



SEEING JAPAN · AUTUMN 2023

NATURE, SPIRIT & CULTURE
A CREATIVE IMAGE-MAKING PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR


12 NOVEMBER – 24 NOVEMBER 2023

Robert van Koesveld & Daisuke Kondo



WELCOME

Autumn in Japan is an enticing time to make images as this diverse country moves colourfully from summer green to winter white. We invite you to join a small group on a special photo tour to explore the surprising modern and traditional cityscapes of Tokyo and the intimate beauty of Kyoto's serene cultural treasures. Between these modern and historical cities, we explore a chain of sacred places linking Fujisan and Koyasan with their historic shrines and temples.



“Autumn has a special resonance in Japan. The deep rich colours in the grounds of ancient temples and shrines inspire images that hint at the sacred and at timelessness. As we slow down and tune in, perhaps we can find images of both the natural and the unseen world.”

CALM & FOCUSED TRAVEL

We have designed this itinerary to maximise your photography opportunities. With short distances between hotels and at least two nights in most places, we can stop along the way more often and for longer.

Good photos come from taking time and thinking about your vision. There is time to review your images, and teaching is designed around the daily locations and participants' interests.



SPACE FOR CREATIVITY & LEARNING

We can offer support and guidance to take your image-making further and deeper. With just 4-6 participants and two photography coaches it also means we can travel in one van and be flexible in response to interesting options that present themselves.

We are excited about offering creative opportunities to you in a place we both love.





“Photography can portray something of the unseen world, mystery, presence, and reverence. We can try to invite quieter and deeper reflection as well as documenting.



A KIND OF PILGRIMAGE

Nature is central to what is held as sacred in Japan, and we look for images of the sacred in mountain, forest, stream, and shoreline as well as temple and shrine. We look for portraits of pilgrims and visitors to this much beloved area.



JUST FOUR TO SIX

With just four to six participants and two photography coaches, we (Robert and Daisuke) can offer support and guidance to take your image-making further and deeper.

We can tune in to where you personally want to go with your own image-making and, if you want, be alongside you when you shoot.

A small group size is ideal for portraits and street photography as you can find your images with less risk of having to negotiate with other photographers or confuse the subject. It means we travel in a comfortable single van as we explore the sacred Japan. We are not limited to main roads. We have flexibility to respond to changing light and weather as well as new opportunities that arise.



NATURE, SPIRIT & CULTURE

HIGHLIGHTS

- ❖ Discover Tokyo's contrasts: elegant modern, intriguing traditional and surprising streetscapes.
- ❖ Find lake and traditional settings with views of Fujisan, (Mount Fuji) and wander the surrounding national park.
- ❖ Make our own pilgrimage from Fujisan, through the sacred shrine complex of Ise and the special Kumano shrines, each in their own beautiful locations.
- ❖ Explore Koyasan, the Buddhist temple settlement first settled in 819 and stay in temple lodgings.
- ❖ Delight in Kyoto's marvellous temples, shrines and gardens in their rich autumn colours.
- ❖ Make memorable portraits of Geiko and Maiko by working in pairs with three of these special traditional artists.
- ❖ Build or extend a body of work in response to Japan's sacred cultural and natural landscape.
- ❖ Develop your skill and vision by taking time to review your images as you go.
- ❖ With a small group you have full access to Robert and Daisuke, the two photography coaches, whose key priority is your creativity.





NATURE SPIRIT & CULTURE

ITINERARY

This photography tour begins in Tokyo and ends in Kyoto. We travel by comfortable van so we can take advantage of opportunities along our journey. In Kyoto we use taxis and local trains.

Day 1 † *November 12*

Tokyo

After gathering in our centrally located hotel, we will take a late afternoon walk and do some street photography before an evening meal, near our hotel. After our meal you can choose to photograph some more.

Day 2 † *November 13*

Tokyo

We explore the city for urban landscapes as well as choosing both day and evening times for creative street images. We are looking for our first portrait of the modern culture of Japan that coexists with deep traditions. We will also find our first autumn images in the streets. Our teaching sessions begin as well. Our central location means we can use a daytime slot for the session, so as to leave time for evening shoots.

Day 3-4 † *November 14, 15*

Tokyo ⇒ Fuji

We head to beautiful Mt Fuji in the morning looking for views of the mountain in the landscape along the way. Working from a central base we look for a range of different views of Fujisan with autumn foliage and the beautiful Lake Kawaguchiko. Should the mountain be behind clouds, we can explore forests, lake and local shrines

Day 5 † *November 16*

Fuji ⇒ Hamamatsu

Leaving the Fuji lakes area we look for views of Fuji across fields, lakes and the ocean.

Day 6 † *November 17*

Ise

Early in the morning we head to the Ise Shinto shrine complex, with a number of buildings set in a forest. The shrine itself is dedicated to the worship of Amaterasu and is rebuilt in traditional methods and materials each 20 years. It has been a major pilgrimage site since the Edo period (1603 -1867).

Day 7 † *November 18*

Kumano

The UNESCO-listed Kumano pilgrimage trail links three important and beautiful sacred shrines. We visit all three as well as explore some of the surrounding coastal and forest area.





Day 8 † *November 19*

Koyasan

Completing our pilgrimage, we head to Koyasan (Mt Koya), an atmospheric small town with many Buddhist temples.

As well as special Buddhist buildings there is a beautiful historical cemetery area set in forest that has much to offer photographers. We stay in a temple-based traditional lodging and can experience a little of the daily practices as well as a beautiful vegetarian meal.

Day 9 - 12 † *November 20 - 23*

Kyoto

Kyoto, once the capital of Japan for over a thousand years, is the cultural jewel of Japan. It offers fascinating opportunities for images of people, street scenes and temple gardens, as well as other unusual cultural experiences.

We will visit selected temples, shrines and gardens, making our choices partly on the basis of where we hear autumn colour is at its best that week.

A special treat will be meeting and photographing Geiko (Kyoto dialect for geisha) and Maiko (apprentice Geiko) in a private traditional setting. There will be a teaching session a day beforehand, so you are comfortable with portraiture in a traditional setting.

After experiencing the beauty of their traditional dancing, we will work in small groups to make portraits with each of our three artists.

Robert has been working with Tea Master Takako Morita on collaborative projects for some time. Takako is a fourth-generation tea master who is interested in the ways Tea concepts extend more broadly including into the photographic process. We will have a tea experience with Takako and discussion afterwards.

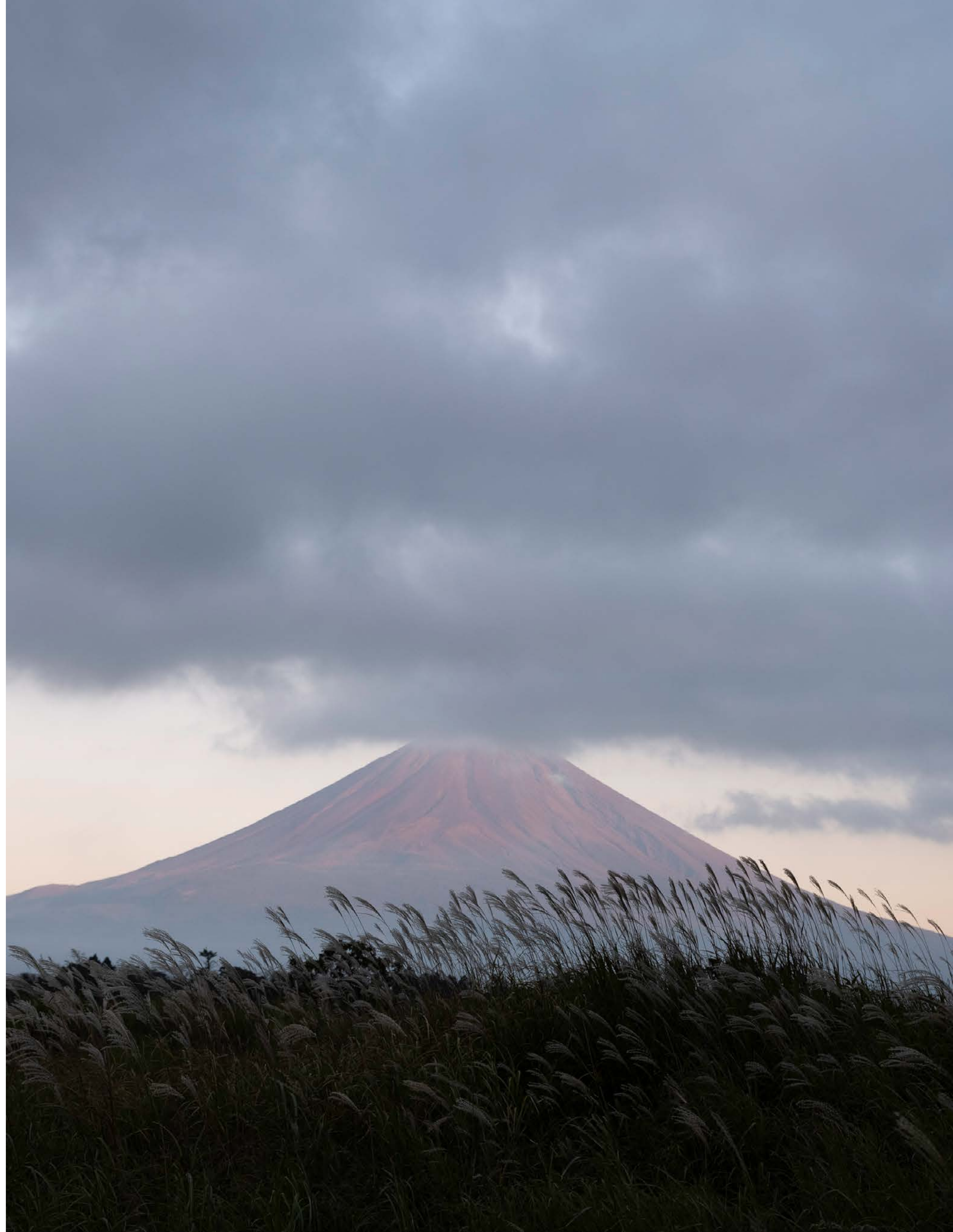
There will be some free time on the last afternoon for shopping or to visit a place of specific interest before we gather for our final dinner banquet.

Day 13 † *November 24*

Kyoto

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 and, of course, our images.

The above basic itinerary is the plan. The actual tour may vary slightly due to weather, road conditions or other things beyond our control. We 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.



YOUR TOUR LEADERS



Robert van Koesveld

Robert is a full-time photographer whose work is primarily involved with world cultures. Since retiring early from his psychotherapy practice, he has concentrated on photography and travels extensively. His photo book 'Bhutan Heartland' (2010), co-authored with his wife Libby Lloyd, was well received internationally, and his photo book 'Geiko and Maiko of Kyoto' (2016) won the Australian Professional Photography Awards category of best Photo Book of the year. Robert is interested in capturing 'spirit of place' and 'people's presence' in a cultural context. He has led photo tours to Bhutan, India, China and Japan, exhibited in Kyoto, Arles, Dubai and Perth, and published in 'Kyoto Journal' and 'Better Photography'.



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.

TEACHING & 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.

We (Robert and Daisuke) will photograph alongside you at times and are always happy to share our process of conceptualising images. Your images though are our absolute priority. There will be opportunities for image review as well as teaching and coaching. We are always open to chatting about image-making and Japanese culture.

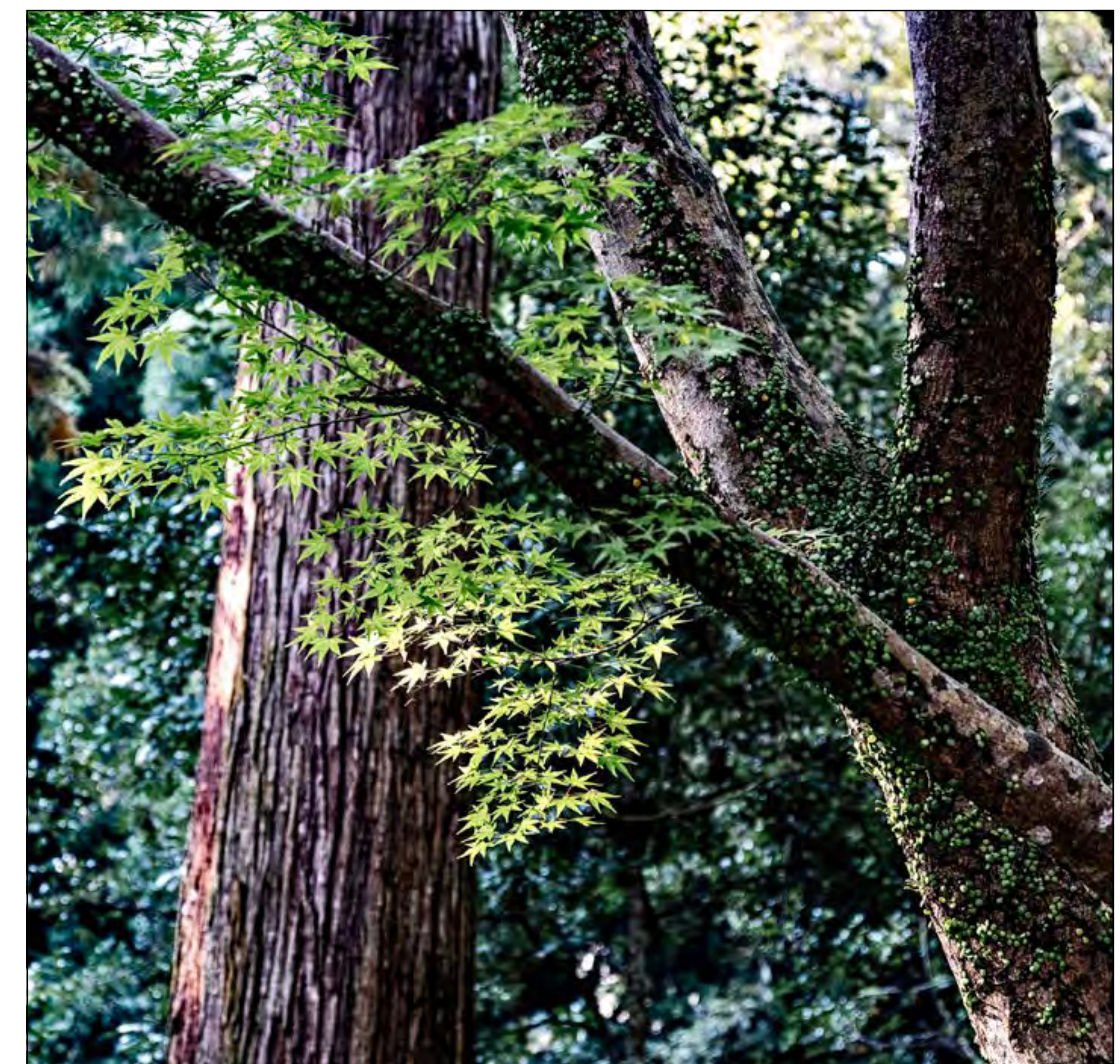
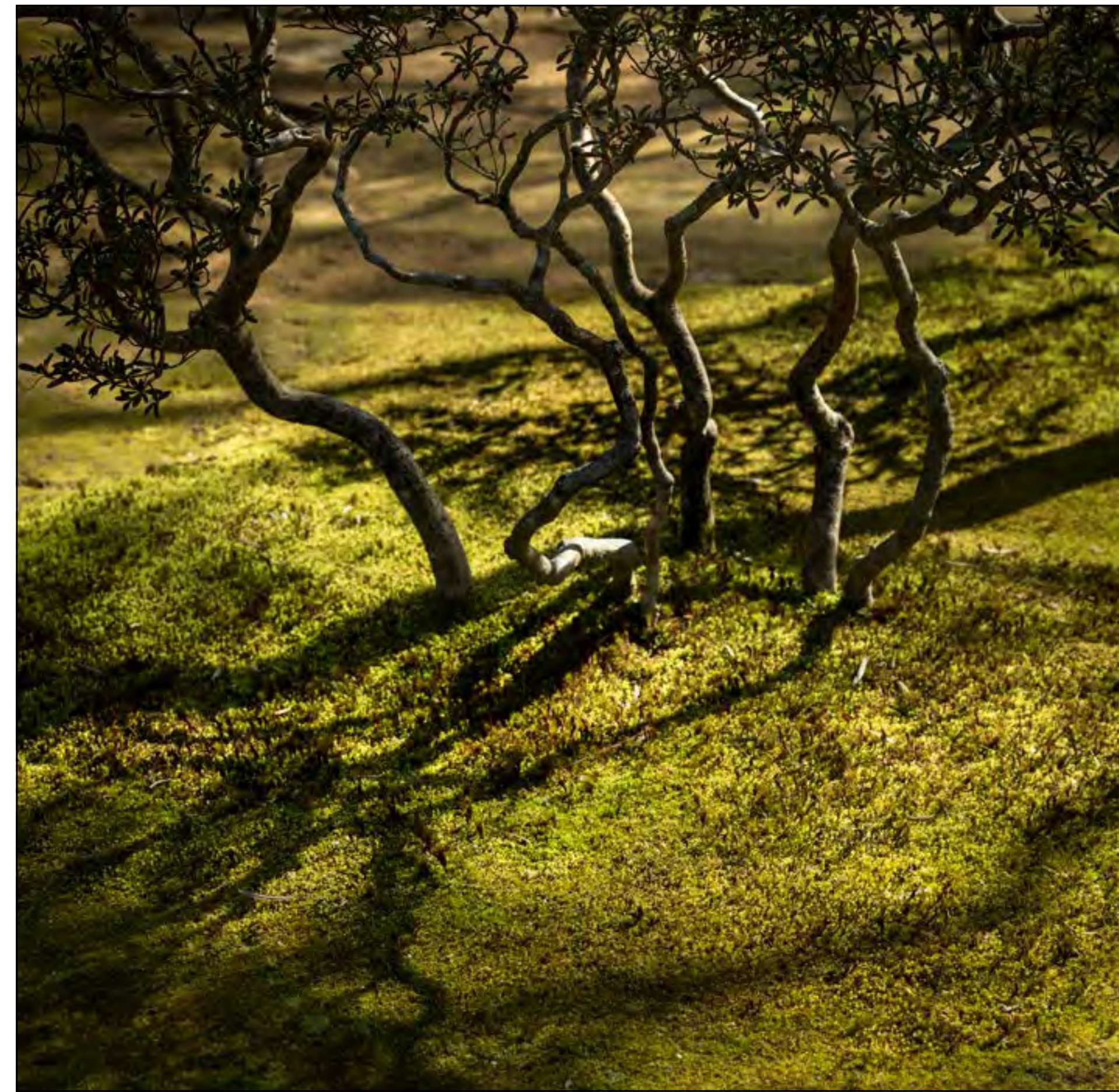


IMAGE-MAKING

Robert considers a camera is 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.



WHO SHOULD COME?

Photographers of any level of experience will enjoy this trip. Artists and non-photographers will enjoy making written or sketched images. We do spend lots of time in most locations.

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 a 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.

Curiosity and respect for the rich and complex culture that is your ultimate host is also important.



TRANSPORT

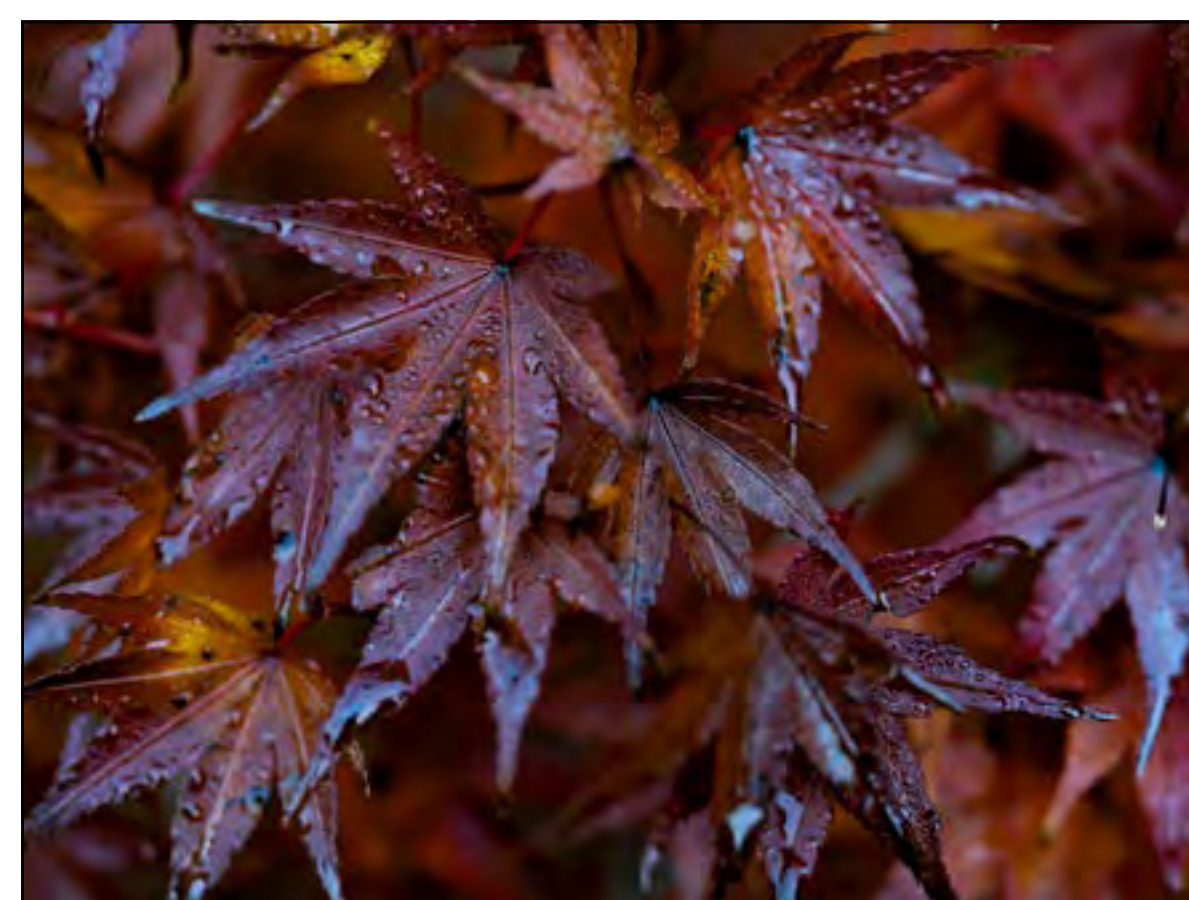
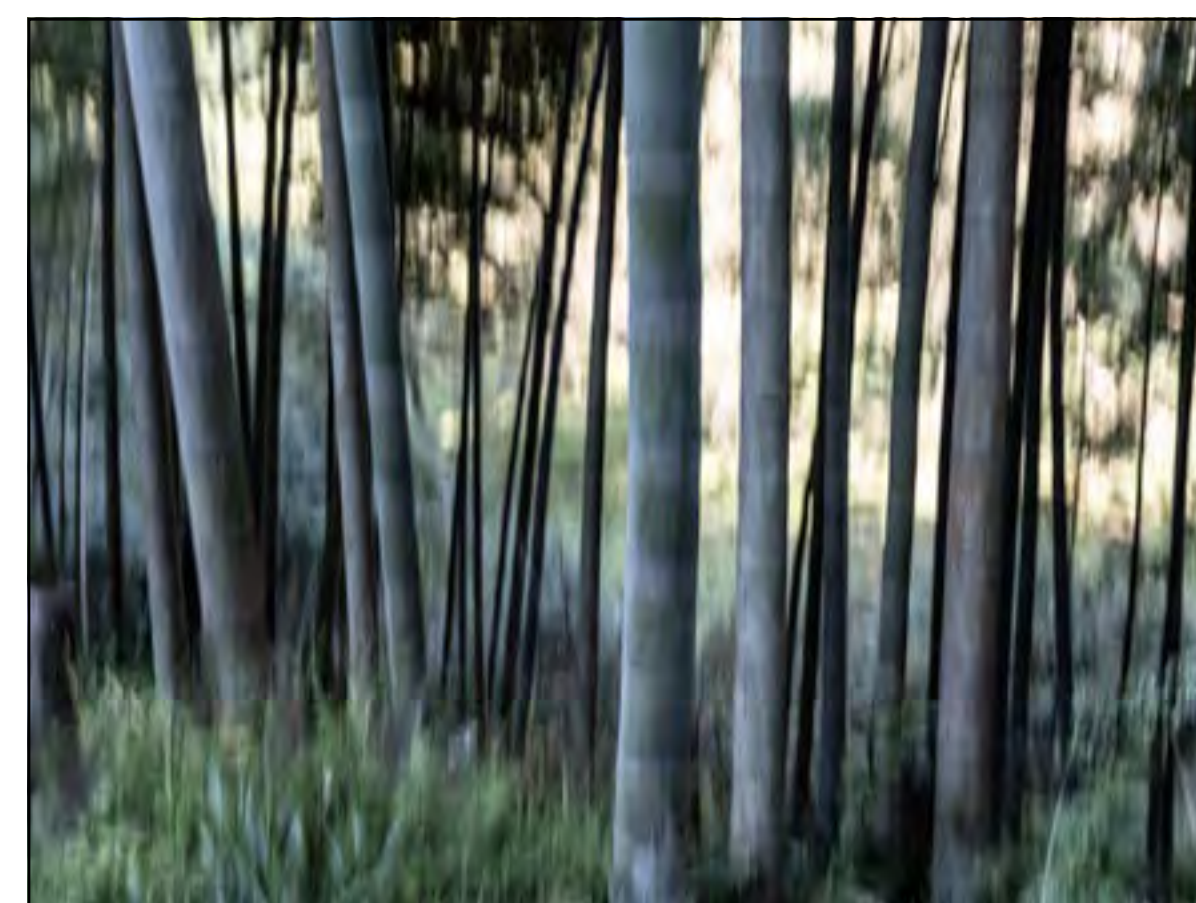
We travel in a spacious van throughout our journey. This allows us to set our timing according to the light and new opportunities. Keeping the group small means just one vehicle and gives us freedom to stop for opportunities and take the backroads where they are most interesting.



ACCOMMODATION

We have an interesting mixture of hotels and onsens 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 underneath 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; you may too.



FOOD

Dinners in Japan are a real highlight. 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. Menus will include local delicacies and dishes throughout our journey including: Ramen, Sukiyaki, Shabu-shabu, Okonomiyaki, Onigiri, traditional homemade Udon and Soba, and Sushi/Sashimi. Breakfasts are usually included in the hotel arrangements. Simple 'western style' or traditional Japanese.

When on the move, there is maximum flexibility, personal choice and efficiency if guests choose ready-to-go lunches from the ubiquitous *konbini*, Japanese convenience stores. As well as being a fun cultural experience, it means we don't waste time ordering and eating there. It also allows us to sometimes eat lunch on location in the wild. Other lunches will be in local restaurants.

We will do our best to accommodate dietary preferences or restrictions. If you have specific concerns email before booking.



PHYSICAL FITNESS

A basic level of walking fitness is essential. This tour is not a hiking or a trekking tour, so nothing extreme will be required of you. Some shrines and temples have steps on their approach. If you have any health issues or doubts, please let us know more and we will see how we can work around them.



HEALTH & SAFETY

In what we hope will be post-Covid times, we will maintain appropriate infection precautions. We clean inside the vehicle each day and avoid queues and crowds. Hand sanitising gel will 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 will be a part of our wardrobe at times. Following best practice health protocols will be a requirement for guests and leaders.

NATURE, SPIRIT & CULTURE

12 TO 24 NOVEMBER , 2023

DATES & COSTS

The tour commences at 5:00 pm on the first day in our hotel's lobby before a group dinner and ends after breakfast on the morning of the final day.

PRICE

¥ 1,150,000 per person [Japanese Yen]
(approx. \$US 8,500)

Single Supplement: ¥ 100,000 (approx. \$US 850)

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.



WHAT IS INCLUDED

- 13 days in Japan. 12 full days on tour.
- Itinerary specially researched on the ground by leaders who have been photographing in Japan for many years.
- Ground transport during the tour by private passenger van.
- All breakfasts, and dinners (excluding drinks).
- All hotel accommodation throughout the tour (12 nights).
- Entrance fees for all included locations
- Expert photography coaching and key cultural briefings.
- Review, post-processing and image composition sessions during the tour.
- One-on-one sessions to develop use of light and composition, story-telling and post-processing.
- Specially developed notes and materials specific to your tour.

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED

- International and domestic airfares and visas if required.
- Lunches.
- 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 cancellation, 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 can accept credit card payments for the deposit (details on reservation tab).

Final payment by foreign exchange transfer is recommended.

We have to pass on card providers fees (currently 3.25%) for final payments.

To reserve your place and complete the deposit and trip application forms go to -

<https://www.sparkphotography.jp/seeing-japan-autumn-2023>

This tour is planned and managed by Spark Photography in collaboration with Robert van Koesveld.

Our Japan Tour operator is ::
MY Travel Consulting Inc. (ANTA3-1049) —
a member of the All Nippon Travel Agents
Association

Address ::

254-1, Warabi, Yotsukaido-shi, Chiba,
Japan 284-0044

Certified General Travel Services Manager ::
Mayumi Kawana

E-mail :: contact@mytravelconsulting.co.jp

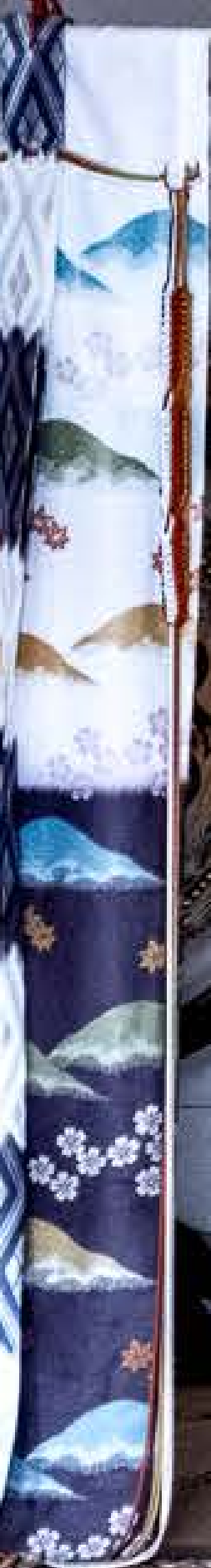
Telephone :: +81-50-3613-8975



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三所権現



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いよ祈らむ御代の那智









NATURE, SPIRIT & CULTURE

To book your place in this tour, please use the reservation form on the Spark Photography website:

<https://www.sparkphotography.jp/seeing-japan-autumn-2023>

E-mail *Daisuke Kondo* with any questions:

info@sparkphotography.jp

or call +81-90-3811-0038



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