

A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a woman's face, likely a geisha or kabuki actor, with white face paint, red lips, and red eye makeup. Her eyes are closed, and she has a serene expression. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the makeup and the contours of her face. The background is dark, making the subject stand out.

SEEING JAPAN

WORLD HERITAGE in DEPTH

A CREATIVE IMAGE-MAKING PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR
13 - 27 March 2023

Robert van Koesveld & Daisuke Kondo



Welcome

Japan offers so many diverse experiences – peaceful ancient forests and tiny gardens; beautiful snow-capped mountains and island beaches; intriguing traditional culture and vibrant modern cities. We invite you to connect with the people, culture and landscape in focused and interesting ways, paced for thoughtful photographers, so that you can create images that reflect your experiences at a greater depth. With a small group led by two professional photographers, this is a great opportunity to follow your creative ambitions while (further) exploring this fascinating country.







Highlights

- Find lake and traditional settings with views of Mount Fuji and wander the surrounding national park.
- Explore Yakushima Island's World Heritage cedar forests with their exquisite moss and fern understorey.
- Enjoy unusual Yakushima beach experiences – indulging in a hot-spring bath and watching the endangered Loggerhead Turtles come ashore at night to lay eggs.
- Attend an odori in World Heritage Kyoto – the extraordinarily beautiful annual dance/theatre performance of one of the five geiko (geisha) districts.
- Meet and photograph Maiko and Geiko in a private traditional setting.
- Have fun with street-style photography in the daytime and evening, in Tokyo and Kyoto.
- Take time to review your images as you go, consider your purposes and methods, all with access to two photography coaches, whose priority is your creativity.



Sakura

We have scheduled this tour in March so that we can experience the incredibly special delights of cherry blossom time in Japan.

Just exactly when the cherries actually blossom is not something that follows a calendar timetable so we have time available in Tokyo, Fuji and Kyoto and will organise around what is happening on the ground (or in the trees). If the blossom comes early we will head to the hills outside of Kyoto if necessary where it is cooler which gives us four possibilities.

Sakura is a busy time but we think a small group like ours will be able to avoid the crowds or maybe join them in picnicing under the trees.

Robert van Koesveld
PHOTOGRAPHY



Just Six

With just six participants and two photography coaches, we (Robert and Daisuke) can offer support and guidance to take your image-making further and deeper. It also means we can travel in one van and be flexible to respond to interesting options that present themselves. We are excited at the notion of offering others creative opportunities.

We both know Kyoto well and together with Akie, our Kyoto specialist, want to introduce you to places beyond the busy tourist attractions. Robert's award-winning photobook, 'Geiko and Maiko of Kyoto' would also be an interesting introduction to this very special group of traditional artists and craftspeople. A small group means we can engage with local traditional artists and craftspeople, and visit small quiet temples.

Calm and Focused Travel

We have designed this itinerary so that we stay longer in three of our specially selected World Heritage locations – Mt Fuji Five Lakes, Yakushima Island, Kyoto. This means we can take time to explore each location, get into the zone, find images and focus on our image-making. We can sometimes return to places under different weather conditions to make quite different images. Good photos come from taking time, not from rushing around making snapshots. More time means you get sufficiently familiar to wander and let images find you. Fewer locations also mean much less time is wasted on packing, unpacking and traveling.



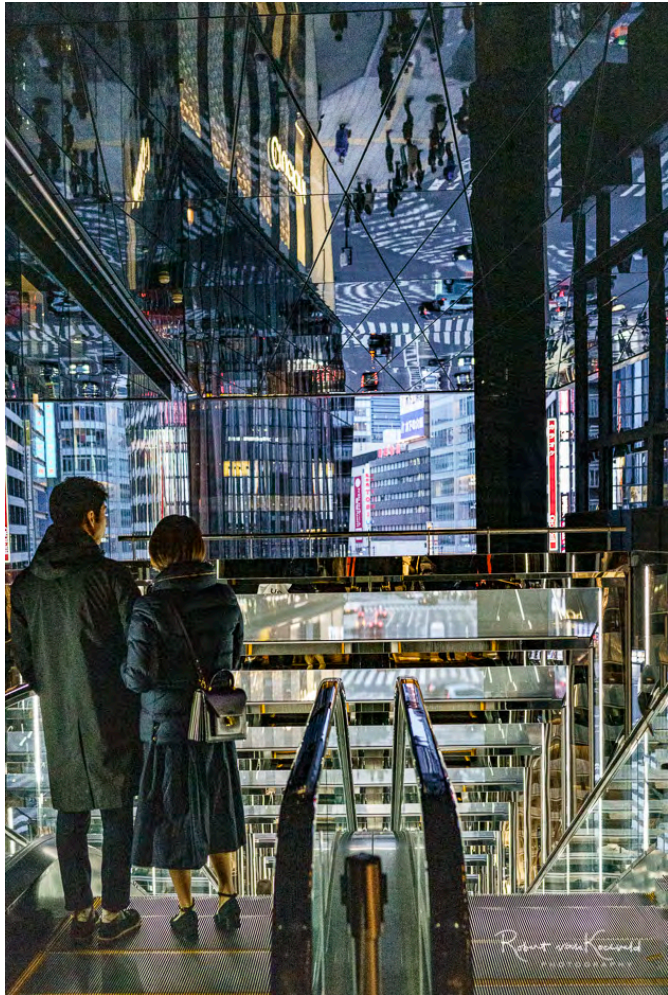


Itinerary

Day 1: March 13th (Monday):

Arrive Tokyo

We start in Tokyo (which is where most inward flights come) and will meet at our hotel at 4pm for an introduction before heading out for dinner and our first opportunity for some interesting street photography.



Itinerary (continued)

Day 2-4: March 14-16 (Tues - Thursday): Mt. Fuji and Lake Kawaguchi

After an early breakfast we will head west in our comfortable van to Lake Kawaguchi (1000m), one of five lakes (Fujigoko) around the north base of Mt Fuji; it is on the World Heritage list as part of the Fujisan Cultural Site. After lunch at our hotel by the lake, we will begin exploring. Mt Fuji is sometimes 'shy', but we have three days here, so that she can show herself without veils. At 3776m she is Japan's highest peak and fortunately has been dormant since 1707. Although women have been allowed to climb her since 1872, we plan to all explore only around her base; climbers are only permitted anyway, early July - early September. We are looking for interesting foregrounds and perhaps to make a start on our own '36 views of Mount Fuji'. You may become inspired by revisiting Hokusai's famous 18thC woodcut versions beforehand.





Itinerary (continued)

Day 5: March 17 (Friday): Transfer to Osaka

Today is a transfer day and we will drive to Osaka while looking for different views of Mt. Fuji. We can relax, work on images or chat a long the way. If time allows, after we check-in to our hotel, we will explore Osaka and have a local speciality for dinner, practicing street photography along the way.

Day 6: March 18 (Sat): Osaka to Yakushima

Today we fly south to the mountainous small island of Yakushima, just below Kyushu.

Day 7 - 9: March 19 -21 (Sun - Tues): Yakushima Island

Yakushima Island is a World Heritage Site known for its ancient mossy and mysterious cedar forests, wildlife (macaques and sika deer) and hot springs. With our private van we can explore pathways into the lush forests beside the road that runs around the whole perimeter of the island. During our initial days there we will venture into the Shiratani Unsui-kyo Valley, the nature park of Yakusugi Land and to the Anbo River, often having a picnic lunch in the forest. On the Monday night we will move to a traditional onsen-hotel next to relaxing Nagata Beach, aiming to watch the endangered Loggerhead turtles come ashore at night to lay eggs on the beach where they were born. Next day we will drive to Yokokawa Valley, Seibu Rindo and the towering Oko waterfall, returning that evening to take a hot bath in the outside Onsen by Nagata beach.

Day 10: March 22 (Wed): Osaka to Yakushima

Today we fly to Osaka (Itami) then take a Limousine bus to Kyoto station. We settle into our hotel and then have dinner followed by a night walk





Day 11-14: March 23- 26 (Thurs-Sun): Kyoto

Kyoto, once the capital of Japan for over a thousand years, is the cultural jewel of Japan. With so many options, we are pleased to have Akie, a highly experienced specialist guide in Kyoto who has been working with Robert for many years and through him, more recently with Dai. Together they will lead the group towards fascinating Kyoto opportunities for images of people, street scenes and temple gardens, as well as other unusual cultural experiences. We will choose small temples and locations beyond the crowded ones. A special treat will be meeting and photographing Geiko and Maiko (apprentice Geiko) in a private traditional setting. One afternoon we will take the opportunity, rarely taken by foreigners, of attending the extraordinary odori (annual dance/ theatre performance) of one of the five Geiko districts in Kyoto. It will be a memorable finale to our time in Japan.

Day 15: March 27th (Mon): Kyoto farewell

Over breakfast we farewell each other, and for some, say sayonara to Japan too. We shall continue enjoying our memories of Japan in our hearts, minds, cameras and, of course, our images.

This itinerary is the plan. The actual tour may vary slightly due to weather, road conditions or other things beyond our control. We also have built in some flexibility and will decide some details based on the best options on the day. We adjust our plans to take advantage of weather changes or new opportunities. Either way, we will ensure you get the best photographic tour that we can provide, and you will come away with fantastic images and memories.



Image Making

Robert considers a camera as just a tool for engaging with our world and for making images.

The best images are made not ‘taken’. We aim to photograph what we feel, not just things or places. By engaging with the people and places we meet, we deepen our experience of them, as well as their cultural and physical environment. Then we can begin to identify ‘what this photograph is about’ and find ways to make an image that reflects our deeper experience, and also really moves and interests the viewer. Sometimes one image tells your story, other times it needs a sequence or series of images.

Teaching and Coaching

Developing as a photographer is not just a product of time. Experience needs reflection to be genuinely useful developmentally. Technical skills are valuable at times, but simply acquiring a bunch of techniques, or a bunch of cameras, won’t really take you forward. While we can talk about technical matters if appropriate for you, we are most interested in deepening your conceptual process so that you come away with images that matter to you. If you are open to sharing your images and visual process, we can support your development. Robert will offer some group teaching tailored to the actual participants, and with a small group we will be able to converse and coach individually along the way. Still, we won’t be intruding, and if you just want to work on your own, we will leave you to it. Robert and Dai will photograph alongside you at times, but your images are our absolute priority.

So, we will definitely be open to conversation and coaching about your own creative process, as a photographer, sketcher or writer. Robert will bring examples of his own exhibition-oriented work and be open to sharing about his own process. We welcome you bringing your own projects or work in process too.

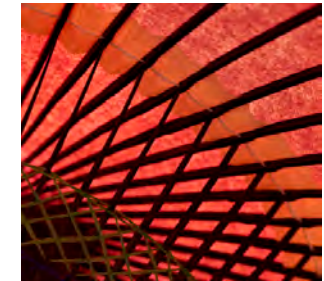
Physical Fitness

A basic level of walking fitness is essential, but this tour is not a hiking tour or a trekking tour, so nothing extreme will be required of you. It will be late spring, and we have planned several scenic walks in nature, and we will be visiting many stunning temple gardens, but mostly on well-maintained pathways. The hardest physical test will be to occasionally climb some stairs. Just let us know if you have any health issues or doubts, and we will see how we can work around them.

Who Should Come

Those with any level of experience as a photographer will enjoy this trip, as will artists and non-photographers who can, of course, enjoy making written or sketched images. We do spend lots of time in most locations, so you need to be open to that. In terms of gear, there are no special requirements, other than your ability to carry it; we recommend travelling reasonably light. Anything from a good phone camera through to a mirrorless, dslr or medium format camera is fine. If you are not a photographer something like a sketch book or writing journal will be good too. We provide a detailed pre-departure document to help with gear and most other questions.

The best images are made not ‘taken’. We aim to photograph what we feel.





Hotels and Onsens

We have an interesting mixture of accommodation planned. Because Japanese hotels often do not open bookings until around 6 months before the date, we will send a final list at that time. Some of the hotels are western style while others are more traditional with tatami rooms and futons put out on the night. Most westerners add an extra futon for comfort in traditional rooms. Western style rooms can be quite small in Japan. Some traditional Japanese onsen-style hotels have access to a hot bath which Japanese really love. We aim to use a mid-Edo era onsen hotel for 2 nights on Yakushima Island that has this style for bathing and no showers in the rooms; it is right next to the turtle beach and very photogenic in its own right, so well worth the cultural experience.

Food

Dinners in Japan are a real feature and we will have quite a few banquet-style Japanese meals, often in our hotels. Other times we will visit a range of local and speciality restaurants. Breakfasts are usually included in the hotel arrangements and are either very simple 'western style' or traditional Japanese. Lunches will often be from convenience stores, when on the road. We will let you choose something ready-to-go, so we don't waste time ordering and eating and so we can eat lunch on location in the wild.

Health and Safety

In what we hope will be post-Covid times, we will nevertheless maintain appropriate infection precautions. We will clean inside the vehicle each day and avoid queues and crowds. Hand cleaning gel will of course be available. Please discuss any health concerns with us before signing up. Health matters are covered in more detail in the trip information you will receive after registration. Japan is a mask-oriented culture, so masks are likely to be a part of our wardrobe at times. Following best practice health protocols will be a requirement for guests and leaders.



Tour Leaders



Robert van Koesveld

Robert is a full-time photographer whose work is primarily involved with world cultures. He has been interested in cultural travel all his life. Since retiring early from his psychotherapy practice, he has concentrated on photography and travels extensively each year. Together with his wife, Libby Lloyd, he published a photo book about Bhutan ('Bhutan Heartland: Travels in the Land of the Thunder Dragon', Fremantle Press, 2010). His book 'Geiko and Maiko of Kyoto' was published in 2016 and, in advance form, won the Australian Professional Photography Awards category of best Photo Book for 2015. Robert is interested in capturing 'spirit of place' and 'peoples' presence' in a cultural context. He has led photo tours to Bhutan, India, China and Japan.



Daisuke Kondo

Dai has always been passionate about exploring the world's environments and cultures, even while growing up in Tokyo. His travels began in Australia and led to him guiding outdoor adventures in Japan, New Zealand and Malaysia. As well as developing his photography skills, Dai trained as an Emergency Medical Technician in North America. This useful combination of interests, knowledge and skills enabled him to conduct photography tours and teach First Aid in his travels. His extensive travels in his native Japan led to him establishing Spark Photography, specialising in leading photography tours throughout his homeland. Dai has worked with Robert on his previous photo tours and scouting trips. Dai lives in Sapporo, Hokkaido.



Workshop Dates and Prices

Tour Dates: March 13 – 27 2023

Price: ¥1,005,000 (Japanese Yen) Per person (approx. \$US 9250*

Single Supplement: ¥85,000 (approx. \$US 750) *

The tour begins in Tokyo and ends in Kyoto, Japan.

Payment Schedule:

Initial Deposit to hold a place ¥ 30,000 (approx. \$US 275)

Second Payment ¥ 160,000 (approx. \$US 1,500)

(Due to the Covid situation, we have a small initial deposit. The second payment will be invoiced once international travel opens. The initial deposit holds your place and can be transferred to other trips if required.)

Balance Due 90 Days before departure [December 9, 2023]

What is included:

All transport during the tour by train, private van and taxi, as detailed

All breakfasts, lunches and dinners (excluding drinks)

All hotel accommodation throughout the tour

All entrance fees for all included locations

Expert photography coaching from two leaders

Specialist local guide and key cultural briefings

Review, post-processing and image design sessions during the tour

One-on-one sessions to deepen use of light and composition, story telling and post-processing

Specially developed notes and materials specific to your tour.

What is not included

International airfares and visas if required

Personal expenses including laundry, snacks, drinks and extras you might choose to buy along the way

Transfers between the start and finish hotels and airports etc (people often have independent plans)

Travel Insurance for cancelation, health and travel (required as a condition of booking)

Camera and other gear insurance

Costs arising from unforeseen circumstances or factors beyond our control

* We price this tour in JPY (Japanese Yen) so our price remains stable and you know the exact cost.

* Single supplement: Many Japanese hotels do not have single rooms and charge us for a single person at the double room rate for a 'double' room. If you wish to share a room, you need to book together with your own nominated travel companion.

* We can accept credit card payments for the deposit (details on reservation tab). Final payment by foreign exchange transfer is recommended, as we have to pass on our card providers fees (currently 3.25%) for final payments.

To reserve your place go to

www.sparkphotography.jp/seeing-japan-worldheritage-in-depth
(and complete the deposit and trip application forms)



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**To book your place in this tour please use the
reservation form on the SparkPhotography website
[www.sparkphotography.jp/seeing-japan-
worldheritage-in-depth](http://www.sparkphotography.jp/seeing-japan-worldheritage-in-depth)**

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