

LEATHER BAGS GALORE



BUSINESS THE JAPANESE WAY
MAN, WOMAN & CHILD - SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

People of all ages do business in one way or another, and with the Japanese known as some of the hardest workers in the world; be they kids prepping for advancement to schools that will start them out on the path to future success, or those working their way through university, perhaps grad-school, there will always be the need for bags capable and functional in this regard. Kids have long used satchels to use the English term and few reading this will have any memory of a childhood sans leather satchel somewhere down the line. Perhaps into the teens the satchels of childhood would be exchanged for briefcases and shoulder bags more akin to advancing in age, fashions of the day and / or the need for more space in which to place books than (generally) smaller satchels provide.

By the time adulthood comes around the bags in question are more often than not 'business' looking and aimed at transportation of books, files, and the like, and from places of work, education, and residence.

Many high quality materials make their way into bag production nowadays, from the synthetic to the natural, but it is mainly in the latter of these two that Japanese manufacturers prefer to use for bag production - from the satchels used by kids heading to elementary schools around the country, to the products used by millions of businessmen and women to transport back and forth papers, files and of course lunch boxes - excel, in the form of leather.

Leather is used throughout the Japanese bag production world, and not all is black and brown as might be supposed of such a 'staple' use for the world's oldest material in as far as bags go - for business or otherwise. Indeed, as can be seen in the images, Japanese bags used for business come in a range of

forms, capable of accommodating a wide range of material volume(s).

Material wise, the leather used in Japan, imported or domestically bred includes leather not only from cows as most would imagine. Japanese leather also includes that taken from alligators, pythons and even lizards. These often make popular souvenirs - with the correct paperwork filled in - and are as hard-wearing as any other form of leather, even if considerably lighter when held. Even the Japanese forms of leather made from the hide of cows that is used in bag production - business included - are themselves reduced in thickness and thus weight to ensure lighter, but still incredibly strong pieces for those making the ultimate purchase in such bags; lighter a consideration made by bag producers in Japan to allow for generally lighter frames in the Japanese body according to the Chairman of The Japan Luggage Association (www.kaban.or.jp), Shoichi Inose.

In the men's leather business bags range produced by many of the dedicated bag makers in Japan the range is immense but one style that never goes out is the so-called 'tenchaku' bags that have the zipper across the top of the bag - the 'ten' referring to heaven or the 'top' of the bag, and 'chaku' the Japanese term for zipper. The ladies leather range found in Japan is arguably bigger and this is nowhere more evident in the styles and designs - fixtures and fittings, strap lengths and number of pockets as well as the bags being designed primarily for carrying in one hand, slung across the body, perhaps on one shoulder - or just carried under the arm.

But that is leather through and through - as versatile a material as any other and a whole lot sturdier than most. Go with leather when selecting a business bag and you will not go wrong.



BAGS A LA JAPONAIS & ECO-FRIENDLY TO BOOT!

When on the lookout for a top quality leather bag made in Japan, there is one thing above all others that should be sought - the mark of 'Made in Japan', the mark of real leather, and thus the mark guaranteed to down the road ensure satisfaction with the product invested in.

The Japanese have long been known as a people for whom quality and attention to detail matter a great deal. In the manufacture of their bags they are no different. One easy example of the attention to detail seen in Japanese produced bags can be seen in the 6, 7, or 8 stitches used in every 3cm of leather sealed in Japanese bags. These stitches are changed to suit the products.

2010 has already, and will continue to see, a range of events aimed at promoting the use of leather in Japan at such exclusive locations as Omotesando Hills, not only in bag form but also in shoes and a great many other areas for The Japan Leather Awards, and in October, 2010, Award winning products are exhibited at a fair held in Paris, France.

With a multitude of criteria to work through, the best of Japan's best, be they pros in the industry, or students of leather work, will be pitted against each other to see who will carry the torch of Japanese leather into the next 12 months.

These awards coupled with the ever

present desire for quality and function in the Japanese market will only enforce the need to grow with the times, and the Japan Leather and Leather Goods Industries Association has taken a recent step in this direction by introducing the 2009, JAPAN ECO LEATHER Standard (see sidebar).

In doing so, the whole industry is taking steps towards leading the eco-movement from the front in as far as leather goes, but for the simplest identifying marker possible that will aid in recognizing a bag as genuine leather and 'made in Japan', look for the mark shown (direction); an indication of quality and workmanship the Japanese and Japanese bag producers rightfully pride themselves on.

Shop aware, and know you will get quality whilst helping the environment

In 2009, the Japan Leather and Leather Goods Industries Association settled on a "JAPAN ECO LEATHER Standard".

Leather goods carrying the Japan Eco Leather mark are only made of leather satisfying the requirements of Japan Eco Leather Standard.

MAIN REQUIREMENTS

- Genuine Leather
- Leather manufactured by a tannery controlling waste water, and solid waste matter.
- No breaking of agreed limits on chemical substances. (formaldehyde, heavy metals, PCPs, forbidden azo dyes)

Full details of the Japan Eco Leather Standard: www.jlia.or.jp/ (JP)



Leather goods in Japan, large or small are made to some of the highest standards in the world.

As such, for those unaware of how to best check the country of origin and authenticity of a given piece, the pros in the industry have taken the strain out of making sure you get a quality piece - with accompanying peace of mind; that you are getting value for money and the item itself is guaranteed leather.

Anywhere the accompanying tag (see image) is found, those making the purchase can rest assured the bag in question is genuine leather and this tag (see image) shows the product is made in Japan. These tags are issued by The Japan Luggage Association.

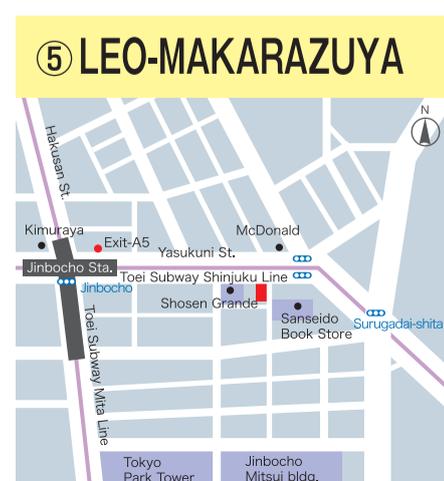
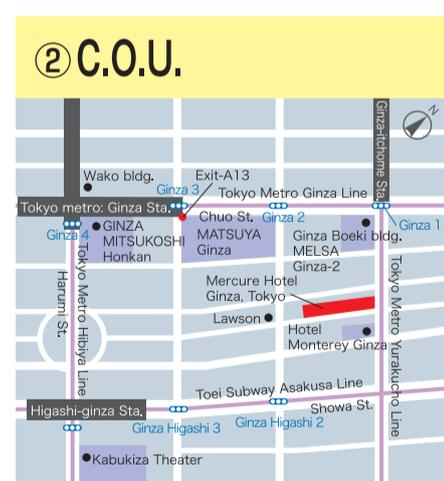
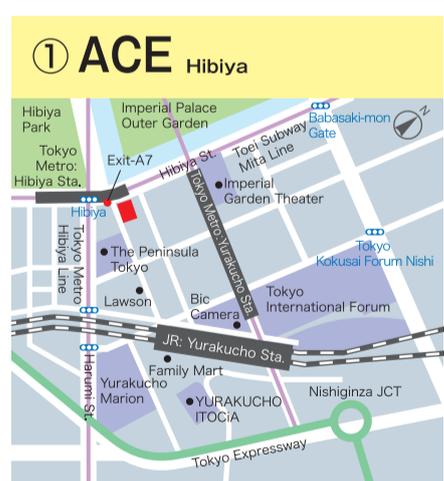
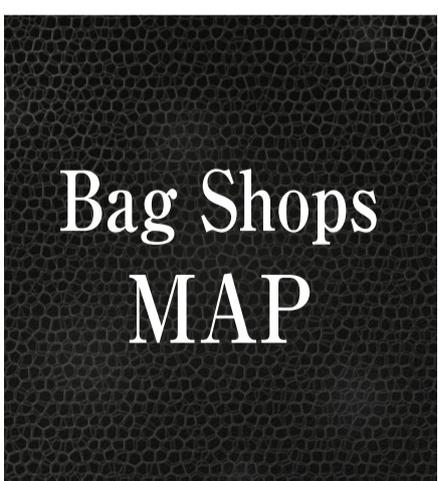


ACE Hibiya Store

Founded in 1940, ACE has established itself as a world-class bag manufacturer mainly producing travel and business bags. ACE bags boast an extremely high quality of product, which is maintained by performing strict inspections of all their pieces at domestic manufacturing plants. Together with their suitcases, ACE's fine leather briefcases, also enjoy high popularity.

ACE Hibiya made its grand opening in May 2010, as the brand's flagship store. This modern and stylish location is one of ACE's major bases from which they market their core original brands, such as "ProtecA" and "ACEGENE".

As well as the many business men and women that visit the store, ACE Hibiya is also well prepared to serve non-Japanese customers that visit from nearby hotels; one of their services being the use of China UnionPay, ACE also runs the World Bag Museum in Asakusa - one of the world's largest bag museums, with hundreds of bags from 50 nations around the world. Free of charge, the museum has recently added English-language text descriptions to enable non-Japanese visitors to further enjoy the experience.



① ACE Hibiya

ADDRESS 1-9-1, Yurakucho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
 TEL 03-3211-1266
 OPEN 11am-8pm
 CLOSED no regular holidays
 NEAR STATION a 0-minute walk from A7 of Hibiya Sta. on the Tokyo Metro Hibiya Line
 URL <http://www.ace.jp>

UC JACCS AMEX MASTER VISA 銀聯

COUPON For 10% discount offered to the customers who bring this coupon (invalid for sale items) ※Valid only through 10-31-2010

THE LEATHER NUMBERS GAME & LEATHER AS A WEDDING GIFT

One aspect of the Japanese language many visiting for a longer period, regardless of where they are from, or indeed those opting to live in the country soon become aware of once they have been around the Japanese language for a while is the use of 'double' sometimes 'triple' readings of certain terms when put on paper. This is a concept particularly at home in the reading of numbers, and can at first be somewhat confusing for those new to Japanese as a foreign tongue.

After a while though it does become part and parcel of everyday comprehension of the language and particularly the advertising mindset in the islands – the alternate reading of 'one' (ichi) as 'i' (sounding like 'e' in English), the reading thereby of 11 as 'ii', and the abbreviation of 'seven' (usually nana or shichi in the local lingo) to 'na', meaning that the telephone number 117 comes out as 'iina' – itself another term for good or great in Japanese, oftentimes with a sliver of envy added to the voice of the speaker just for good measure.

The twisting of the language in this regard happens all over, and the good folk behind the national leather business in Japan have come up with their own ingenious take on leather promotion with November 3rd being designated いいレザー

ーの日 – the いい the Japanese for 'ii' (11) and レザー the term for leather (and 03) – thus emphasizing the date while の日 refers to the day.

That the date is itself already a national holiday (Culture Day – or Bunka-no-hi), and was once the birthday of the much loved Meiji Emperor who reigned from 1868 – 1912 in what was considered the most culturally important reign of the past thousand years in it opening Japan to the world and effectively modernizing the nation, it is thus perhaps the most apt day on the calendar to celebrate a material – along with all the associated campaigns that will be seen come the cooling of days and the onset of Autumn – as culturally defining across the globe as leather.

Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue.

SOMETHING LEATHER.

Few anywhere will initially associate leather with weddings, anniversaries of that big day and such. Many a 'material' deemed linked to wedding anniversaries is known of, if not in detail in general form by most; silver (25 years), gold (50) – and perhaps even paper (just 1) the easiest to remember.

But just how many reading this are aware of the worldwide preference for leather upon completion of a fixed number of years of marital bliss?

Traditionally the system of offering certain gifts of certain materials originated in the West (likely Germany and later the UK and Commonwealth nations) but has



Shoichi Inose - President of Inose

long been embraced in Japan. Interestingly though, the UK and US do differ in some regards with leather the gift of choice on the third anniversary in the UK, and formerly so in the USA.

Japanese too of late have offered leather pieces large and small to celebrate the married life of relative newly-weds on the third anniversary, but in the modern US, leather has been moved 'up' to the ninth anniversary and in the process has been amended to 'leather goods' as opposed

to 'leather' outright – but any date with extra longevity is obviously something of a compliment in that the longer you have been married in general, the more valuable the material of which gifts are supposed to be made, are.

Japan Leather and Leather Goods Industries Association

www.jlia.or.jp

Writer: Mark Buckton

Photographs: INOSE Co.,Ltd/Christopher Jue

C.O.U.

C.O.U. aims to provide customers with a place they can encounter various concepts of values, different cultures and goods in one spot. Together with their original "WILD SWANS" brand, C.O.U. also sells various domestic brands' leather goods, and strives to promote the value of leather products. Everything on sale in their store is handmade by Japanese craftsmen. Here you can purchase functional and intricately designed leather bags for a reasonable price. Small leather goods can be customized to suit your tastes by choosing the type and color of leather as well as the stitching color from 14 variations. The products are all durable and the longer you use them, the better they will become. Regardless of how old the goods are, C.O.U. is willing to fix and repair them when possible. All the distinctive signboards, the interior and displays inside the Ginza store were custom-made by a famous artist – something you won't discover until you are inside being that it is actually quite a unique and exciting location.

HIDEO WAKAMATSU Jiyugaoka Store

The brand began as a boutique near the Jardin du Luxembourg in Paris, in 1989. The brand concept is one of fusion of style, functionality and usability. Designer Hideo Wakamatsu takes time to listen to the voices of his customers in order to understand and then create exactly what they are looking for. His will to be involved in each and every process, from design to crafting, and the importance he places in creating "made in Japan" products, are the major characteristics of this brand. Stylish and functional, yet simple but fashionable, their products often appear in fashion magazines home and abroad, and have many fans among Japan's horde of celebrities. That more than 20 of their bags have won and are award-winning products including Good Design Award is also of note, and another fact that solidifies their value. Stores can be found in Jiyugaoka, Shibuya, Tokyo, Europe, the U.S.A., China, Hong Kong and South Korea.

KURACHIKA YOSHIDA Omotesando

A venerable bag manufacturer established in 1935, with a corporate motto of "Hitohari Nyukon," meaning, to make sure you give it your all every single stitch. They put emphasis on material, parts, the sewing, and functionality when producing bags for their brands, "PORTER" and "LUGGAGE LABEL." Yoshida Bags are 100% made in Japan, and the longer you use them the better they become. Their wallets, backpacks, tote bags and various other bags are very popular with young people, many of whom are regular customers. Of the several hundred pieces they produce, some limited products have become extremely valuable. Likewise outside Japan, where Yoshida Bags have drawn the attention of the foreign media for many reasons leading to many non-Japanese fans who now value their products. Adjacent to their shop in Omotesando, one of two directly-owned stores, with the other in Marunouchi, is a hand-stitch workshop where, if lucky, you can watch the production process. At these two stores are limited items for sale that you will find only here, so bag lovers be sure to stop by during your visit to Japan.

LEO-MAKARAZUYA

Founded in 1906, this long-established business with a history of over 100 years is currently being run by the fourth owner. From the very beginning they have stuck to producing "Japan-made" goods, and have continued support for Japanese craftsmen and manufacturers. Thus, their goods are almost wholly "made in Japan." The store is located in the old and historical district of Jimbocho, with its many antiquarian bookstores. Once inside the store, filled with a retro-flavored atmosphere, customers are overwhelmed by nearly one thousand products that are laid out on the shelves, from the lineup of casual bags such as backpacks and shoulder bags, to the standard briefcases and other perennial favorites. There are also some precious collectors' items hidden away among the goods, so if you are lucky you may be able to find that classic bag you'd been looking for. Staff on hand are well prepared to assist non-Japanese customers, including Chinese-speaking staff.



A leather tote in a refined design with elaborated details.



② C.O.U.

ADDRESS 2-9-4, Ginza, Chuo-ku, Tokyo

TEL 03-3563-5040

OPEN Mon-Sat 11am-8pm
Sun & national holidays 11am-7pm

CLOSED no regular holidays

NEAR STATION a 3-minute walk from Exit A13 of Ginza Sta. on the Tokyo Metro Ginza Line

URL <http://cou-shop.jp>

UC JACCS AMEX MASTER VISA 銀聯



A chic, functional bag in nuance shade distinctive of real leather.



③ HIDEO WAKAMATSU Jiyugaoka

ADDRESS 1-3-16, Jiyugaoka, Meguro-ku, Tokyo

TEL 03-3718-1901

OPEN 11am-8pm

CLOSED Tue

NEAR STATION a 5-minute walk from South Exit of Jiyugaoka Sta. on the Tokyu Toyoko Line

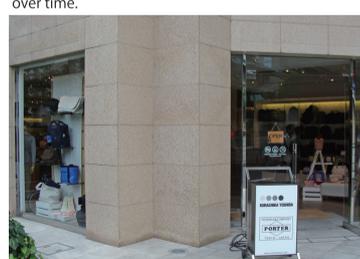
URL <http://www.hideo-wakamatsu.com>

UC JACCS AMEX MASTER VISA 銀聯

COUPON For 10% discount offered to the customers who bring this coupon (invalid for sale items) ※Valid only through 10-31-2010



Elegant style leather bags conform more and more over time.



④ KURACHIKA YOSHIDA Omotesando

ADDRESS 5-6-8, Jingumae, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo

TEL 03-5464-1766

OPEN 0pm (noon)-8pm

CLOSED no regular holidays

NEAR STATION a 5-minute walk from Exit A1 of Omotesando Sta. on the Tokyo Metro Hanzomon or Ginza Line

URL <http://www.yoshidakaban.com>

UC JACCS AMEX MASTER VISA 銀聯

COUPON For a PORTER / multi pouch as a FREE GIFT offered to the customers who bring this coupon ※One gift per customer / Offered to the first 50 customers



A basic item can become your partner.



⑤ LEO-MAKARAZUYA

ADDRESS 1-3, Kanda-Jinbocho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo

TEL 03-3295-5200

OPEN Mon-Fri 11am-6.30pm
Sat 11.30am-6.30pm
Sun & national holidays 1pm-6pm

CLOSED no regular holidays

NEAR STATION a 2-minute walk from Exit A5 of Jinbocho Sta. on the Tokyo Metro Hanzomon Line or Toei Subway Shinjuku Line

URL <http://leo-makarazuya.co.jp>

UC JACCS AMEX MASTER VISA 銀聯