



Come See it.  
Feel it.  
Be Part of it.

## Shigaraki Kilns Look to the World Expo to Keep the Flame Alive



Ogama, Noborigama Kiln, located on Shigaraki Towns Kiln Exploration Trail

Shigaraki, a small town in Japan's Shiga Prefecture, has long been known for its pottery, its kilns a testament to a rich tradition that dates back centuries. But today, Shigaraki is at a crossroads – a crossroads where the past meets the future, where the flame of ancient kilns is kept burning by a new generation of artisans and innovators. And as the world turns its eyes to the 2025 Osaka-Kansai Expo, the Shigaraki Pottery Industry Cooperative is taking a bold step forward, using the global stage to share its story and secure its future.

### From Earth to Art: Shigaraki's Invitation to the World

In Shigaraki, pottery is more than just a craft. It's a way of life. The clay here holds stories, shaped by hands that have passed down knowledge through generations. And now, as the world prepares for the Expo, Shigaraki's artisans are seizing the moment. They aren't just creating something new for the event; they are extending an invitation to the world to come and see where it all began.

For the Expo, Shigaraki has crafted ceramic stools, beautiful yet functional objects that tell the story of the region's rich pottery heritage. But it's not just about their beauty – it's about what they're made from. The stools are crafted from a hybrid clay, combining Shigaraki's renowned natural clay with recycled ceramic waste, refined through modern digital technology. It's a perfect blend of tradition and innovation, a testament to Shigaraki's ability to adapt and evolve while staying true to its roots.



A "Eco clay" has been created and stools crafted for Expo 2025 to showcase the area.

### Clay with a Story

Long before there was Shigaraki ware, this land was part of a vast ancient lake. Over millions of years, layers of sediment settled, forming the high-quality clay that gave rise to one of Japan's Six Ancient Kilns. That same clay is still used today, but now, it's taking on a new form.

The Shigaraki Pottery Industry Cooperative, alongside Marushi Pottery, has developed a hybrid clay – part traditional, part upcycled – designed specifically for the Expo. This innovative approach blends recycled materials with traditional

clay, preserving the signature texture of Shigaraki ware while reducing waste. The result is a durable, sustainable material that remains true to its origins.

### An Invitation to Experience Shigaraki

For Shigaraki, the Expo isn't just about showcasing pottery – it's about bringing people to the source. The ceramic stools are a starting point, a quiet invitation to come closer. To walk the narrow streets lined with climbing kilns and brick chimneys. To step into a working pottery studio and feel the weight of raw clay in their hands. To witness the firing process, where earth transforms into something lasting.

Factory tours and hands-on workshops will open the doors of Shigaraki's kilns to visitors, offering a rare chance to connect with a craft that has stood the test of time. This is a place where history is still being made – one kiln, one pot, one visitor at a time.



Shigaraki is only 90 minutes from Kyoto - Come See it. Feel it. Be part of it!

### A Future Built on Fire and Clay

Masayuki Imai, CEO of Marushi Seitou Kabushiki Gaisha, understands what's at stake. "This isn't just about making something for the Expo," he says. "It's about showing the world what Shigaraki stands for. It's about keeping this craft alive for future generations."



Mr. Masayuki Imai CEO of Marushi Seitou Kabushiki Gaisha crafting a large pot

The Shigaraki Pottery Industry Cooperative has long understood that its survival depends on more than just preserving tradition. It's about adaptation – about taking the past and forging a path toward the future. And that's exactly what they're doing with their innovative entry into the 2025 World Expo's Co-Design Challenge. This is not just about creating something new for a global audience; it's about ensuring that Shigaraki's legacy is alive, sustainable, and ready to inspire the next generation of creators and visitors.

As the kilns of Shigaraki continue to burn, the invitation stands: *Come to Shigaraki. See it. Feel it. Be a part of it. Experience the ancient art of pottery, reimagined for the future.*



Poponta is the official mascot character of the Shigaraki Town Tourism Association. This adorable raccoon symbolizes Shigaraki's traditional pottery and culture. Catch up with him at the events and festivals in Shigaraki.

[www.e-shigaraki.org](http://www.e-shigaraki.org)