

PLAYING WITH EARTH AND FIRE a brief escape to Mashiko

WORDS Danielle Demetriou
PHOTOGRAPHS Shinichi Ito

一个简短的逃生到益子

An easy hour's journey from Tokyo, Mashiko— with its mix of rustic pottery and postcard-worthy nature— could not be further from the capital. The artisans' enclave made famous by acclaimed potter Shoji Hamada, one of the founders of the Japanese folk-art, movement, is a place where you can soak up the beauty of ceramics— and even try your hand at making some.





Shoji Hamada collected the works of many noted sculptors, which are on display at the museum
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The works of Shoji Hamada
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Shoji Hamada's minka stands four stories high
LEFT: Tomoo Hamada carries on his grandfather's legacy
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It starts out as a teacup. Soon, it morphs into a bowl—before flirting with the form of a jug. Then, in a final flourish, it resigns itself to becoming a wonky plate.

Sitting at a clay-splattered pottery wheel in a dusty studio in a town where folkware kilns seem to outnumber traffic lights, I am a little bewildered by the novice creation acquiring a life of its own before me. But I also feel a serene happiness. Sunlight is streaming through the rattan shutters; a pot of green tea is cooling on the worktop. As I get to grips with the instructions of my sensei—and the red clay spinning between my hands—I realize that I'm in pottery nirvana.

Among all the mentally filed memories of recent journeys crisscrossing Japan, recollections of my visit to Mashiko in Tochigi Prefecture are perhaps the most rose-tinted. There is something about its Zen gardens and temples hidden in the hills, its adherence to traditional arts such as tea ceremony and ikebana, and its devotion to the making of the perfectly imperfect pot, whether for quotidian use or to display on a shelf, that seems quintessentially Japanese.

The history of pottery in Japan dates back more than 10,000 years, making it one of the world's longest continuous ceramic cultures. There are few better places to explore this than Mashiko, which has attracted generations of potters due to its distinct red clay and pine trees providing wood for firing—resulting in 400-odd kilns alongside dozens of shops, galleries and markets selling a spectrum of creations.

Although modern *mashikoyaki* (Mashiko ware) dates from

它开始作为一个茶杯的生活。简要摇身一变成一个碗，壶的形式调情前。并在最后的蓬勃发展，辞职本身成为一个靠不住的板。

在粘土湿透陶器轮坐在尘土飞扬工作室在日本农村，我有点不知所措乱七八糟上一个属于自己的生活在我之前的新手创作。但我也感到平静和快乐。太阳被流通过藤百叶窗和一壶绿茶冷却上台面，因为我得到明智的话我的陶老师（教师），以及我的手指间旋转的红土交手。

其中所有的精神存档和记录纵横交错近年来，日本的各种旅行的回忆，我这次访问的镇，在栃木县益子的回忆，也许是其中的玫瑰色彩。这是因为它是陶器的佳境。随着禅宗花园，茶道，插花，早已作为一个典型的日本艺术形式庆祝。超过10,000年，在日本举行的民族擅长制作完美的锅。

并有一些更好的地方比益子探索。陶艺家几代人早已被吸引到漂亮的城市，由于其独特的红粘土和400多个窑烧制陶器商店，画廊和市场摊位卖谱创作的数十一起导致松树。

这是对那些很酷的，清脆的日子之一，与眼crinklingly明亮的阳光下的蓝天下，我开始我的旅程益子。早起，我换东京的清晨乘客和混凝土塔，田园诗般的画面为日本农村的稻田，绿山，偏远乡村，通过一系列的火车，成为逐步慢节奏和气氛的窗户框。

然而，最后的列车，是迄今为止最难忘的：一个完全恢复的旧蒸汽机，通过绿化景观隆隆，益养老金领取者和过度



Pain de musha musha café
一个精心策划的质朴简约剂量正是我需要探索益子



Starnet vessels (right) and chic space (bottom)
一个精心策划的质朴简约剂量正是我需要探索益子一个精心策划的质朴简约剂量正是我需要探索益子



1853, when a potter from a nearby village set up a kiln, what put the town on the map was the arrival in 1924 of artist-ceramicist Shoji Hamada (1894–1978), later designated a Living National Treasure. The father of the *mingei* Japanese craft movement established a studio and—thanks in part to his influence—the pottery of Mashiko became representative of the tenets of *mingei*, which honors beauty in utilitarian things. The town is now internationally known as a production center of simple, handsome everyday tableware as well as one-of-a-kind artistic pieces.

It was on a crisp, sunny day beneath an eye-crinklingly blue sky that I began my journey to Mashiko. Rising early, I swapped Tokyo's morning commuters and concrete towers for an idyllic tableau of rural Japan—rice fields, green mountains, remote villages—framed through the windows of a series of trains, each becoming progressively slower in pace and atmosphere.

The final train, however, was by far the most memorable: a perfectly restored steam locomotive, chugging through the rural landscape, carrying on board crowds of hatted pensioners and over-excited trainspotters. Upon arrival in Mashiko, I wandered into town to explore its famous pottery scene, but was first greeted by a sight in the main square that prompted more bemusement than inspiration: a giant, slightly gaudy *tanuki* racoon dog (ceramic, of course), surrounded by camera-toting tourists.

Fortunately, it didn't take me long to find examples of the Mashiko earthenware I'd come to see. Scattered among the market stalls of ruby-red strawberries and local wild mushrooms were countless pottery shops and studios; soon, I was the proud owner of several simple, enchantingly imperfect round plates. After a quick vegetable curry lunch in a bohemian café, I strolled to a workshop in an old *minaka* (traditional farmhouse) where I had arranged to meet Ryoichi Furuki, my pottery teacher for the day. Here, under his watchful eye, I happily spent hours kneading and working a ball of clay until it reached something like the right consistency. The spiral wedging technique he taught me—called *kiku-neri*, or literally “chrysanthemum kneading”—typically produces a shape that looks like “the petals of a chrysanthemum,” according to Furuki sensei, though mine didn't look very flower-like. Finally, I graduated to the wheel, where I made a different kind of a mess.

Pushing the wheel with my foot, I wet my hands and began to shape the spinning clay. It felt beautifully soft and—despite the chaotic creations that emerged—I soon found myself cloaked in its soothing effect. The objects I made bore little resemblance to anything conventionally found in a kitchen, but I felt as contented as I was clay-splattered. Stopping only briefly when a matronly lady in a flowery apron arrived with steaming green tea and sweets, the hours passed in a blur

兴奋 trainspotters 板人群携带。在抵达益子后，我徘徊镇通过探索其著名的陶器现场，但首先映入眼帘的景象：在主要广场比灵感，促使更多的困惑，一个巨大的，稍浓艳的狸兔犬（陶瓷，当然），包围身背相机，领取养老金的人群从附近的一个教练。

幸运的是，它没有把我找到其他例子 Mashikoyaki 陶器。分散在美味的红宝石红色草莓市场摊位和当地野生蘑菇无数的陶器店，工作室和摊位，我很快就自豪地拥有几个简单，质朴迷人不完善，圆板。经过一个快速的蔬菜咖喱在波希米亚当地的咖啡馆吃午饭，我走了10分钟左右，老明卡农舍，在那里我曾与古木良一，我的益子陶器一天老师布置了会议。在这里，在他的工作室，他欣然同意教我基本的决定，他也许很遗憾我固有的人才缺乏明显的。幸运的是，我的热情掩盖了我的技能赤字，我愉快地度过小时滚动和软化粘土（“像一朵菊花，说：”古木老师），最后才毕业我做了一个烂摊子一种完全不同的。

润湿我的手，车轻推我的脚，粘土觉得精美的软，我很快就发现自己陷入混乱的作品出现在我面前（在我脸上的红粘土涂层，其原件，这些对象可能已经出生的传统在厨房里，但我感到高兴，因为我是粘土四溅。只是简单地停止时，在一个华丽的围裙主妇夫人抵达蒸青绿茶和甜食，通过在一个旋转的模糊的时间，直到最后，它是时间清理。

热衷进一步探索益子前的天空变暗，我借来一台正在生锈的旧从明卡蓝色自行车，我在路上摇摇晃晃。远离主要的陶器店林立的街道，我品尝一种和平的，只能在农村，我沿着安静的小巷，衬以绿色的田野，老房子，偶尔 konbini 便利店循环。

我的第一站是益子参考收藏博物馆。设置在益子的最有名的陶艺家，已故正治滨的故居，它是空的，因为它是和平的，我喜欢一个孤独的漫步在古朴的木制谷仓和修剪整齐的花园。但最后一天宝石星网。继离大路小路，我发现自己在时尚的质朴别致复杂，包括美味的有机咖啡，用当地种植的农产品，设计商店和陶艺画廊。

白色，安详和平静，它是的空间一种就是让时尚这将是比遥控器（它是或许小的惊喜，其创新的创始人弘巴巴近年来已开通农村前哨较为普遍臀部东京等作为目黑邻里在资本和大阪出售星网品牌食物和陶瓷）的前哨。

但我搬到丰盛的蔬菜汤，同时享受我的周围，它似乎是一个精心策划的质朴简约剂量正是我需要探索益子一天后旋风。后来我前往火车站载货更多的采购（一些微妙的白色星网杯），它也把我完美的心情我到城市的回报。我的行程可能已经稍纵即逝，但回忆长期徘徊，也许要归功于每天的作用，在我的生活中扮演的益子陶器。几个月后，我的访问，抵达后，一个纸箱里塞满了报纸和自己的益子陶器创作，发射和釉面。这种陶器最玩命的传统分类鱼龙混杂（它是一个

until, too soon, it was time to clean up.

Keen to explore Mashiko further before the sky darkened, I borrowed a rusting blue bicycle from the minka and wobbled my way up the road. Away from the main shop-lined Jonaizaka street, I savored the kind of peace that can only be found in the countryside as I cycled along quiet lanes bordered with rice fields, old houses and the occasional *konbini* convenience store.

My first stop was the Mashiko Reference Collection Museum established by Shoji Hamada. The Sankokan, as it is known, is set amid manicured grounds that include the famed potter's former home (a magnificent thatched-roofed minka), a *kura* storehouse and his personal workshop. The museum itself was as empty as it was peaceful, so I enjoyed a solitary tour of the collection that features Hamada's work as well as pieces by his colleagues such as Kanjiro Kawai and Bernard Leach.

But the final gem of the day was Starnet. Following a small path off the main road, I found myself in a homespun-chic complex of renovated farm buildings housing an organic café that serves locally grown produce, a studio, design shop and pottery gallery.

White and serene, this is the kind of space more commonly associated with hip Tokyo neighborhoods than rural outposts. (It's perhaps no surprise that Starnet's innovative founder, Hiroshi Baba, has opened branches in Tokyo and Osaka selling Starnet-branded food and ceramics.)

As I tucked into the café's hearty vegetable soup, it seemed that a dose of carefully curated rustic minimalism was exactly what I needed after a whirlwind day of exploring. I headed to the train station laden down with yet more purchases (some delicate white Starnet cups), knowing that while my trip may have been fleeting, Mashiko would stay with me, thanks to its wares that now play a daily role in my life.

A few months after my visit, a cardboard box arrived in the post. Under the newspaper packing were my pottery creations, glazed and fired. This motley assortment of crockery—most defying categorization (a plate? a vase?) and marked with a lopsided DD on the red clay base—continues to evoke Mashiko memories while taking pride of place on my kitchen shelves.

Danielle Demetriou writes for The Daily and Sunday Guardian, Monocle and Condé Nast Traveller

Danielle Demetriou 日报“和”星期日卫，单片和康泰纳仕旅行者写道

板？它是一个花瓶？）和所有标记的 DD 对红土不平衡的基础上，继续以唤起快乐的益子回忆今天同时骄傲的地方，我的厨房货架上。这种陶器最玩命的传统分类龙混杂（它是一个板？它是一个花瓶？）和所有标记的 DD 对红土不平衡的基础上，继续以唤起快乐的益子回忆今天同时骄傲的地方，我的厨房货架上。但手拨到菜场，同时享受我的周围，它似乎是一个精心策划的质朴简约剂量正是我需要探索益子一天后旋风。后来我前往火车站载货更多的采购（一些微妙的白色星网杯），它也把我完美的心情我到大城市的回报。我的行程可能已经稍纵即逝，但回忆长期徘徊，也许要归功于每天的作用，在我的生活中扮演的益子陶器。几个月后，我的访问，抵达后，一个纸箱里塞满了报纸和自己的益子陶器创作，发射和釉面。这种陶器最玩命的传统分类龙混杂（它是一个板？它是一个花瓶？）和所有标记的 DD 对红土不平衡的基础上，继续以唤起快乐的益子回忆今天同时骄傲的地方，我的厨房货架上。这种陶器最玩命的传统分类龙混杂（它是一个板？它是一个花瓶？）和所有标记的 DD 对红土不平衡的基础上，继续以唤起快乐的益子回忆今天同时骄傲的地方，我的厨房货架上。



Taking a beginner's course at Mashiko Ceramic Art Club

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Toko's shop and gallery
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RIGHT: The steam locomotive, Moka
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LEFT: Chopstick and toothbrush holders with lotus root shape at Toko
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Mashiko Data

Access

Take the JR Utsunomiya line from Ueno to Utsunomiya. Transfer to a Toya bus bound for Mashiko (bus stop #14) outside the station's west exit (¥2,990/160 min.).

More expensive but also more fun is to take the Shinkansen from Ueno to Oyama. From there, hop on the Mito line to Shimodate and then transfer to the Moka Tetsudo local line to Mashiko (¥4,460 reserved, ¥4,150 unreserved/145 min.). Note: the SL Moka (a restored steam locomotive) runs only on weekends, holidays and Fridays during August. The train departs Shimodate Station at 10:52, and arrives at Mashiko Station at 15:08. www.moka-railway.co.jp/ (Japanese language site)

Mashiko Ceramic Art Club (Ryoichi Furuki Workshop)

3288-6 Mashiko, Mashiko-machi, Haga-gun, Tochigi ☎ 321-4217

Tel: +81-0285-72-3866

Open: 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Closed: Wednesdays and Thursday (closed in winter until the end of May)

Mashiko Reference Collection Museum (Mashikoyaki Sankokan/益子参考館)

A museum with about 30 pieces by Shoji Hamada, as well as many other works. Hamada's studio is open to the public.

3388 Mashiko, Mashiko-machi, Haga-gun, Tochigi

Admission: ¥800

Tel: +81-0285-72-5300

Open: 9:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. (enter by 4:30 p.m.)

Closed on Mondays, for the New Year's season and during February.

Starnet

3278-1 Mashiko, Mashiko-machi, Haga-gun, Tochigi

Tel: +81-0285-72-9661

Toko

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Pain de Musha Musha and Coffee

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