

SEEING JAPAN: WINTER

HOKKAIDO INTENSIVE

A CREATIVE IMAGE-MAKING PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR

27 JANUARY - 8 FEBRUARY 2023

Robert van Koesveld & Daisuke Kondo





Welcome

Photographers Robert van Koesveld and Daisuke Kondo invite you join them for a journey through the unique Winter landscapes of Hokkaido in northern Japan. With a small photography tour size, you will be inspired to create images that reflect the poetic beauty of farmlands, mountains and hills under snow. Moving to the coast we will marvel at the sea ice and sculptural shore protection. Visiting inland lakes, we look for elegant environmental images of the famous red-crowned Japanese cranes and whooper swans. Your creativity will be well supported by coaching, teaching and conversation







Highlights

- An inspiring variety of winter landscapes – forests, farmlands, windbreaks, gorges, waterfalls, mountains, seashore, lakes and those poetic lone trees in the snow.
- Creative focus for your images, drawing on your own style. Find your response to this white world and make images that express your vision.
- Spend time with whooper swans and Japanese cranes and make portraits or landscapes of these elegant creatures in their environment.
- 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.
- Maximum time in the field is assured because of the carefully researched routes and itineraries for this small group.



Space for Creativity and Learning

With just 4-6 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 in response to interesting options that present themselves.

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

Calm and Focused Travel

We have designed this itinerary so that we travel only short distances between our hotels. This means more or longer stops are possible, every day. Also, we stay at each hotel at least two days and so, less packing and unpacking. Good photos come from taking time and thinking about your vision. We will build in opportunities to review your images as well as teaching that is designed around the daily locations and the participants' interests





Itinerary

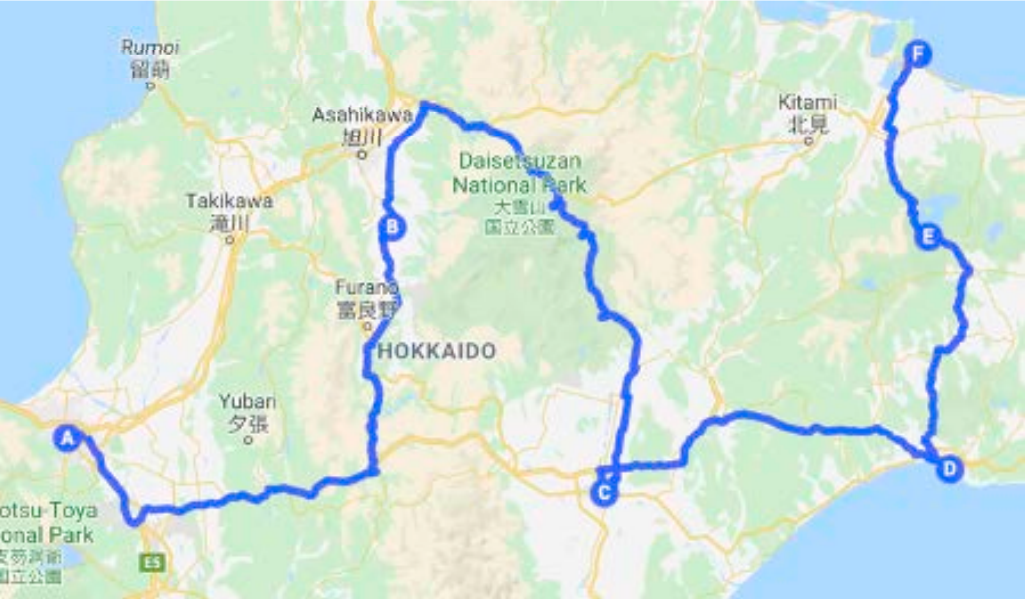
Key Details

These workshops begins in Sapporo and end in Abashiri, so there is no backtracking on our journey. Beyond Sapporo our overnight stops are always for two or three nights and direct travel distances are short. Our accommodation will likely be as follows:

Basic Itinerary

Sapporo – 1 night (Arriving a day earlier is recommended)
Biei – 3 nights
Obihiro – 2 nights
Kushiro – 2 nights
Lake Kussharo – 2 nights
Abashiri – 2 nights (airport 20 km)

Sapporo to Biei 200 km, Biei to Obihiro 200 km, Obihiro to Kushiro 120 km, Kushiro to Lake Kussharo 90 km, Lake Kussharo to Abashiri 65 km. We will be exploring on our way so actual distances will vary.



Itinerary (continued)

Hokkaido in winter has so much to offer. We will begin with the relatively well-known locations around Biei, as well as other interesting locations we have found on previous trips. We are looking for new ways of seeing, as well as for classic images.

The weather always adds a new dimension in Hokkaido. So, any location can be transformed by the depth of snow. It can be sunny with wonderful shadows, or snowing and beautifully moody. We carry light snowshoes with us as well as ice fittings for our boots; the snowshoes can mean it is possible to get even a few meters more in deep snow and sometimes that really expands possibilities. If there is a blizzard, we will try to make some fine images, and then take time to process and review in the warmth of our hotel.

Moving on from Biei, we wind our way toward the coast via interesting snow-covered farmland, lakes and mountains. We will head, via the cable car, to Mount Asahidake if conditions permit. We have been exploring this area over many trips and have learnt to adjust our route using side roads according to the conditions. Our goal is to keep finding the best opportunities on the day. Short travel distances means we can return to a spot in different light if it calls us back.

On the coast itself we look for images of the sea ice and the coastal defence structures. The coast can yield beautifully calm abstracts and wide landscapes.

The swans and cranes are a special pleasure. This is more about the natural world, so we are oriented to evocative environmental images. We aim to tell stories, so don't use those big heavy lenses. We will actually hope for mist and snow to set the mood.

Big landscape images are not our only goal. We will also seek more intimate landscapes and abstract patterns, textures and impressions. Focusing close in can produce a new dimension to image-making in this elegant white world, and finding sections of a larger landscape with a longer lens can be equally rewarding.

On our gentle journey we will look for images of local people, of farming and horses, and of snow-covered small towns. There are multiple stories in Hokkaido.

Our goal is to invite an immersive experience in this unique winter world. It's not a tour of Japan as a whole, it's just one place, in one season, that is a varied and rich dreamworld for photographers.





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

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 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.

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





Transport

We will travel in a spacious van throughout our journey which allows us to set our timing according to the light and the 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 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. 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 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 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 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.

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.



Your 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:

27 January – 8 February, 2023

Each tour commences at 5.00 pm on the first day in our hotel's lobby before a group dinner and ends after our breakfast on the morning of the final day.

Price On Request

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

What is included

Ground transport during the tour by private van
All breakfasts, lunches and dinners (excluding drinks)
Hotel accommodation throughout the tour (12 nights)
Entrance fees for all included locations
Expert photography coaching from two leaders and key cultural briefings
Use of individual 'YakTraks' to attach to your boots and access to snow-shoes
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 and domestic 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, 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 -

www.sparkphotography.jp/japan-winter-photo-tour

*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-winter-photo-tour
Please email Daisuke Kondo with any questions
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