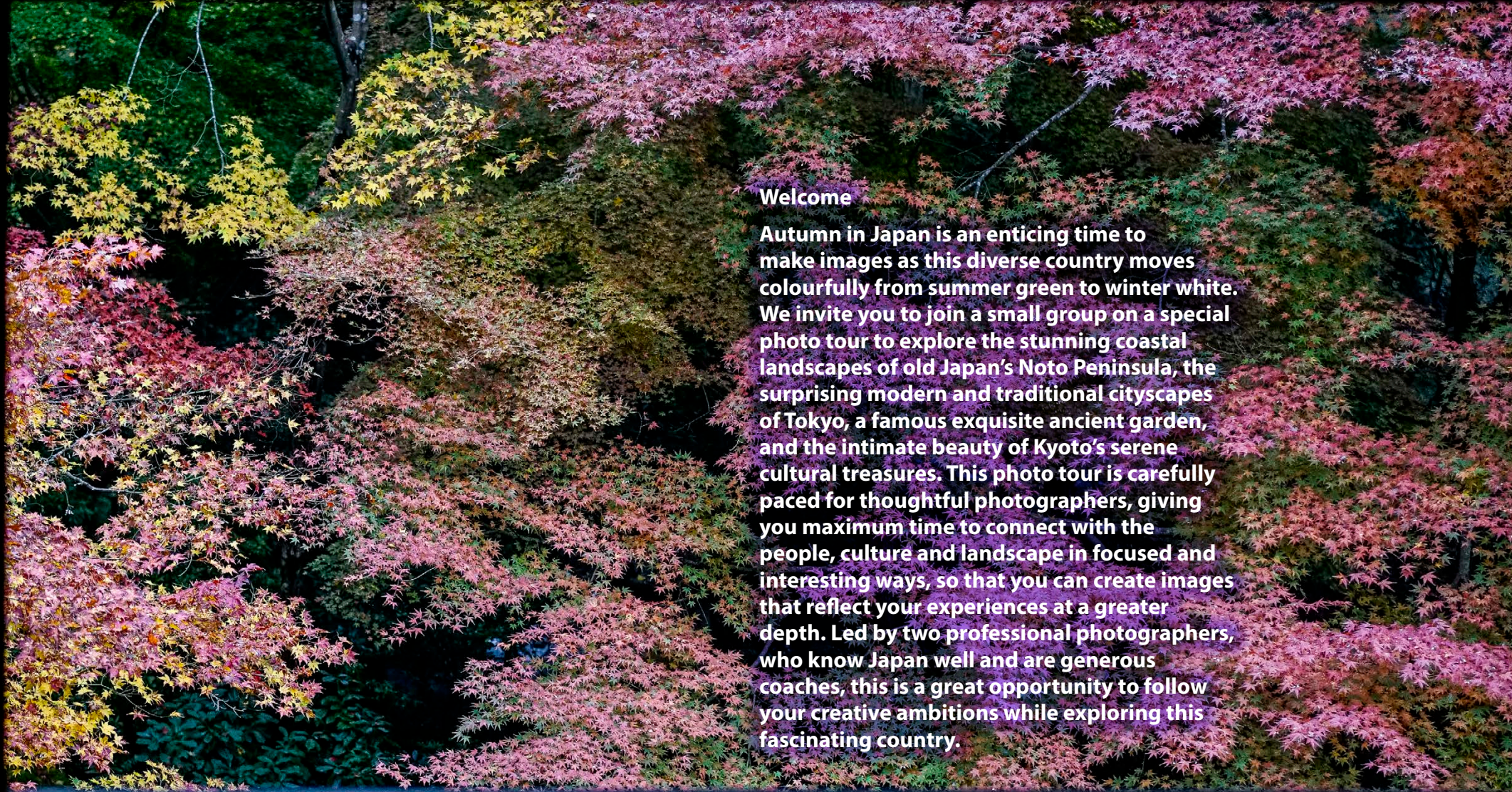


A woman with dark hair styled in a traditional Japanese fashion, wearing a kimono with a red and gold pattern. She is looking down and to the left, with her hand resting on a wooden railing. The background is a blurred autumn scene with trees and foliage in shades of orange, red, and green.

SEEING JAPAN : AUTUMN

COLOUR, CULTURE & CONTRASTS
A CREATIVE IMAGE-MAKING PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR
9 - 21 NOVEMBER 2022

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 stunning coastal landscapes of old Japan's Noto Peninsula, the surprising modern and traditional cityscapes of Tokyo, a famous exquisite ancient garden, and the intimate beauty of Kyoto's serene cultural treasures. This photo tour is carefully paced for thoughtful photographers, giving you maximum time to connect with the people, culture and landscape in focused and interesting ways, so that you can create images that reflect your experiences at a greater depth. Led by two professional photographers, who know Japan well and are generous coaches, this is a great opportunity to follow your creative ambitions while exploring this fascinating country.









Highlights

- * Explore Tokyo's contrasts: elegant modern, intriguing traditional, surprising streetscapes and autumnal gardens.
- * Feel the moods in one of Japan's top-three gardens: the gorgeous Kenrokuen in Kanazawa, and the nearby Samurai district.
- * Discover your own images along the stunning Noto Peninsula's coastline with fascinating old rural Japan and its married rocks and 1200-year-old onsen.
- * 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.
- * Enjoy relaxing travel on Japan's fast train system and, for exploring the Noto Peninsula, in a comfortable van as there are just 4-6 participants and two leaders.
- * 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.



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 can travel in a comfortable single van as we explore the peninsula, so we are not limited to main roads. This also gives us great flexibility to respond to changing light and weather as well as new opportunities that arise. Small group size also helps with negotiating train stations.

Calm and Focused Travel

Good photos come from taking time, not from rushing around making snapshots. More time means you get to wander and become sufficiently familiar with the location to let images find you. Portrait sessions are also organised so that there is time to make considered images.

We have designed this itinerary so that we mostly have at least two nights in our hotels; this is not a rushed trip. You will be able to wander small towns before breakfast or maybe even sleep in at times. Distances are relatively short on our little road trip exploring the Noto Peninsula which will have its own rhythm, with lots of opportunities to stop and enjoy the unfolding countryside and coastline.





Itinerary

Day 1: November 9 (Wed) Arrive Tokyo.

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

Day 2-3: November 10-11 (Thu-Fri) Tokyo

We have two full days to 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 and gardens.

The first of our teaching sessions begins as well. Our central location means we can use a daytime slot for the session, so as to leave time for evening shoots.

‘Our Priority is Your Creativity’



Itinerary (continued)

Day 4-5: November 12-13 (Sat-Sun) Tokyo – Kanazawa

Today we experience the delight of the Japanese railway system, boarding the shinkansen train to Kanazawa. We have reserved seats and will buy bento box lunches to eat on board which is one of Japan’s special pleasures. (Shinkansen 3.5 hrs)
We should have time to explore Kanazawa in the afternoon. We will also have a presentation on garden photography, so you are ready for tomorrow. We often supply brief and focused notes on photography topics for guests as well as on some cultural dimensions, so we will provide some notes on this special garden’s design to help focus you and your camera.

First thing on Sunday we head to the fabulous Kenrokuen Garden to be there when it opens. The extensive old garden is rated as one of the Top Three Gardens in Japan. In the afternoon we will explore the historical Samurai district and other photogenic locations.

Day 6-8: November 14-16 (Mon-Wed) Noto Peninsula

After breakfast we pick up our vehicle and head along the stunning Noto Peninsula road to enjoy the beautiful coastal views and photogenic rock outcrops which have been ‘married’ by joining them with a heavy rope.

We have organised three hotels along the scenic road so that we can capture dusk and early mornings in varied locations. Our first stop is at Togi, nearby two of the special ‘married’ rock outcrops, the next night is at Wajima, with its interesting market, and finally, Wakura Onsen, a high end onsen (hot spring) resort, used for 1200 years and loved by samurai clans.

The Noto Peninsula is a less frequently visited area that many describe as like old Japan. The coastal road produces a varied choice of sea and landscape opportunities as well as relaxed smaller rural towns and traditional buildings.

Wajima is a small town with a long history. We start our day with a visit to the morning market which claims a 1000-year-old history and stretches along the central road. The town is also known for its lacquerware and we hope to visit a workshop and photograph the creation of this beautiful traditional craft.

In the afternoon we continue our photo road trip to to Wakura, including seeing the rice fields nestled beside the sea.



Itinerary (continued)

Day 9: November 17 (Thu) Kanazawa - Kyoto

After a short drive to Kanazawa we return our vehicle and board the comfortable Thunderbird express to Kyoto. We arrive with time for an afternoon exploration.

Day 10-12: November 18-20 (Fri-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 be joined by 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 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. Our Kyoto specialist always has her eyes (and ears) on Kyoto's pulse and will also let us know if we can take advantage of other interesting opportunities.

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. Takoko is a fourth-generation tea master who is interested in the ways Tea concepts extend more broadly including into the photographic process. We will visit her private tearoom and garden and experience tea ceremony. Photography will be organised so that you can have a quiet tea experience as well as a chance to make some images.

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 21 (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 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 and 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. We (Robert and Daisuke) will photograph alongside you at times and are always happy to share our process of conceptualising images. Your images 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.



Transport

Our first journey is on a shinkansen on a very scenic journey down to Kanazawa. We will have reserved seats and can enjoy lunch on the train.

Exploring the Noto Peninsula, we will travel in a spacious van, which allows us to set our timing according to the light and the opportunities. Keeping the group small means just one vehicle is possible and gives us freedom to stop for opportunities and take the backroads where they are most interesting. We catch the wonderfully named Thunderbird Express to Kyoto.

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 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 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. 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. The Noto Peninsula is famous for its seafood. Breakfasts are usually included in the hotel arrangements and are either very simple ‘western style’ or traditional Japanese.

We have found that when we are on the move, there is maximum flexibility, personal choice and efficiency if guests choose ready-to-go lunches from the ubiquitous Japanese convenience stores. As well as being a cultural experience, it means we don’t waste time ordering and eating there, and can sometimes eat lunch on location in the wild. Other lunches will be in local restaurants.

We will do our best to accommodate food preferences or restrictions. Please email before booking if you have specific concerns.

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 autumn, and we explore some special gardens renowned for their foliage. We will be visiting stunning temple gardens as well, 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.

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.

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 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.





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 'peoples 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.



Workshop Dates and Prices

Tour Dates: 9 – 21 November, 2022

Price On Request

Please email **info@sparkphotography.jp** for more information

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/japan-autumn-photo-tour

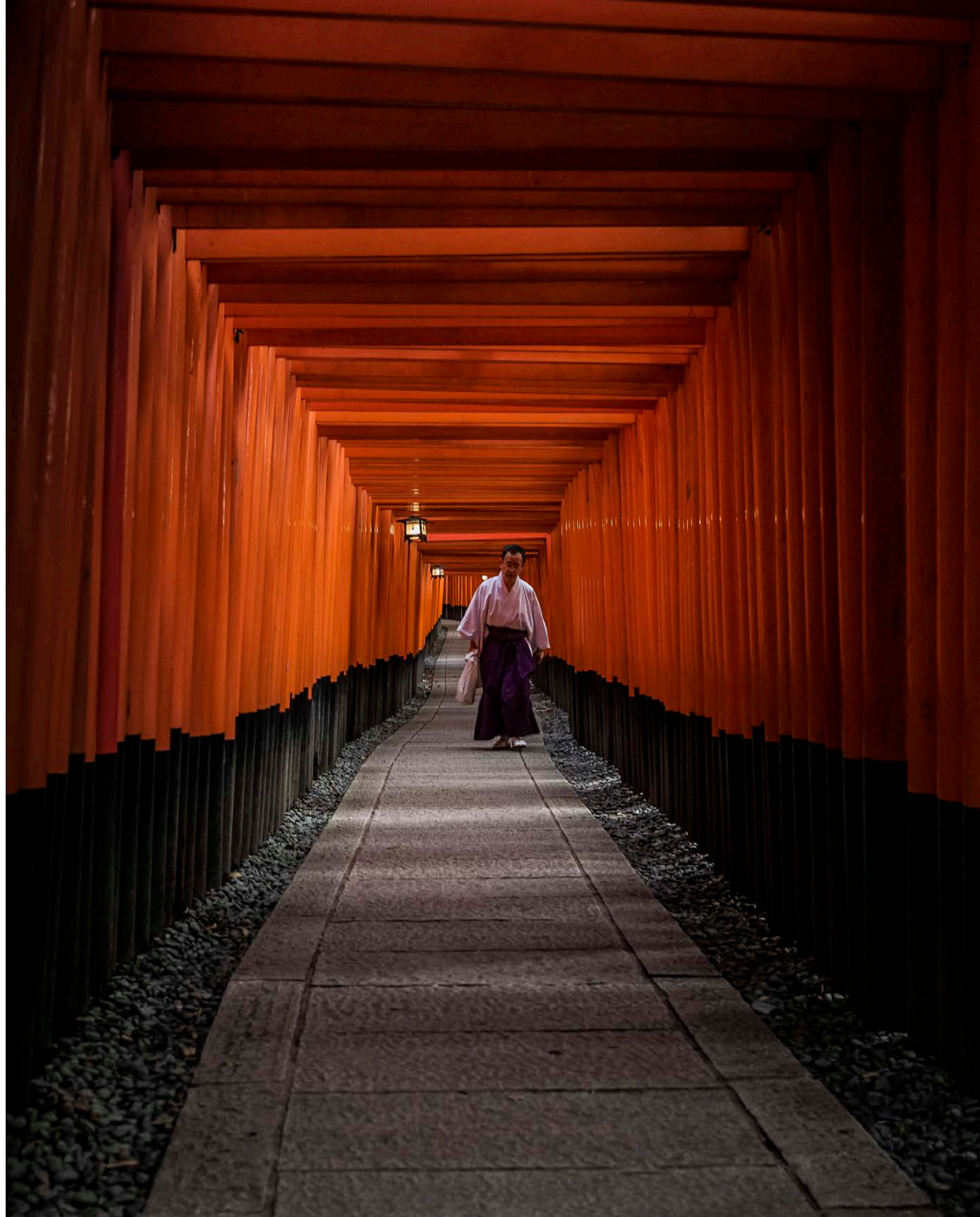
(and complete the deposit and trip application forms)

*The tour operator is Spark Photography info@sparkphotography.jp
+81-90-3811-0038*













To book your place in this tour
please use the reservation form on the SparkPhotography website
www.sparkphotography.jp/japan-autumn-photo-tour
Please email Daisuke Kondo with any questions
info@sparkphotography.jp
+81-90-3811-0038

