



## **sustainable travel in the Chubu The Nagara River.**

*The lives, economies and cultures of the people of the Nagara River basin have always been deeply connected to the river. For local residents, maintaining the clarity of its clear waters is essential to the sustainability of their livelihoods.*

*This program focuses on the Nagara River Basin in Gifu, one of the three clearest rivers in Japan, to learn about a unique fishing method and Japanese paper crafts. The purity of the water is the reason for the existence and survival of the local traditional crafts of Mino Washi paper, Seki blades and Gujo Honzome dye.*

*Ukai (cormorant fishing) in which these birds catch fish has been passed down from generation to generation in the area for 1,300 years. Unfortunately, there are only two craftsmen left in the prefecture who can still make the kind of special boats needed for this fishery; the process of construction is passed on only by word of mouth between the makers. The six boats owned by the fishermen are aging rapidly, and since there are few builders, repairs are becoming less and less easy.*

*The demand for Mino Washi paper, meanwhile, is declining due to changing lifestyles. Washi artisans are turning to other industries or closing their businesses for lack of successors.*

*While discovering the originality of the crafts and customs of the region, visitors contribute to their preservation and transmission by participating in related activities. This support is one of the main characteristics of Sustainable Tourism.*



Cormorant fishing on the Nagara River



## **Nagara River Valley Program**

### **Day 1 : Tokyo / Gifu**

Departure by train to Gifu in the morning.

*The city of **Gifu** is known as one of the centers of traditional Japanese umbrella (wagasa) production. The area has a long history of producing Japanese paper known as Mino-washi, which is used to make umbrellas.*

Scheduling of sightseeing and meals are at your convenience.

Suggested visits :

#### **Gifu castle**

Standing on the top of Kinka Mountain, Gifu Castle was the headquarters of Nobunaga Oda, one of the great military commanders of Japan. The Japanese armors and swords displayed inside the castle are very impressive.

#### **Kawaramachi**

Walk through these streets of old-fashioned Japanese houses. These as well as old warehouses have been renovated and transformed into stores while keeping their basic architecture. It is interesting to discover the traditional souvenirs of Gifu such as ayu (kind of trout) grilled with salt, and Gifu uchiwa (traditional paper fan)

#### **Ukai Museum in Nagara (cormorant fishing muuseum)**

In this museum, the history and appeal of cormorant fishing is presented through videos and replicas of cormorants and traditional boats. Out of season, fishermen give demonstrations and explain the fishing method (Saturdays, Sundays and holidays).

Suggested activities (reservations required):

- Visit of a **Wagasa** workshop (bamboo, wood, thread and Japanese paper umbrellas)
- **Wagasa** making with a craftsman
- Painting on **Chochin** (traditional lanterns made of bamboo, paper or silk)
- Making **Japanese bound notebooks**
- **Bamboo basket making** with young cormorant fishermen
- **Cormorant fishing show** on the Nagaragawa River (cruise with dinner).

Cormorant fishing is a traditional method of fishing for ayu (Japanese fish) using tame cormorants. This fishing method has been practiced on the Nagara River since the 7th century. Nowadays, it is still practiced and cruises are organized from May 11 to October 15 every year.

Overnight stay in a renovated old merchant house or similar,



## **Day 2 : Gifu / Mino / Tokyo**

Departure after breakfast for Mino by train.

*The history of **Mino** has been known for 1300 years thanks to the Japanese paper industry. Benefiting from high quality materials and pure water from the Nagara River, Mino's Japanese paper is recognized as one of the most prominent Japanese papers.*

Scheduling of sightseeing and meals are at your convenience.

### Suggested visits :

#### **The old "Udatsu no agaru street"**

The "Udatsu" are protective walls made at both ends of a roof and intended to prevent the spread of fire in case of fire. At that time, rich merchants of the Edo period installed splendid "Udatus" to display their wealth.



Mino Washi Akari Art Gallery

#### **The Mino Washi Akari Art Gallery**

On the first floor, there is an extraordinary exhibition of Mino paper lanterns which is renewed every year. On the ground floor, there is a rest area and a souvenir store with washi paper works.

#### **Former Imai Family Residence / Mino Historical Museum**

This is the former residence of a washi paper merchant family which was built in the mid-Edo period. This building has been turned into a museum dedicated to the history and culture of Mino city, it exhibits writings about the buildings and tools used for washi paper making.

Return to Tokyo at the end of the day

**\*\* End of our services \*\***  
**(Extensions available upon request)**



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