

# The World's First Eco-Bag

Tokyo and Paris help raise worldwide ecology awareness through a practical collaboration.

Linked by a friendship city agreement since 1982, Tokyo and Paris are two iconic mega-cities that share a close bond. Last year they celebrated that relationship with a cultural exchange project known as Tandem Paris-Tokyo 2018. It was conducted by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, the City of Paris, and the Institut Français. The program featured a variety of stimulating and entertaining events that promoted the cultural allure of these two world-famous capitals.

One of the most intriguing events on the calendar was “FUROSHIKI PARIS,” which took place in front of the historic l’Hôtel de Ville (the city’s municipal government building) in November. Renowned architect and social artist Tsuyoshi Tane acted as art director for the project. In the plaza in front of this building, a large rectangular pavilion wrapped in a *furoshiki* (traditional Japanese wrapping cloth) was presented as a gift from Tokyo to Paris.

Inside the pavilion a wide range of *furoshiki* displays, including some from acclaimed creators, dazzled audiences with their artistic designs. Visitors were able to see *furoshiki* exhibitions from highly respected TV personality and film director Takeshi Kitano, prominent polka-dot artist Yayoi Kusama, con-



Photo: Yujiro Ichioka (TAM.inc)

The pavilion wrapped in a *furoshiki* in the Place de l’Hôtel de Ville in Paris.



The walls of the l’Hôtel de Ville in Paris and notable statues in the vicinity were also adorned with *furoshiki*.

temporary photographer Mika Ninagawa, fashion designer Jean Paul Gaultier, plus many more. Long lines of people formed to see the demonstrations, workshops, displays about the history of *furoshiki*, various installations, and a video projection about how the Japanese wrapping cloth has been used up to the present day.

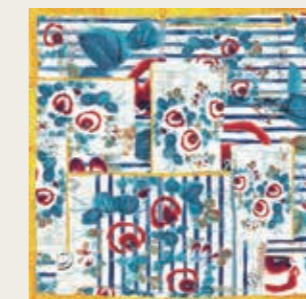
The origin of *furoshiki* is believed to date back more than 1,200 years to the Nara period. By the Edo period (1603-1868), it had become very popular, almost a fashion item. The kimono-clad people of all classes used them as handbags or carry bags.

Following the development of the plastic bag in the 1970s, *furoshiki* fell out of fashion and was almost forgotten. However, in recent years it has seen a revival in Japan. The world’s first ever eco-bag, *furoshiki* is viewed as an environmentally friendly alternative to plastic bags and present-day wrapping paper as it is versatile, flexible and, most importantly, reusable. For centuries the word *mottainai*, which is used to express regret when something has been wasted, has been embedded in Japanese culture. *Furoshiki* is a wonderful example of the *mottainai* spirit—having a mind to devise ways not to waste things but to cherish things.

Usually square in shape, *furoshiki* comes in a variety of sizes with some being as small as a handkerchief and others being larger than a bed sheet. There are techniques for wrapping bottles for safe convey-

ance and other techniques for wrapping round or spherical objects. The possibilities are endless.

Whether being taken to wrap gifts or a lunch box, compartmentalize clothes and accessories in a travel bag or neatly store items from your home, there is no denying the adaptability of *furoshiki*. The uses range from slightly creative—wearing *furoshiki* as a scarf—to the practical—using it as a sling to cradle an injured arm. The options go on and on. That is the beauty of *furoshiki*.



Some of the wide range of *furoshiki* designed by prominent creators. “Flours du ciel!” ©Jean Paul Gaultier (left), “Once the Abominable War is Over, Happiness Fills our Hearts” ©YAYOI KUSAMA (right).