

Traditional Crafts of Kaustinen – Skill, Heritage and Everyday Beauty

Crafts as Part of Everyday Life

As late as the twentieth century, almost every household in Kaustinen possessed the skills to weave, spin, sew and make its own household textiles. Sheep's wool was spun into yarn, the yarn was dyed using natural and commercial dyes, and the loom produced everyday textiles, ceremonial items and the bride's trousseau.

Craftsmanship was more than a practical necessity – it was also a way of expressing skill, creativity and local identity.

Ryijy Rugs and Raanu Coverlets Adorned the Home

In Kaustinen, colourful **ryijy** rugs were woven for festive occasions and decoration, as well as warm sleigh blankets for winter journeys. Particularly popular were richly patterned **ryijy** rugs, whose yarn was often spun and dyed at home.

One of Kaustinen's best-known textiles is the **silmikkoraanu**, a traditional woven coverlet. It was used as a wall hanging, bedspread, cover for a church sleigh, bridal canopy and ceremonial bed covering. Common motifs included crosses, stars, rowel wheels and spruce branches. A distinctive feature of Kaustinen's **raanu** tradition was that each village had its own identifying colours, making it possible to recognise where a particular textile had been woven.

Täkänä Rugs and Woven Textiles

From the 1950s onwards, **täkänä** rugs became popular as decorative wall textiles. Woven as double cloth, they were both durable and highly skilful in design, with reverse-colour patterns visible on each side.

In Kaustinen, weavers also produced scarves, shawls, tablecloths, curtains, bedspreads, wall hangings and woven bands. Many textiles were made from wool and flax produced on the family's own farm and remained in use for decades.

Fringes and Needle-Made Mittens

Kaustinen is also renowned for its finely hand-knotted fringes, used to decorate sheets, tablecloths, curtains and ecclesiastical textiles. Traditionally, the fringes were white or the natural colour of linen, and producing them required patience and exceptional craftsmanship.

Another local speciality is **neulavanthut**, mittens made using a large needle and thick woollen yarn. The craft was often learned from an early age.

The Bride's Trousseau and Traditional Craft Skills

Handmade textiles formed an important part of a bride's trousseau. Sheets, pillowcases and towels were embroidered with the owner's initials. Every textile had its own purpose, and fine workmanship was a source of pride.

Processing wool – carding, spinning and dyeing – together with quilt making formed part of the annual work in many households. Embroidery techniques such as cross stitch, whitework and Hardanger embroidery were also widely practised and passed down from one generation to the next.

A Living Craft Tradition

The traditional crafts of Kaustinen reflect a self-sufficient way of life, exceptional craftsmanship and a community in which skills were passed from one generation to the next. Many traditional techniques continue to thrive today thanks to enthusiasts, craftspeople and local heritage work.

Every **ryijy**, **raanu**, hand-knotted fringe and **neulavanthut** forms part of Kaustinen's cultural heritage – a story of hands that brought beauty to both everyday life and celebration.

Photo: Fringed Tablecloth

Made by Maija-Liisa Paavola, 1990.

Source: Miia Penttilä, *Kaustisen kädentaitoperinne (The Craft Heritage of Kaustinen)*

Photo: "Elämän langat" (Threads of Life) Ryijy

Made by Veera and Simo Paavola, 1950.

Source: Miia Penttilä, *Kaustisen kädentaitoperinne (The Craft Heritage of Kaustinen)*