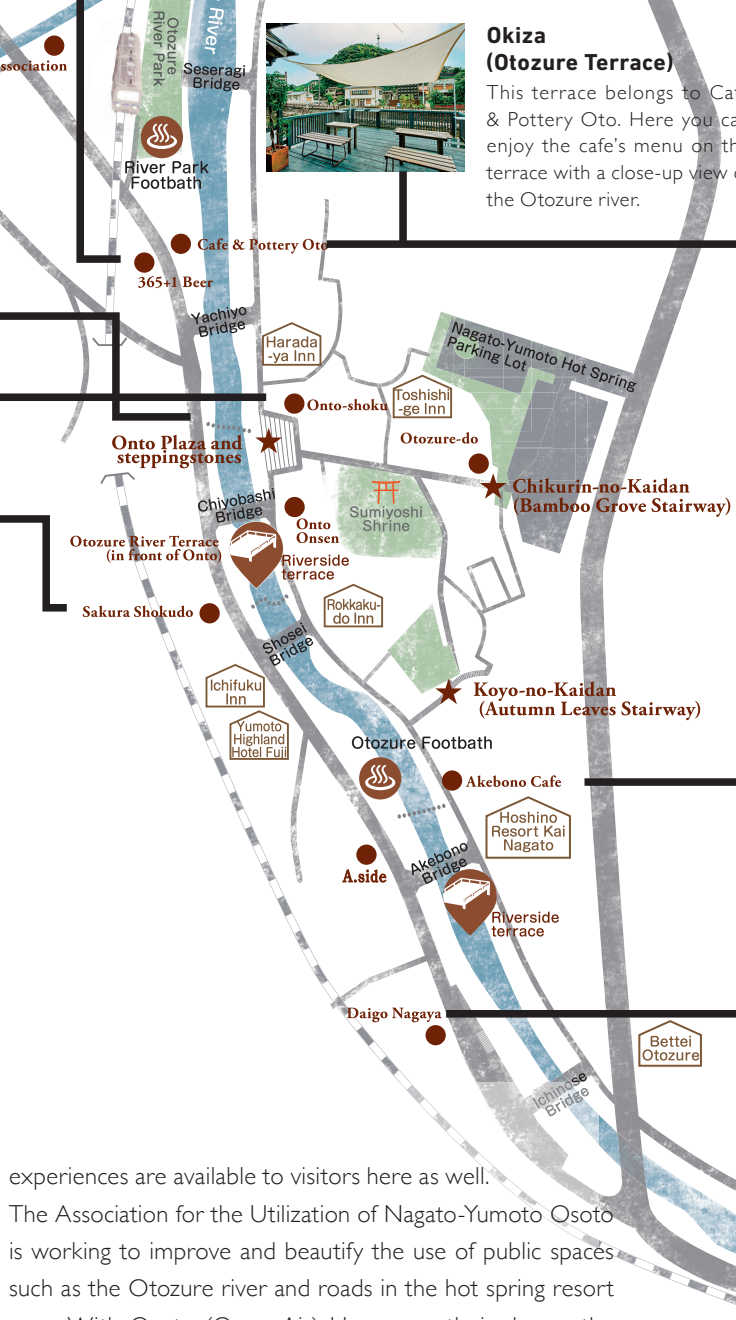
Sakura Shokudo
Yakitori is the soul food of Nagato. The proprietor here, procures fresh chicken every morning and skilfully grills it to order. The Nagato style is to spear regular onions on the stick between pieces of chicken and topping it off with garlic powder.

How to enjoy and fall in love with the Nagato-Yumoto Hot Spring resort

The greatest attraction of the Nagato-Yumoto Hot Spring resort is the lifestyle and culture that has been created and nurtured here. Children play in the Otozure river that flows through the center of the resort, and locals relax on the terraces set up around the river and everyone bathes at the Onto Onsen. Evenings are spent eating and drinking at the resort's unique restaurants, resting on the benches along the riverside paths, enjoying the changing seasonal landscape, and the illumination throughout town. All of these rich

www.yumotoonsen.com

experiences are available to visitors here as well. The Association for the Utilization of Nagato-Yumoto Osoto is working to improve and beautify the use of public spaces such as the Otozure river and roads in the hot spring resort area. With Osoto (Open Air) Heaven as their slogan, the Association continues to plan numerous ways for residents and visitors to enjoy their walks in the community. With the murmuring of the river and the tweeting of birds serving as the background music to your walks, your hours of enjoyment at the Nagato-Yumoto Hot Spring resort will make you want to return over and over again.





Artists in pursuit of their own unique Hagi ware

Fukawa-Yumoto and Sounose,
Nagato City, Yamaguchi Prefecture

Fukawa Goyo

In 1657, Li Shakuko, the founder of the Hagi ware tradition, moved with his descendants to the mountains of Fukawa-Yumoto Sounose in Nagato and established the Sounose Hagi ware collective under the command of the local lord. Here we introduce five kilns still proudly making Hagi ware in this small village.

Tahara Tobei Kiln

十三代 田原 陶兵衛

Tobei Tahara XIII

Bringing out the beauty of Hagi ware clay
through a variety of expressions



Tobei Tahara

Tobei Tahara was born in Nagato City in 1951. He studied under Shigetoshi Nakazato after graduating from the Musashino Art University Graduate School in 1975. He was selected for the Japanese Traditional Crafts Exhibition for the first time in 1990 and is the recipient of numerous awards.
www.tahara-tohbe.com

Split high base tea bowl

This piece offers an elegant coloration from the white Hagi glaze. I place importance on maintaining elegance when creating my tea bowls."

The Tahara Tobei Kiln was founded by Sukezaemon Akagawa, one of the original potters in Sounose. The 13th generation potter Tobei Tahara studied under the Karatsu potter Shigetoshi Nakazato after studying at the Musashino Art University Graduate School. "I have had many opportunities to learn, such as being able to see the works of the 12th generation Tobei objectively, and the techniques I learned in Karatsu." Since Tobei returned at 26, he has honed his skills on a daily basis in order to bring out the true expression of the clay that is characteristic of Hagi ware. "When I achieve the look I am aiming for, whether a soft or rough expression, I look for what I need to do next. I hope I can continue to evolve in the future as well."

Sakakura Zen'emon Kiln

十代 坂倉 善右衛門

Zen'emon Sakakura X

Pioneering the future of Hagi ware without being
bound by traditions or stereotypes



Zen'emon Sakakura

Zen'emon Sakakura was born in Nagato City in 1969. He graduated from Kobe Design University in 1994. He began training at a kiln in Mino after completing training at the Tajimi City Pottery Design and Technical Center in 1996. In 2000, he returned to Sounose and became the 10th generation Zen'emon Sakakura in 2006.

Moonlight ware

Beautifully coloring from a unique local glaze this piece is somewhere between a piece of tableware and an art object.

This kiln was originally founded during the Edo Period as the Sakakura Gorozaemon Kiln of the new Sakakura family. The kiln was closed during the time of the 7th generation Goro Sakakura, but rekindled by the 10th generation Zen'emon Sakakura. Zen'emon majored in furniture at the Kobe Design University, but switched to pottery out of his desire "not to waste the materials." He returned to Sounose after studying at the Tajimi City Pottery Design and Technical Center and then training with a potter in Tajimi City. "In a sense, this kiln started from scratch. I want to explore new paths without being restricted by the stereotypes of Hagi ware. When I create ceramics, I keep an awareness of the presence the piece has when placed in a space."

Shinjo Sukeemon Kiln

十四代 新庄 貞嗣

Sadatsugu Shinjo XIV

A personal approach to pottery
found through trial and error



Sadatsugu Shinjo,

14th generation potter

Sadatsugu Shinjo was born in Nagato City in 1950. He completed his graduate studies in sculpture at Tokyo University of the Arts in 1977 and later completed a traineeship in ceramics at the Kyoto Municipal Institute of Industrial Technology and Culture.

Hagi ware tea bowl

Exhibited at the 64th Japanese Traditional Crafts Exhibition. Made of Mishima and Daido clay, and ash glazed after firing.

Sadatsugu Shinjo is a descendant of Sukeemon Akagawa, who in turn was a descendant of Li Shakuko. After the death of his father, the 13th generation potter Kanzan Shinjo, Sadatsugu decided to attend Tokyo University of the Arts because he felt he was yet unable to take over the kiln at that time. He returned to the Sounose valley after studying sculpture at university and learning pottery in Kyoto. "When I started, I wanted to explore the possibilities of Hagi ware using traditional clays and glazes, and different strengths of flame in the climbing kiln. A tea bowl is an item that fills the space between your hands comfortably and gives a sense of the space within. I consider the space in which the piece exists as I carry out my pottery."

Deika Kiln

坂田 澄治

Sumiharu Sakata

Approaching pottery from a frank perspective by
leveraging his training in the tea ceremony



Sumiharu Sakata

Sumiharu Sakata was born in Nagato City in 1978. He completed a course in Ceramics at the Kyoto Municipal Institute of Industrial Technology and Culture in 2012. He began training at Horinouchi Choseian the same year and began creating pottery at Deika Gama in 2008.

Tea bowl

This bowl is created with a blend of Daido and Mishima clays. It is a traditional example of Hagi ware coated in straw ash glaze.

Originally founded by Li Shakuko, the Sakakura Gorozaemon family split into the two during the 7th generation in the Edo period. Sumiharu Sakata is the 16th generation potter of the lineage. "I am the second son of the 15th generation potter Deika Sakata, so I did not originally intend to carry on the family business." He however decided to enter the world of pottery at the age of 30, and completed his studies at the Kyoto Municipal Institute of Industrial Technology and Culture. He then went on to study the tea ceremony at Horinouchi Choseian. "I believe this experience to be useful in producing tea bowls which can be said to be the origin of Hagi ware," he says.



Sakakura Shinbei Kiln

十五代 坂倉 新兵衛

Shinbei Sakakura, 15th generation

He seeks to create his own world of Hagi ware by bringing out the true appeal of Hagi clay



Shinbei Sakakura, 15th generation

Shinbei Sakakura was born in Nagato City, in 1949. He graduated from Tokyo University of the Arts in 1972 with a degree in sculpture, and the university's graduate course in ceramics in 1974. In 1989, he received the Yamaguchi Prefecture Arts and Culture Promotion Encouragement Award. In 2013, he was certified as an Intangible Cultural Property Holder for his Hagi ware and is also an official member of the Japanese Kōgei Association.

White glazed bowl

This tea bowl was made with a base of Mishima clay coated with Daido clay and decorated with a straw ash glaze before firing in a climbing kiln. Shinbei, the 15th generation potter, is working on a new mode of expression; "I want to create a new approach that further develops the contrast between the glaze and clay," he says.

The Sakakura Shinbei Kiln is located at the far end of the Sounose valley. This is one of the famed potteries that have continued to produce ceramics as the direct heirs to the founder of Hagi ware, Li Shakuko. 15th generation potter Shinbei Sakakura, whose grandfather, 12th generation potter also named Shinbei Sakakura, known as the father of the revitalization of Hagi ware, took over the kiln himself at the age of 26. This was because his father, the 14th generation Shinbei, suddenly collapsed from illness and passed away at the early age of 58. "I was only able to work alongside my father for three months. I learned a great deal from standing behind my father and watching him work diligently producing ceramics despite his illness." He subsequently took the name Shinbei Sakakura XV at the age of 29. He says that he found the world of Hagi ware that he was seeking during his

strenuous life as both an artist and manager of the pottery. "Hagi clay has a warmth that soothes people. I want to bring out the best of that clay during my work. I combine Daido, Mishima, and Mitake clays, coat them with straw ash or transparent glazes, and fire them in my climbing kiln. The resulting color variations expand through alteration during firing. As I work and express myself through this work, I constantly ask myself, how can I bring out the charm of the clay?" He explains that the painted works produced using a painting knife normally used in oil painting was an approach he began to bring out the beauty of the clay. "My hope is to give birth to works that communicate to the future that, as a person who exists within the history of Hagi ware, it is OK for the 15th generation Shinbei to be this creative."

Sakakura Shinbei Kiln

坂倉 正紘

Masahiro Sakakura

He looks within himself in pursuit of a type of Hagi ware never seen before



Masahiro Sakakura

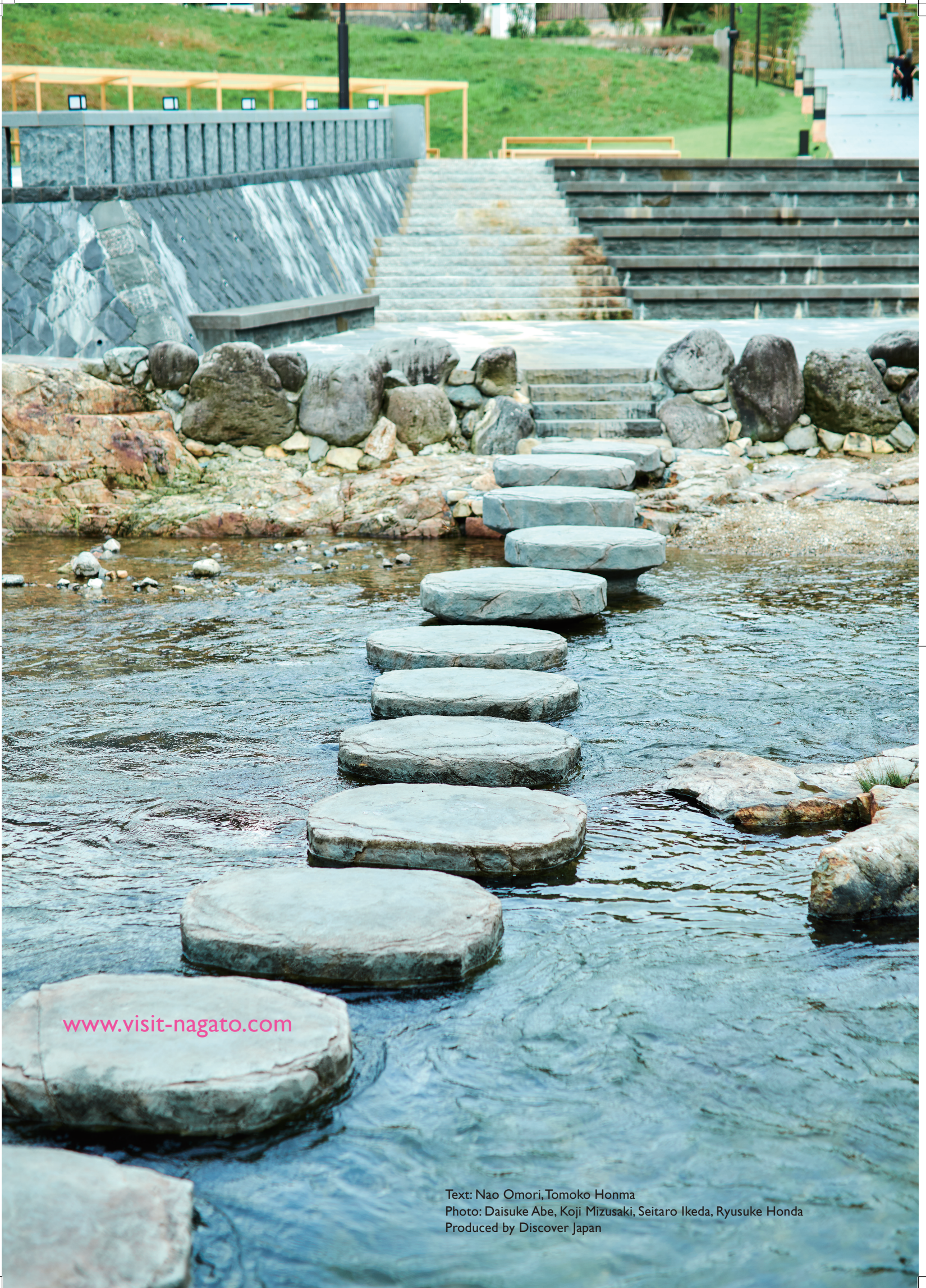
Masahiro Sakakura was born in Nagato City in 1983. He graduated from the Tokyo University of the Arts in 2007 with a degree in sculpture, and completed his graduate studies in sculpture at the same university in 2009. He then studied pottery techniques for two years at the Kyoto Municipal Institute of Industrial Technology and Culture, after which he entered the world of ceramics in 2011 under his father, 15th generation potter Shinbei Sakakura.

Hagi tea bowl, Daido powdered

This tea bowl is produced using a traditional technique with Hagi ware and Daido clays, but it is glazed and then fired rather than being fired unglazed. Unlike the typical Hagi ware which prefers the soft and quiet aspect of the clay, the aim was to give a better sense of the power of the clay and fire with the burnt texture and unique alterations during firing.

"What is Hagi ware? I want to discover the underlying answer to that question," says Masahiro Sakakura with sparkling eyes. Heir to the famed Sakakura family's Fukawa Kiln, Masahiro started his own career in pottery about 10 years ago. Masahiro explains, "I had no reservations at all about entering this profession." He returned to his hometown of Fukawa-Yumoto in Nagato after graduating university and commuted to Kyoto for two years by train. Since beginning his career as a potter, he began the habit of traveling through the mountains in order to explore the nature of clay as a material. He explains, "My five senses are sharpened in the mountains. Sometimes I encounter animals, and when I'm digging up clay, I imagine that people have been creating fired pottery from clay since the Jomon period. The clay of this area is what inspires me to bring

out the appeals of that clay." It is not Hagi ware itself that Masahiro wishes to express despite following the Hagi ware techniques. He explains his own concept of Hagi ware, saying that "Now is not the time to define Hagi ware by its colors and techniques. I would rather be more open minded about its definition." He continues, "In my own mind, Hagi ware are the creations my father produces. I want to carry on that tradition as the official output of the Sakakura Shinbei Kiln," and adds, smiling, "But I myself hope to create works that have never been seen before, that will be said to be unlike Hagi ware. The style I inherit from my father and my own style will be similar but different, but not necessarily unlike. I think they can both coexist." Masahiro's flexible but brave attitude will surely be the beginning of a new age of Hagi ware.



www.visit-nagato.com

Text: Nao Omori, Tomoko Honma
Photo: Daisuke Abe, Koji Mizusaki, Seitaro Ikeda, Ryusuke Honda
Produced by Discover Japan

