Tokyo Weekender

APR-MAY 2021



ROBERT WHITING'S NEW MEMOIR

The venerated author waxes poetic about Tokyo's turbulent past

JAPAN'S GREAT OUTDOORS

Some fresh air would do us good – get your nature fix this spring

LOVE AND THE CONSTITUTION

Japan's latest same-sex marriage victory is too little, too late for some



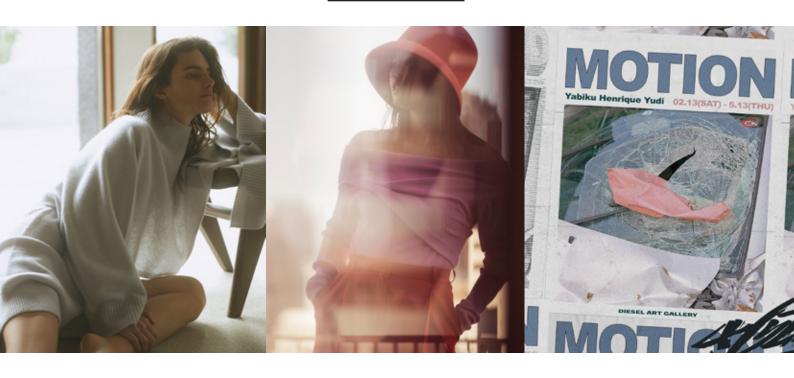
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Opinions expressed by TW contributors are not necessarily those of the publisher

EDS' CHAT

@nicknarigon: Liam, what is your favorite part about spring in Tokyo?

@liam_ramshaw: That's an easy one. I love the annual two-week period of outdoor communal drinking. There is only a small window of time every year where it's acceptable to crack open a beer before lunch, sit under a tree, eat seasonal snacks and enjoy mother nature in all her glory. How about you?



There is only a small window of time every year where it's acceptable to crack open a beer before lunch, sit under a tree, eat seasonal snacks and enjoy mother nature in all her glory



@nicknarigon: Since Tokyo barricaded off my favorite cherry trees to keep me from spreading Covid-19, I have my eyes set on the hiking trails out west. I also have my eye on our guide to camping gear (page 39). What's catching your eye these days?

@liam_ramshaw: The main thing that's been catching my eye recently is the Tiktok channel of this month's cover star Sumire (page 16). Not only was she one of the most down-to-earth and friendliest stars we've ever interviewed, her social media videos are amazing, providing a really positive message to those in need of one.

@nicknarigon: Sumire was great, wasn't she? So gracious, and graceful. Sushi chef Hisashi Udatsu (page 30) is also pretty super. I gobbled up his avocado and natto wrap, and I hate natto. Any foods you look forward to eating as Tokyo opens up from its latest SOE?

@liam_ramshaw: Funny you should mention that actually, from next month the TW team will be on a year-long mission to scour the length and breadth of the country in search of Japan's craziest softcream flavors. It's going to be a crazy adventure, think Lord of the Rings, but with softcream. Make sure to check out our YouTube channel next month to see the saga unfold.

@nicknarigon: I'll put on my helmet and grab my battleaxe and enjoy the softcream adventures from home. I think we are all ready for a new adventure in 2021.



Nick Narigon Editorial Director



Liam Ramshaw

SOMETHING FOR THE WEEKEND

Our roundup of what tickled our fancy and ground our gears this month

INTO IT	OVER IT	F*CK IT
Sapporo's District Court	Slow progress	Bigots worldwide
Night picnics	Online hanami	Yoyogi Park
Kamakura hydrangeas	Balcony gardening	Hay fever
Sustainable fashion	Fast fashion	Elastic waistbands





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ECONCIERGE

Looking for a great place to eat, shop, sleep or play in Tokyo? Welcome to TW's roundup of recommended restaurants, hotels, stores, experiences and more. Here, we share this month's editor's picks, but for the full lineup head to www.tokyoweekender.com/the-concierge



Sukiyabashi Samboa

Opened October 2010 in Ginza, this non-smoking standing bar, which was founded in Kobe more than 100 years ago, offers various classic cocktails and rare Japanese whiskey. The street-facing bar, an unusual sight in Ginza's Sukiya-dori, has a sleek European-style interior. A compact bar, Sukiyabashi Samboa creates a calm space making it a marvelous location for intimate after-work drinks or social gatherings. With their collection of unique drinks and mixes, which can only be tried here, it offers one more reason to visit Ginza.

Katsuragi Kitanomaru

After driving up a long winding road, offering expansive views over the rolling mountains and towns of Shizuoka, you arrive at Katsuragi Kitanomaru, a dream-like castle resort constructed from seven 200-year-old repurposed country homes. Make sure to stay in one of the Japanese-style suites and let yourself get transported back to the Edo era. To complete your modern castle experience, indulge in one of the hotel's splendid kaiseki dinners, which combine the region's best produce and meat in a beautiful succession of courses you will never forget.

Fujimoto Dental Clinic

At this Ginza-based clinic, which was founded in 1981, you'll not only receive world-class specialist restorative and periodontal dental care, but you'll also be in the expert hands of Dr. Kohei Fujimoto. He is fluent in English, a graduate of the University of Washington's Graduate Periodontics Program, and certified as a Diplomate of the American Board of Periodontology. Appointments can be made via phone.



www.samboa.bar



03-3572-5466



1F 7-3-16 Ginza, Chuo-ku



modern.ribs.holly



yamaharesort.co.jp



0538-48-6118



2505-2 Ugari, Fukuroi, Shizuoka



pounding.torched.thinks



www.fujimoto-dental.com



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edges.shelters.rainy

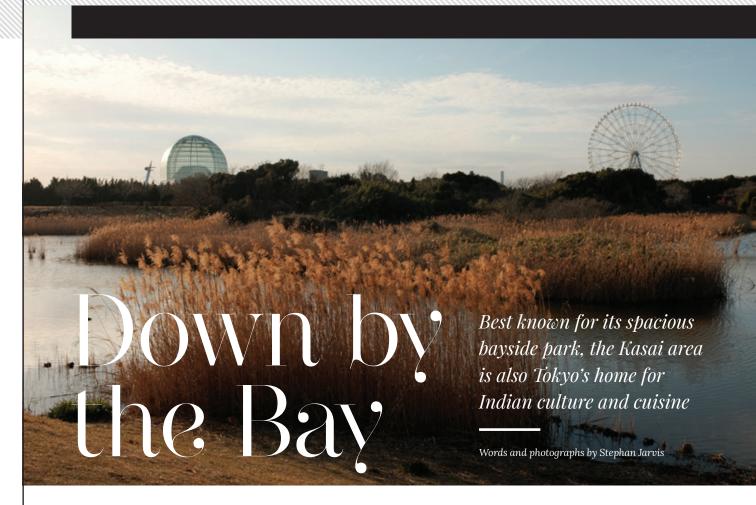


Area Guide: Kasai

Known more for its spacious park, this bayside neighborhood is also home to Tokyo's Little India.

New BeginningsStylist Shoi Sapeta shows us how to stay comfy while also looking fashionable this season.

Photogenic Softcream
Find out how to take an Instagram photo
of your softcream that will make all the
hearts melt.



hanks mostly to the IT boom of the early 2000s, Tokyo has seen an increase in the number of Indian workers and their families now calling the city home. More than 3,000 (10% of the entirety of those living across Japan) have made Edogawa ward that home, particularly within the Kasai area. With parks aplenty, it's also a wonderfully green and peaceful part of town in which to discover a very different side of Tokyo.

Little India

Known as 'Little India' to some, Nishi Kasai lacks the visually obvious decor and ambience of cultural counterparts such as Chinatown. However, nosey around and you'll find highly rated restaurants such as the main branch of **Spice Magic Calcutta** (the oldest in the neighborhood), **Amudhasurabhi** and **Delhi Dhaba** to enjoy great food from across the Indian subcontinent. If you want to spice up your own cooking, gather supplies from grocery stores such as **Swagat Indian Bazaar** that are packed full of delicious delights at decent prices.



Also worth visiting is either of the **Reka** restaurants. Run by the mother of Yogendra "Yogi" Puranik, who in 2019 became the first person of Indian origin to be elected to office in Japan, the Higashi Kasai branch not only serves as his base of operations but also the **Edogawa India Culture Center**. Here you can take part in a number of activities and classes such as cooking, yoga, music and dancing to name but a few.

As you would expect, Kasai is a popular place to celebrate two of India's biggest festivals – Holi and Diwali. Held every spring in **Nishi Kasai Dinosaur Park** (so-called due to a pair of playground dinosaur statues), Holi is particularly enjoyable and a great opportunity to mix with the locals and get doused in an explosion of color.

Metro Museum

Located under the tracks of Kasai Station you'll find the fun and informative **Metro Museum**. There's plenty to do here as you learn all about the development of the system over the years while marveling at the logistical and engineering side of things. There are hands-on exhibits for all ages to enjoy such as train simulators, dioramas and restored carriages, one of which happens to be Japan's first-ever subway car. It entered service in 1927, traveling between Ueno and Asakusa, and is now a designated Important Cultural Property.

Green Belt

Venturing deeper into the suburbs, it's possible to enjoy a leisurely, nature-filled stroll around a large chunk of the neighborhood by following various interlocking parks, streams and rivers. The tranquil stream within Shin-Nagashima River Water Park leads down to the Sakon River and the Shinsakongawa Water Park, an airy open space that has facilities for BBQs and various water sports along the banks. The river thins out past the lock, cutting through the neighborhood before ending up at Nagisa Park on the edge of the Kyuedo River. Head back west via the neighboring Fuji Park, a lengthy stretch of green in which to take a break amongst a beautiful European-styled flower garden, before connecting to the Sakon River once again or continuing down to the sprawling Tokyo Kasai Rinkai Koen.



Park Life

Built upon 810,000 m2 of reclaimed land and chock-full of things to see and do, **Tokyo Kasai Rinkai Koen** is a strong contender for the accolade of Tokyo's best park. It's not the biggest (**Mizumoto Park** holds that mantle) but its bayside location gives it a special ambience. Witness beautiful sunsets from the shoreline (with Mount Fuji visible on clear days) or get an elevated view from either the **Crystal View Observation Square** – a three-story, free-to-enter glass building – or in a capsule of the 117 meter-high landmark **Diamond and Flower Ferris Wheel**, the second-largest in Japan, for an even more spectacular sweeping panorama. Traverse the winding pathways towards the east side and you'll come across a large conservation area featuring freshwater and brackish lakes for avid bird watchers and photographers to enjoy.

Should the Olympics end up taking place, the park will host the canoe slalom events in a brand new facility. Once everything has wrapped, the general public will be able to pick up some oars, jump in and imagine their own Olympic glory.



Wild Things

Wildlife lovers looking to get a bit more up-close and personal with nature have a surprising number of options in Kasai. Biggest of all is the Tokyo Sea Life Park, and aquarium within Tokyo Kasai Rinkai Koen - famed for its huge doughnut-shaped tuna tank and penguins. There is also the free-toenter Edogawa Zoo, north of Nishi Kasai Station on the premises of Gyosen Park, (which also features Heisei Garden - a small, tranquil Japanese garden and pond with a renovated residence that visitors can enter). Don't expect any elephants or lions here, smaller exhibits such as spider monkeys, anteaters and red pandas are its specialty, along with farmyard specimens and critters such as goats, sheep and guinea pigs.

If you or the kids still want more, stop by Nagisa Pony Land for some rides or pop into the Kasai branch of Neco Republic Cat Plaza. While animal cafés often get a deservedly bad rap, this particular chain is actually part pet sanctuary, as all of its cats have been rescued from homelessness or impending euthanasia. There is also the possibility of adoption should you feel a particular affection for one of the felines. Finally, the Nishi Kasai branch of the robot hotel chain Henn na Hotel has a pair of multilingual robotic dinosaurs manning the front desk to check out and check you in if you're looking for a comfortable overnight stay to get some wellneeded rest.





Get to know Tokyo-based designers and trendsetters -find out what inspires their style and where they love to shop in the city



KEIKO NAGATA Designer at ADAWAS

Local

MY CLOTHING BRAND IS... ADAWAS is highly influenced by travel. Using carefully

selected materials, yarn and fabrics from all over the world, each piece is designed and inspired by our trips around the globe. While sourcing material, we look for manufacturers that share our values and worldview. Our clothing combines the techniques of knitwear with a variety of material, including original ADAWAS fabric, and is meant to enhance the lives of our customers.

TOKYO FASHION IS... A unique culture with a mixture of unique fashion not found anywhere else in the world.

MY TOP PLACES TO SHOP AND EAT IN TOKYO ARE...

BRACKETS: Tsutaya Books (Daikanyama T-Site): A place I have fallen in love with for all things books, coffee and music. store.tsite.jp/daikanyama

MATSUNOYA: Local goods for everyday use. matsunoya.jp

ITOYA: A stationery wonderland. Even if it's just to browse, I always walk out with new ideas. www.ito-ya.co.jp



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BEGINNINGS

Turn a new leaf this spring with a new style and the latest fashions

Compiled by Shoi Sapeta

fresh start is something
everyone can use in 2021 after a
year of remote work and oodles
of hours spent staying at home.
To contribute their support, Japanese
fashion brands are focusing on more
comfortable but still stylish clothes. Say
goodbye to heavy coats, and welcome the
light and delicate materials to embrace
the warm weather and the start of a new
you. These pieces will help complete your
spring transformation.

COMFY IN CASHMERE

Super soft and light, a cashmere long dress is perfect to wear either at home or to meet with close friends. Simple designs match easily with other clothes, such as a light spring outer. Choose a color based on your personality color – this light grey brightens a healthy complexion for the summer type. Dress by ADAWAS

COOL & CASUAL

A long button-front shirt is a fun way to keep cool, casual and relaxed in your daily life routine. It can be worn open like an outer, and you can pair it with wide-leg or pegged pants. When you wear it buttoned up, like your normal long shirt, skinny jeans are the best match. All clothes by ADAWAS





EASY AS SPRING

Everyone needs a top and bottom set for nature outings this spring and summer. We can just put them on and look great. Instead of spending too much time choosing clothes, enjoy your time feeling the breeze of the season. Top and bottom sets can be worn separately allowing more options for styling. Top & bottom set by ADAWAS



MEET OUR STYLE EXPERT

Shoi Sapeta is the founder and chief stylist of XYI Style Creation as well as an influencer working with Japanese fashion brands. XYI collaborates with different stylists and Japanese brands to offer efficient and effective styling services for daily life or special occasions. More info at www.xyi-style.com



Instagram Tips for a Softcream Photo That Melts Your Heart

Pics or it didn't happen!

Words by Zoria Petkoska

retty sweet treats and Instagram are like vanilla and chocolate swirled together – they are made for each other. Food was one of the first things to be posted on the app, and while you can spend a good amount of time rotating and snapping expertly plated bites, softcream comes gorgeous straight out of the machine, and it begs you to act quickly before it melts. Here are some photo tips ready, so you can snap, eat, post and repeat.

1. Easy mode: Shoot against a simple background

Softcream in one hand,
a smartphone in the
other, and you're done
in a second. You should
be quick, but giving
yourself a few more
seconds to find a clear
background will make
that softcream pop. A clean
wall, a clear sky, the back of your
friend's solid T-shirt will all suffice.
Just don't let your softcream get lost in
visual clutter.

2. Portrait mode: Softcream poses

Simple background applies here too, so have the least distraction possible in your shot. Instead of holding your softcream awkwardly, extend your arm and bring your camera closer to the softcream so it looks bigger.

Matching softcream with your outfit's colors and accessories makes for a cute color-coordinated pic. You can go for the same color throughout, different shades of a color, or play with a few color combos. Bonus points if you factor in the color of your surroundings.

3. Group mode: SFF (Softcream Friends Forever)

Who doesn't love a group photo or even better, an insta story? All portrait tips above apply – clear background, color-matching and showing off your softcream closer to the camera. Other poses that work well are the classic softcream cheers (works great with two or three people), making a circle of hands holding softcream (best shot from above), buying different color softcream so you form a rainbow and buying different shades of the same color so you form an ombré lineup.

4, Playful mode: What's your angle?

Here are some creative challenges for those looking to take their softcream pics to the next level. Find a horizontal line and match it with the demarcation where the cone ends and the softcream begins. At a beach, it will be the horizon line or where the waves meet the sand.

Against the sky it might be power lines or an airplane trail in the sky. Play with the buildings around you. At a distance the softcream can look like a roof sculpture, a torch or a puffing chimney.

5. Emergency mode: Make the most out of it

Oh, did the softcream start to melt? Take a snap of that, up close, as there's something aesthetically pleasing about melting sweets. Did a child get some softcream on their chin? Here's your chance to take a cute Insta pic that will make everyone smile.



IN-DEPTH



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Sumire

The stage, music and fashion icon shares a positive message for those in need of one.

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Tokyo Junkie

Author Robert Whiting shares tales of his run-ins with Tokyo's most notorious characters.

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Going Rogue

See why photographer RK is one of the most exciting artists operating in Tokyo.

Sharing H0D8 (a Better HIIIIC

Stage, music and fashion icon Sumire opens up about the mental strain of the pandemic and providing a positive message to those in need of one

Words by Yukari Tanaka. Photos by Allan Abani





he same day we meet Sumire Matsubara for our interview, she later shares with her 170,000+ TikTok followers a video of herself performing a choreographed dance to the Justin Timberlake song, "SexyBack," ending on the lyrics, "You make me smile."

Over the course of her career as an actress, recording artist and fashion model, Sumire's trademark has been her radiant smile and sunny disposition, a byproduct of her youth and upbringing in Hawaii. When we meet her for our interview and photo shoot, she holds the elevator door for strangers. She says "Thank you, sir," when they hold the door for her in return, all with a smile.

Sumire, 30, hosts a radio show "FIND my BEAUTY" on air every Sunday on Tokyo FM, and is recording new music she hopes to release soon. She also is set to perform in a musical coming up next year, which was supposed to be staged last year but unfortunately got put on hold due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

She also launched a podcast during the pandemic, "Smile with Sumi," in which she addresses mental health issues in Japan, and openly discusses her own struggle with mental illness, a subject that remains taboo here. She also joined forces with friends to launch All Four One, a charity collaboration project between herself and fellow recording artists Crystal Kay, Tigarah and Ukico. The quartet produced a version of Lady Gaga and Ariana Grande's hit song "Rain on Me" to support mental care for people feeling stress and anxiety during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"I think my message that I want to get across to people is that it's okay to have bad days, it's okay to have those ups and downs, and I want people to know that it might seem like on social media I have a great 99

I hope I can come up with something where I can be authentic and show people the ups and downs that I have, because they are essentially part of who I am.

66

life but that's not everything – everything that I put on social media is not my whole life," says Sumire. "There are a lot of bad times and down phases that I go through and I've been trying to figure out a way to show more of that, but I don't know how to do it without losing fans.

"I hope I can come up with something where I can be authentic and show people the ups and downs that I have, because they are essentially part of who I am."

Both of Sumire's parents – Junichi Ishida and Chiaki Matsubara – were well-known actors in Japan during the '80s and her father continues to be a household name. After her parents divorced in the late '90s, Sumire and her mother moved to Hawaii. Sumire dreamed of following in her family's footsteps (her grandfather was an NHK announcer during the 1964 Olympics) and she began performing, singing, dancing and modeling from the age of 16. For two years she studied at the prestigious Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh.

The encouragement she received from teachers at school and directors she had worked with reassured her that she could make a proper career out of her own in the entertainment industry.

"I didn't want to let them down, so I think that was when I decided to take it up as a profession," she says.

Ten years ago at the age of 20 Sumire returned to Japan to make her debut, though she returns to Hawaii from time to time, taking roles in the popular CBS series Hawaii Five-O in 2014, as well as the role of Sarayu in The Shack, a Hollywood movie that came out in 2015.

"At first, when my Japanese wasn't as good, [the Japanese audience] took that as comedy," she says. "I was able to use that to my advantage and be funny with it by making mistakes – kind of like slapstick humor. Making silly grammatical errors and mistakes with words was perceived as funny. Now, whenever I say something in

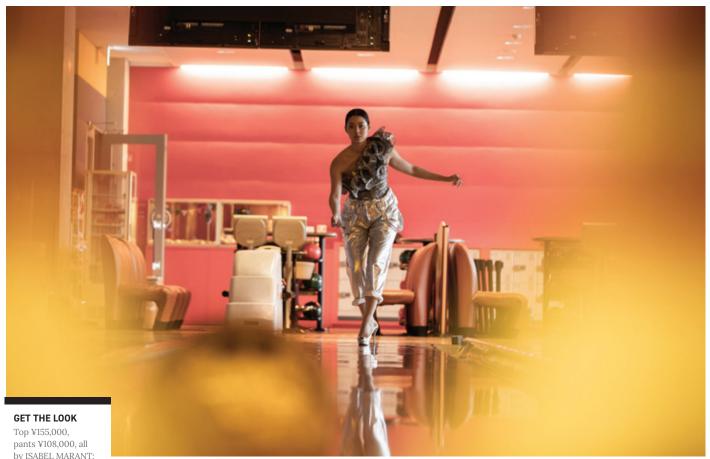
English everyone is like 'wow!' and that on itself makes it entertainment as well.

"I do feel that I was lucky enough to be able to learn both languages."

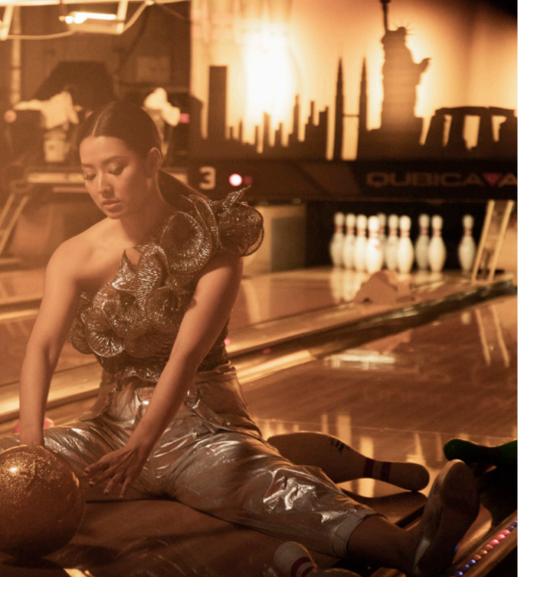
While being raised bilingual worked to her advantage in building a career in Japan, Sumire says that upon her return to her home country she did experience – and still experiences – reverse culture shock, and had difficulties readjusting back into the environment.

"I have times where I don't feel like I'm of this culture and there are instances where I struggle culturally," she says. "For example, specific mannerisms, being very polite, and keigo – the polite form of speaking – is also something that





Top ¥155,000, pants ¥108,000, all by ISABEL MARANT; shoes ¥113,000 (all prices without tax) by SERGIO ROSSI



half a million followers on Instagram and a growing audience online, she surprisingly says there is no "strategy" or rules that she plays by. One thing she keeps in her mind, however, is authenticity.

"For me it's about being myself as much as possible – showing some silliness, showing myself without makeup, showing myself not in a professional setting at times – I think that makes me relatable and closer to my fans," she says. "I used to try to comment back to my fans but recently I've also been trying to stay off of it as much as I can because, you know, it can be a lot to be on it all the time."

In her latest TikTok video, rather than lip sync to a pop song, Sumire's own soulful voice is heard singing to the latest "kyundesu" trend.

"When I'm on it, I try to be as authentic as I can. I'd rather be authentic and real to my fans and to the people who are following me," continues Sumire, polite, sincere and with a smile.

99

I try to be as authentic as I can. I'd rather be authentic and real to my fans and to the people who are following me

66

I have a hard time with."

Still Sumire calls Japan a beautiful place rich in culture, that she respects and wants to continue to learn more about. She also wishes to expand her career outside of Japan – once the world begins to heal from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has made it difficult for Sumire to continue performance work. The aforementioned musical was postponed, and she shared a story on her podcast about

shooting a commercial with her own equipment from her own home

"When I'm shooting at home I try to find a specific spot for it, just like many people who are working from home now from their computers," she tells TW. "They have their little home office, so I have my little home office to shoot things and to work, while other areas I use for my private life."

Social media has become a big part of her life, with nearly



Equal Under the Law

Bi-national couples face an uncertain future due to Japan's lack of same-sex marriage recognition

Words by Shivdeep Dhaliwal

atches may be made in heaven but they must gain recognition on earth. Here in this corner of the world, some couples are waging an uphill battle to gain legal and societal rights that are routinely accorded to other pairs. Japan's bi-national LGBTQ couples are living a life of uncertainty, denied the same rights that their heterosexual peers enjoy. This is despite the fact that Article 14 of Japan's constitution clearly states, "All of the people are equal under the law and there shall be no discrimination in political, economic or social relations because of race, creed, sex, social status or family origin."

Bi-National LGBTQ Couples Face Forced Separation

The Sapporo District Court recently ruled that Japan's failure to recognize same-sex marriage is unconstitutional, a victory for advocates. However, progress still needs to be made, and for some it is coming too late. Jeff Shaw, 37, and Yuta Sasaki, 40, are a couple who face crippling uncertainty about their future. Shaw is a British National (Overseas) from Hong Kong, while his partner is Japanese. Four years ago they were married in the Embassy of the United Kingdom in Tokyo, according to Shaw.



"We went to the Immigration this year and tried to apply for special activity visa but it has been refused based on the ground that Japan currently [does] not recognize same-sex marriage," says Shaw.

Shaw told us that he is on a business management visa in Japan, which runs out in June. Adding to the couple's woes is Covid-19, which has put his visa renewal in jeopardy as the pandemic affected his waffle and coffee takeout shop.

If Shaw fails to renew his visa in June, the couple faces yet another peril because his Japanese husband is not eligible to stay with him in Hong Kong either.

We Are Not Treated the Same as Everyone Else

"If we were a heterosexual couple we could have got legal papers, status or spousal visa to stay in Japan," said Kayin Fong, 53. Fong is a Canadian of Hong Kong-origin and Makiko Matsumoto, 52, is her Japanese partner. same-sex marriage. Marriage for All filed a lawsuit to that end in February 2019.

Terahara told TW that same-sex couples comprising of a Japanese national and a foreign national cannot marry in Japan in order to secure a spouse visa, and a foreign national spouse is unable to live in Japan in the first place if they cannot find a job or a place to study.

She adds that even if a foreign same-sex spouse of a Japanese national does obtain a visa that allows them to live in Japan, they are not considered a legal spouse of the Japanese partner and therefore cannot obtain the various legal and factual protections (e.g., inheritance, division of property, social security, etc.) that are normally granted to spouses. Yamada adds that same-sex couples are not allowed the same rights to rent a home or for such things as hospital visitations.

"We are simply strangers for the state institutions," he says.

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Regardless of your sexual orientation, everyone should be eligible for a spousal visa in Japan

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"Regardless of your sexual orientation, everyone should be eligible for a spousal visa in Japan," said Fong.

Daniel Yamada, 43 and Shota (full name withheld), 32, lived for more than seven years as a married couple in Berlin and Vienna. Daniel is from Austria, while his partner is Japanese. Life took a turn for Shota, who returned to Japan to look after his father after his mother passed away.

"Having not the right to have a spouse visa, it is the most discriminating situation I have ever been in my whole life," says Yamada. "When we lived in Berlin and Vienna, Shota had all the rights. Unlimited staying-permission and work-permission. He was treated like any other Schengen-visa holder and had all the rights."

Yamada points out that Japan is the only member of the G7 nations not to recognize same-sex marriage. "Taiwan can do it, so why not Japan?" he says.

The Law as It Stands Today

"In Japan, same-sex marriages are not recognized, and there is no national same-sex partnership system as there is in other countries," said Makiko Terahara, a lawyer and representative director for the team at Marriage for All, a Chiba-based organization established by lawyers and others to achieve

The Same-Sex Marriage Ball Is in The Court

In addition to the Sapporo District Court, Terahara says four district courts in Japan are currently in the process of directly questioning the constitutionality of the current lack of same-sex marriage. In a March 21 op-ed written for *The Washington Post*, Terahara wrote that "there is no doubt that the Sapporo ruling will have a positive impact on the other lawsuits."

Terahara told TW that another encouraging development was the granting of a special permit of residence to a Taiwanese national with a Japanese male partner in March 2019. The couple could only gain the permit after one of the men sued the government to halt the deportation of the foreign partner.

"The 'special permission for residence' is less stable than the spouse visa, but it is the first time in Japan that a foreign national's same-sex partner has been granted residence status, so it was a breakthrough," Terahara says.

Is Marriage Equality Coming in the Future?

Fong is hopeful for a solution to the hardships faced by LGBTQ residents of Japan. She says

that Japanese society is "more receptive" toward the community whether they are couples or not, adding, "In terms of the legal system, [it] still sucks big time."

Since Tokyo's Shibuya ward began offering partnership certificates to same-sex couples in 2015, nearly 50 local governments in Japan have followed suit. Businesses and hospitals are asked to recognize the certificates, but they are not legally binding.

In late February, according to *The Mainichi*, a Tokyo-based, non-governmental organization launched a mobile phone application to issue partnership certificates to same-sex couples. The Famiee Project aims to provide benefits like life insurance and landowners' permission to live together, which would ordinarily not be available to them. Forty companies including Japan Airlines Co. and Mizuho Financial Group have reportedly agreed to accept the blockchain-based certificate issued by the organization.

Pointing to the special permit of residence granted to the Taiwanese-Japanese couple, Terahara said it would be desirable for other same-sex couples to be granted special permission to stay in Japan as a general rule until same-sex marriage is recognized in Japan.

In the past, as reported by The Japan Times in 2015, the Immigration Services Agency has offered a "Designated Activities" residence status to foreigner-foreigner same-sex couples, but this status has not been extended to Japanese-foreigner same-sex couples.

"Japan does recognize same-sex marriage if both [partners] are foreigners. But because one of us is Japanese and Japanese law does not recognize such marriage, a visa will not be granted," says Shaw. "We only want to be treated the same as everybody else."

Our Voices, Our Rights

Tokyo Rainbow Pride, one of Asia's largest LGBTQ events, celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2021 with a 12-day, online celebration following the theme, "Our voices, Our rights." Don't miss the Online Pride Parade on Saturday, April 24.

WHAT: Tokyo Rainbow Pride 2021
WHEN: April 24-May 5
WHERE: Online – official YouTube
channel (youtube.com/c/
TokyoRPride/) & official Twitter
account (twitter.com/Tokyo_R_
Pride)

MORE INFO: tokyorainbowpride.com

An Urban Escape Like No Other

The new Tokyo American Club Nihonbashi facility offers a full range of upscale services to complement an active city lifestyle

Words by Owen Ziegler





ike millions around the world, Jonathan Bethune has spent much of the last year working from home. But he now has a powerful incentive to spend much more than the occasional day at his office in the vibrant Tokyo district of Nihonbashi.

Since March 31, the native New Yorker has been able to ride the elevator down to the sixth floor of Nihonbashi Muromachi Mitsui Tower, where he works, to decompress or grab a bite at the newly opened Tokyo American Club Nihonbashi.

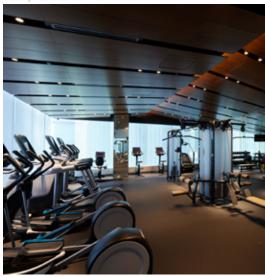
"I think pretty much any day I'm going to the office, I'll be stopping over there, if not for the gym then to have lunch," says Bethune, who joined the private membership club a few months ago. "And it will be great for business opportunities and for meeting people."

Tokyo American Club Nihonbashi represents the first expansion of the Azabudai-based Tokyo American Club in its 93-year history.

By becoming a member of the Azabudai club, Bethune, an executive in the tech sector, enjoys automatic access to the adults-only Nihonbashi facility.



Photo by Yuuki Ide



Located steps from Mitsukoshimae Station, Tokyo American Club Nihonbashi is open on weekdays and more compact than the main facility. But its spaces for working out, dining and relaxing alongside an international group of members prove that big things still come in small packages.

"It's a very minimal, simple entrance, but a whole different world inside," says Daishi Yoshimoto, the architect behind





Members can expect a wow moment when they enter the club

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Tokyo American Club Nihonbashi's interior design. "Members can expect a wow moment when they enter the club." Yoshimoto says the club's striking walnut, pitched ceiling, basalt feature walls, custom-made carpeting and curated

artworks are intended to imbue the space with style and warmth.

"One of the key points around the club is creating an atmosphere of what I call 'urban sophistication," says club member Terry White.

Nowhere else is this truer than in the bar area. Set in front of floor-to-ceiling windows, the bar's wood-and-brass aesthetic, complete with pendant lights, footrails and an illuminated central liquor display, is sure to catch more than a few eyes.

"We want this to be the wow factor," Yoshimoto says.

In the adjacent Muromachi Lounge and American Room restaurant, the kitchen's creations take center stage.

"While the menus have these Japanese inflections, the core of them are modern American," says executive chef Lindsay Gray of the breakfast, lunch and dinner offerings that feature such standout dishes as beef tenderloin with shiso leaf chimichurri and classic pastrami on rye with English cheddar and kimchi-mango slaw.

Between the bar and dining areas, there may be no better place to meet with friends or entertain clients in the Nihonbashi area. But just in case the need for some serious business arises, the club also enjoys access

Photo by Yuuki Ide



to a separate conference room with its own bar.

Of course, what kind of urban escape would Tokyo American Club Nihonbashi be without the chance to work up a sweat and blow off some steam. For that, the club boasts industry-best fitness facilities.

With a warmup area and top-of-the-range cardio and weight-training machines, the club's fitness center pulls no punches when it comes to providing members with the variety of workouts they crave.

"We were adamant that it be a multipurpose kind of gym where anyone could find a good way to work out," says club member Jim Fink of the exercise options, complemented by locker room saunas and whirlpool baths to maximize recovery.

It's true that there's no shortage of great bars and restaurants in Tokyo. Look hard enough and you'll also find a gym that suits your particular needs.

But to find all of this combined with a cosmopolitan pool of members is nearly impossible. That's what truly sets Tokyo American Club Nihonbashi apart.

Tokyo American Club Nihonbashi

Limited memberships available.
Contact the Membership Office at
03-4588-0687 or
membership@tac-club.org today.
nihonbashi.tokyoamericanclub.org



AHARD
HABIT
TO KICK

Author Robert Whiting's new memoir, Tokyo Junkie, details his six-decade love affair with the city

Interview by Matthew Hernon. Photos courtesy of Robert Whiting



fresh-faced GI from a small town in America, Robert
Whiting knew little of Japan's capital before arriving on these shores just under 60 years ago. The then 19-year-old soon fell in love with a place he says, "evolved, in a few short years, from a fetid, disease-ridden third-world backwater into a modern megalopolis in what many believe to be the greatest urban transformation in history."

These words come from Whiting's latest book, Tokyo Junkie, which unlike his previous publications such as You Gotta Have Wa and Tokyo Underworld, is a very personal account, detailing his relationship with Tokyo and how they've both grown over the past six decades. TW recently sat down with the revered author to find out more.

What were your first impressions of Tokyo?

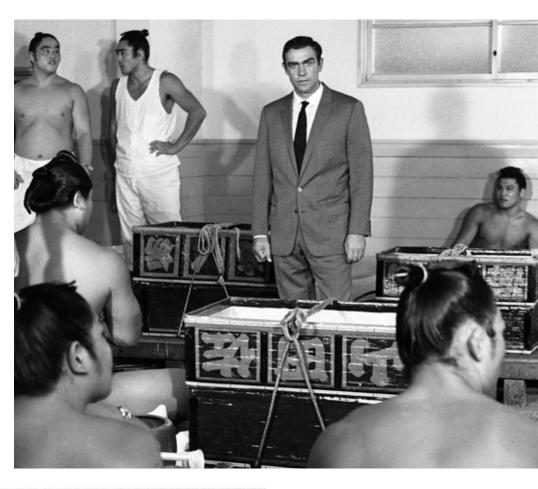
My first weekend in the city was mind-blowing. The sea of people, crowded trains, platform pushers – I'd never experienced anything like it. The energy of the place sucks you in. Walking down the streets of Shinjuku with the neon signs was hypnotic.

How would you describe the buildup to the 1964 Olympics?

When Tokyo got the Games in 1958 it had one five-star hotel falling into disrepair, no highway system, no basic infrastructure, high infant mortality rate, few English speakers and undrinkable water. The attitude was, how the hell are they going to do it? When I arrived, it was like one gigantic construction site. From a swamp backwater nobody wanted to visit to a high-tech megalopolis used for a James Bond film, the transformation in such a short time was remarkable.

What are your memories of the Games?

I remember the tears in Japanese people's eyes during the opening ceremony. This was their entry back into the world after the defeat in the war. There were many standout moments such as Valeriy Brumel's high jump gold and Bob Hayes in the 100 meters and relay. I decided not to include them in the book as they weren't related to the main theme. Instead, I focused on three events involving Japanese athletes.



TORVAL TORVAL

Why were they so significant?

Kokichi Tsuburaya's story is a tragic one. He was caught by Britain's Basil Heatley in the marathon (won by Ethiopia's Abebe Bikila) and ended with a bronze. He thought he'd let everyone down and never got over that, committing suicide in 1968. In judo Japan won the lower categories but the open weight was the main event. Akio Kaminaga was expected to win yet was pinned by Anton Geesink. The Dutchman stopped his coaches from celebrating as it would've been a breach of etiquette. The Japanese people respected him for that but were so disappointed. It was left to the women's volleyball team to save the Olympics.

The Oriental Witches?

Yes. The final night of the Games and 95 percent of the TV audience watched (still a record) them take on a bigger and stronger Soviet Union. The people were riveted. Everything stopped for that final point. Those ladies practiced 10 to 11 hours daily. Their victory restored national prestige and showed that fighting spirit could overcome superior strength, weight and height.



For around five years, Japan collectively lost its mind

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Has any sporting occasion resonated with the Japanese public as much since?

Possibly football and rugby World Cups where Japan advanced or the WBC final in 2006, watched by one in two people. In terms of excitement the closest was probably (Hideo) Nomo making his Major League debut and then starting an All-Star game. Jumbotron TV sets were erected nationwide. They had a pitcher as good as anything the Americans could produce.

What were Nomo and Ichiro like to interview?

Nomo doesn't say much and isn't impressed by anything. He just wanted to play baseball, everything else was a distraction. Ichiro enjoyed his success more and liked the spotlight. He's a well-mannered, intelligent guy who never misses a beat. He was the perfect example of a Japanese ball player developed by the philosophy of martial arts. Opposition players stood and watched his pre-game routine. They'd never seen anything like it.

What impact do you think those early practice sessions with his father had on his game?

It's what made him special. Nobody else went through that. His father in his autobiography wrote about a time he chucked balls at Ichiro because he was too tired to play including one right between his eyes that his son plucked out of the air. He mentioned training being tough but them both enjoying it, which I asked Ichiro about. He said, "he's a liar." That was the only time in the interview he used English. I didn't include it in the article because it wasn't



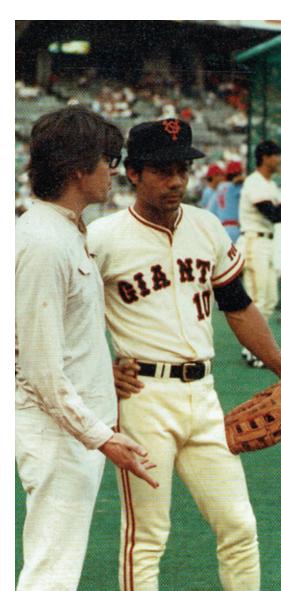
his native language. He described practice as gyakutai ni chikai - close to abuse. His manager asked me not to write about his father, but I didn't comply.

Were you surprised hearing George Bush had read The Meaning of Ichiro?

Yes. It was strange. I got this letter from him and Laura Bush saying they'd enjoyed it, but I couldn't imagine them sitting in the West Wing reading it. Derek Shearer also gave You Gotta Have Wa to Bill Clinton, which he said he'd read on a TV show. That was funny to hear.

Have other big names read your books?

Martin Scorsese would be the biggest. I went



to see him in his New York office, which had a waiting room that was basically a cinema with 300 seats and a whole library of crime movies. I was there to speak about a film version of Tokyo Underworld. He really wanted to do it.

What was Nick Zappetti (Tokyo Underworld's protagonist) like?

He was such a colorful character who lived a terrific life set against a dramatic period in history. Known as a scary American mafia boss in Japan, I tried avoiding him despite regularly dining in his restaurant. One day he approached me and said he'd enjoyed You Gotta Have Wa, and asked if I'd be interested in listening to his story. It was fascinating.



How concerned were you with the threats after Tokyo Underworld?

Very. Katsushi Murata (arrested for manslaughter after stabbing famed wrestler Rikidozan in the '60s) wanted 2 million yen as his mugshot was used in the book. When my editor refused, he was told not to stand too close to the tracks going home. I then received a letter from the secretary of Hisayuki Machii, boss of the yakuza syndicate Tosei-Kai (now Toa-Kai). I was told by a Japanese friend it was threatening. He died soon after, but it was scary for a while. I took different routes homes. I eventually found out he'd heard there was going to be a movie and wanted to be portrayed as a

What's the current situation with Tokyo Underworld?

Over the years it's been optioned out to Dreamworks, Warner Brothers, HBO and Amazon. Now it's in the hands of Chris Albrecht, who's developing a series for his production company Legendary Global with Sherry Marsh (Vikings) and Terence Winter (The Sopranos).



What have been your highlights from the past six decades?

The Bubble Era was memorable. People were flying to Sapporo for lunch and Hawaii for weekends. At that time, the Imperial Palace was said to be worth more than all the real estate in California. Even small properties required 100-year loans that residents couldn't pay when the economy collapsed. For around five years, Japan collectively lost its mind.

What do you think of Tokyo now?

It's the number one city in the world in many ways – highest GDP, most Michelin-starred restaurants, more Fortune 500 headquarters than anywhere else – I could go on. When I arrived, it was first in nothing. The current generation living here are more sophisticated than in the past. Even the anti-foreignness has abated. Right now, I think Tokyo's in a golden era.



Tokyo Junkie is set for release on April 20, 2021. Pre-orders (\$19.95) are available on amazon.com.





DINIG CURATION

Sushi chef Hisashi Udatsu crafts his art in a Nakameguro restaurant akin to an art gallery

Words by Matthew Hernon. Photos by Ryoko Ogawa

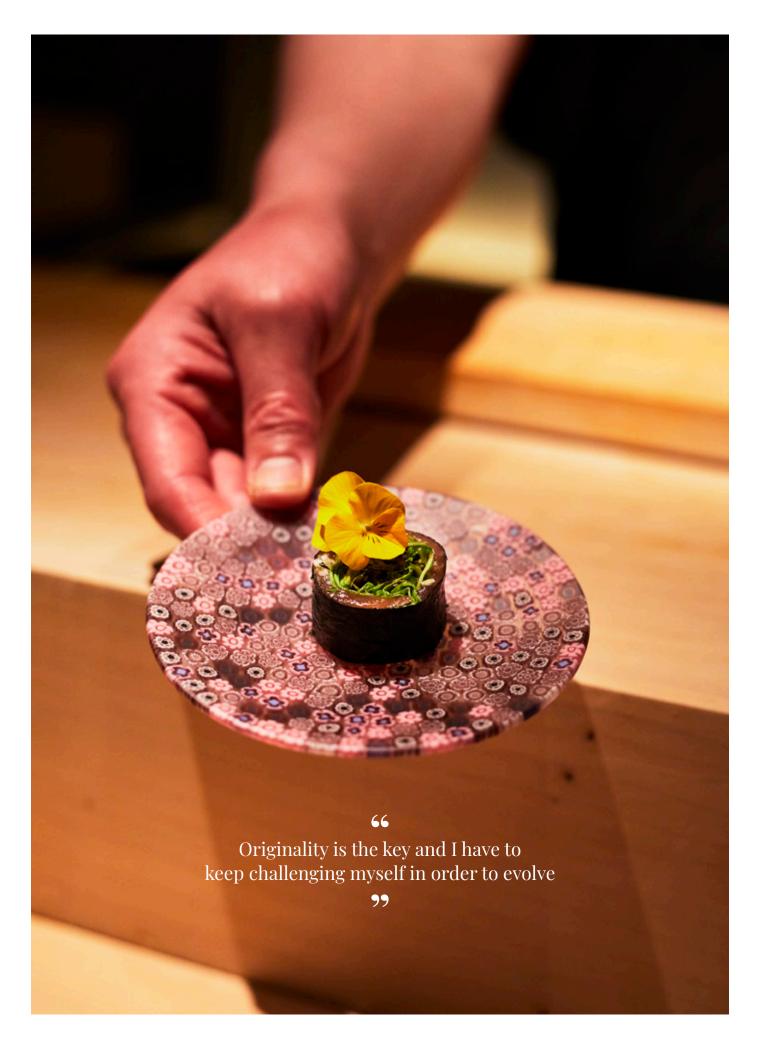
n intimate sushi restaurant providing a unique dining experience, Udatsu Sushi is the kind of place where you could be sat next to a fisherman who caught your ingredients on one side and a Hollywood star on the other.

In a country with more than 30,000 sushi restaurants, standing out in such a crowded

market is no easy feat. Tokyo in particular is awash with fine dining eateries serving Japan's most famous dish and while the quality of the produce is rarely in question, when it comes to ambiance, many of these places are lacking. This is where Udatsu Sushi distinguishes itself from the rest.

An artistic restaurant hidden away in the backstreets of Nakameguro, it's an intimate

setting with dimmed lighting and pictures by contemporary artists on the walls. There's a small private room for four and nine seats along the cypress counter where people from diverse backgrounds can connect with each other while enjoying the sumptuous dishes on offer. It also gives customers the opportunity to observe the sushi master working his magic up close.



Since opening in the spring of 2019, Udatsu Sushi has attracted a wide range of guests from around the globe including celebrities, entrepreneurs and renowned chefs. Given its gallery-like interior, it's no surprise to hear the place has proved particularly popular for artists. Watching the skilled chef slice the ingredients with such intricacy in front of wonderful pieces of art makes it feel like you're at an exhibition.

The restaurant is named after its owner and creative force, Hisashi Udatsu, a man determined to make each one of his customers feel cherished. This, he says, can only be achieved by putting the same amount of care and attention into every dish. Fundamental to his success as a chef is the way he blends the taste profiles of the fish and rice using two distinct styles of shari (vinegared sushi rice) with two types of lio Jozo brewed vinegar.

The dishes look heavenly and taste even better than they appear. The omakase menu has more variety than your typical sushi restaurant including an innovative avocado and natto wrap intertwined with various ingredients such as crispy lotus root chips. The highlights of the course are the rolled vegetables with fish and the smoked fatty tuna which has a big reveal when the lid is lifted.

Udatsu takes much pleasure in seeing the smiles on the faces of his customers. Brought





up by parents who owned a butcher's shop, he's been surrounded by food his whole life, though it was the raw fish being served in the shop next door rather than meat that piqued his curiosity most. As a child, he spent hours observing the local sushi master who was kind enough to take him under his wing.

"It was the only sushi shop in our neighborhood, and I went there before they opened just hanging around," recalls Udatsu.
"I'm sure I got in the way, asking too many questions, but I was fascinated by the work. Originally the dream was to be a baseball player, however, from the age of seven, that changed to sushi chef."

Udatsu realized his dream at 18, getting his first job at a sushi shop in Kanda after graduating from a culinary high school. He then moved on to Sushi Ichi, a Michelin-starred restaurant in Ginza where he climbed the ranks to become sous-chef, a role he later undertook at Sushi Tou in Nishi-Azabu. At 33, he fulfilled another of his ambitions by taking charge of his own restaurant.

"We're still in the middle of building the place up," Udatsu tells TW. "The idea was to establish a style of restaurant you can't see anywhere else. I have huge respect for sushi businesses with long histories but often when something's passed down from generation to generation the idea is to maintain what's gone before rather than trying to change things. Here it's different. Originality is the key and I have to keep challenging myself in order to evolve."

Open to new ideas, Udatsu's built a reputation as a flexible chef who goes out of his way to accommodate his guests. He wants everyone who visits, including those with dietary



restrictions, to enjoy the Japanese omakase tradition without feeling anxious. He procures the freshest vegetables so customers, if they wish, can enjoy a vegetarian sushi experience, something you won't find in rival establishments.

The omakase course also features herbs and edible flowers sourced from the acclaimed Kajiya Farm near Hiroshima. Udatsu spent some time there to get a better understanding of the produce, indicating just how dedicated he is to his craft. From selecting and purchasing the ingredients to the washing of the rice, he's meticulous in everything he does. Being seen as a good sushi chef isn't enough. He wants to be the best.

To help him get to the top, he's assembled a first-rate team and built strong relations with local vendors. This, he feels, is instrumental to the success of the business as they can be relied upon to get him the right ingredients. He works with a rice farmer in his hometown of Kunitachi who cultivates a rice that has the size and texture to Udatsu's image of the perfect shari, which is then sold exclusively to Udatsu. At the fish market he's developed close bonds with merchants and listens intently to what they say before making decisions.

"They're professionals who know a thousand times more about discerning fish than I do," says Udatsu. "If they tell me a fish isn't good on a specific day, I won't get it, regardless of whether I wanted it or not. We've developed a mutual trust over many years, and I provide feedback about what works well and what doesn't. I also invite them to eat at the restaurant so they can see the quality that's needed."

"I'm constantly learning and growing as a chef," continues Udatsu. "My work is my hobby and I love hearing customers say they enjoyed the food. Everyone who comes here deserves to be given special treatment. I do everything I can to satisfy their taste buds and ensure they're happy when they leave."





Photographer RK is pushing the limits of photography, technology and travel

Words by Laura Pollacco. Interpretation by Dorothy Finan

n February 2017, Tokyo-based photographer RK was exploring the secondhand shops of Akihabara when he spotted an elderly man tending his photography shop, which was bursting with equipment, yet perfectly organized. RK snapped a photo of the man surrounded by his wares.

That spontaneous photograph, "Grandpa in Akihabara," inspired the stylistic tone for the rest of RK's work that evokes the bustling and dynamic culture of East Asian urbanized living. This evocative style, which RK calls DENSE, has made him one of Japan's most diverse and exciting photographers.

Born in Ibaraki Prefecture in 1982, RK (Ryosuke Kosuge) began taking photographs after joining the Athletics Far East Tokyo Running Club in 2013 to shed a little weight. This serendipitous choice would lead him to become the official photographer for the club; starting out using only his iPhone he earned the nickname, "the iPhone Photographer." Though his camera equipment has advanced (he now works using Sony DSLRs, including A7 ii and A7R iii) he still enjoys using his iPhone on occasion to capture more spontaneous, neon-soaked shots in and around Tokyo.

RK steadily built up a reputation as a photographer and joined photography crews to gain experience. He was hanging out with such a crew when he shot "Grandpa in Akihabara."

"I happened to spot this elderly man in a photography shop and took a photo of him," says RK. "I really liked the look of that photo and that is where my fondness for this type of photography began. You could definitely say that this was the first photo of mine that was DENSE and influenced the rest of my work."

fashion photographer. It is this diversity that has allowed his work to appear in reputable publications globally, from British newspapers to Taiwanese fashion magazines to American travel journals. His approach to each shoot differs slightly. For fashion shoots, he explains, he does more research in advance.

"Obviously the location scouting is important but because each occasion is so different I am quite spontaneous with how I approach each fashion shoot," he says.

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If that was me how would I have taken that shot any differently?

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RK's DENSE images fill the frame with the subject, often using linear perspective to draw the viewer into the image, to the smiling store vendor in his compact shop or the full majesty of Mount Fuji, rising up through the tangled wires of a street at its base. This DENSE photography technique has seen his Instagram following jump to almost 600,000 followers, making him one of the most popular Japanese artists on the platform.

He utilizes this style in a variety of ways, working as a landscape, cityscape, street and

For his own personal portfolio, and on his travels, he will often check Google Maps beforehand to get an idea of the area, adding, "I also like to look at other people's photography and think, 'If that was me how would I have taken that shot any differently?' I approach my shoots like that."

Despite his popularity early on, RK only went freelance in 2018, finding that juggling the growing demand for his photography work wasn't conducive to maintaining full-time employment.





"I was asked to work freelance for Paris Fashion Week and I realized I wouldn't be able to take the time off," he says. "So I just felt that with all the requests I was getting I might as well become a freelance photographer."

Since then RK has taken more trips abroad, notably in Taiwan and China, to expand his portfolio and has worked with overseas clients as well as collaborating with fashion brands. His most recent collaboration was with the Tokyobased brand POLIQUANT, which incorporates his images into the designs themselves.

In March last year he was due to have his second exhibition at the DIESEL Gallery in Shibuya which, due to the pandemic, had to be moved online and was held virtually. RK says the online exhibition was well-received, just unusual, which could also describe the ensuing year.

"To be honest I haven't been getting much work since Covid. A lot of my work is based overseas and most of it has been canceled, I'm still getting cancelations coming in now," says RK. "It has been a little easier to shoot in Japan due to there being fewer tourists, but I can't think of anywhere right now that I want to shoot. Japanese landscapes don't really click with me currently. I

enjoy traveling abroad more often."

When discussing what his next steps will be he replies, "it is difficult to plan because it is difficult to know when the pandemic is going to end. For the moment I want to focus on collaborations with fashion brands until we can travel. But I would like to visit China again and even go to Iceland next."

Those who follow his Instagram can continue to see new images uploaded regularly. For those interested in how RK gets these phenomenal shots, RK has started uploading short



Instagram reels showing some of his photographic processes, which was in part inspired by the Instagrammer @jordi.koalitic, and is another way to keep busy and beat the corona-blues.

"I am quite serious about my photography but the videos are more to entertain, so there is a bit of a contrast between the purpose of the two," he says. Until international travel is open again, RK's images can still give viewers a gloriously colorful view into the culture and people of Japan and East Asia, with all of their energy and vibrancy.

RK's work can be seen on Instagram at @rkrkrk

Resilience and Strength Through Community Ties



he events of 2011 left an indelible mark on the coastal region of Fukushima, but the residents are eager to create a new narrative moving forward. We visited three noteworthy spots to speak firsthand with residents of this resilient and beautiful region about their journeys over the past decade.

Kicking Off a New Era Through Sports

The Olympic torch relay kicked off this March at J-Village, a vast sports complex that served as the training base for Japan's national teams among many others. However, in the aftermath of March 11, J-Village was the operational base for those dealing with the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station accident.

"J-Village is located just outside the 20-kilometer evacuation zone surrounding the power plant, and we became the base for frontline personnel in the wake of the disaster," says J-Village representative Nobuo Shimazaki. "We hosted construction workers, engineers, researchers, government officials, the media – anyone who Regular business activities were partially resumed in July 2018, followed by a full re-launch in April 2019. The new J-Village Station, part of JR East's Joban Line, opened at the same time. Today the center boasts a range of world-class training, leisure and accommodation facilities, all of which are open to the general public.

Iwaki—Where Hula Meets Hot Springs

The nearby city of Iwaki is home to Spa Resort Hawaiians, which has become a beloved icon since opening in 1966 after a local company executive hit upon the idea of creating a new business based around the nearby hot springs. The resort's famous hula dancers starred in the 2006 film Hula Girls and gained national attention after 2011. Part of the resort was damaged in an aftershock and the troop embarked on a tour of 26 prefectures during the renovations.

"They performed in baseball stadiums, at festivals, at department stores, at evacuation centers – anywhere they could," says Hidefumi Kunii of the Spa Resort Hawaiians sales and planning team.

Ten years after the March 11, 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami we take a look at the astonishing progress made in the Fukushima area

Words by Louise George Kittaka



Spa Resort Hawaiians re-opened in 2012. The resort's proximity to Tokyo makes it an ideal getaway, and with an onsite hotel, restaurants, pools, spa facilities and a golf course – as well as those famous hula dancers – there is something for everyone.

Hope Blooms in Tomioka

Tomioka is known for the cherry trees in Yonomori Park and the surrounding areas, but the entire town had to evacuate after the earthquake and tsunami as it is located inside the 20-kilometer evacuation zone.

A gradual lifting of restrictions for certain areas has seen some former residents return, including three staff members at the Tomioka Tourist Office, which reopened in October of 2019.

"Like all the members of our team, I live in Iwaki and commute over an hour each way to Tomioka. Why? Because this is my hometown and I want to help bring it recovery," says Kazumasa Kohata, the newest member of the team.

While Yonomori Park itself is still off limits, portions of the

cherry tree-lined road nearby are now open. The spring cherry blossoms offer a metaphor for renewal and rebirth – and something for these resilient residents of Fukushima to hold on to.



OUTDOOR SPECIAL



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Drop a Line

Take a fun fishing excursion with an up-close view of Mount Fuji

41

Hit the Links

Enjoy the scenic landscapes of Kyoto from the golf course

42

Fresh Air in Hakone

Take in the cherry blossoms and hiking trails accessible from Hotel Indigo

FINETRACK FLOW WRAP JACKET

While camping is a great way to experience the outdoors, the right type of clothing can make or break the experience. This Flow Wrap jacket by finetrack is designed to

keep you dry and comfortable, protecting you in a wide range of weather conditions. And if a jacket isn't enough, you'll find a hoodie, pants and gloves in the Flow Wrap series too. \(\frac{1}{2}\)28,820, \(finetrack.com\)



MONTBELL MOONLIGHT CABIN 4

It goes without saying: a spacious and sturdy tent is a necessity. Inspired by Montbell's original Moonlight series, the Cabin 4 tent is easy to set up, can function as a comfortable living area during the day and fit up to four people when it's time for some shut-eye. \(\frac{1}{2}\) \(\frac{1}{2}\)

ESSENTIAL CAMPINGITEMS FOR SUMMER

Compiled by Lisandra Moor and Sayaka Mitsui



LOGOS DESIGNER SOFT COTTON SLEEPING BAG

When camping one should not completely give up on comfort. When putting together your camping kit, do include Logos' soft cotton sleeping bags. This checkered sleeping bag was designed to not only keep you warm but bring an interior design flair to your tent. ¥12,700 logos.ne.jp

UNIFLAME YAMA KETTLE

A kettle is a must when camping in Japan. It will certainly come in handy when preparing yourself some instant noodles or preparing your morning tea. This Uniflame kettle has a stylish matte finish and is easy to carry. Pick your preferred size from 0.7, 0.9 or 1.5 liters to ensure everybody in our party stays hydrated. ¥3,900, uniflame.co.jp



OIGEN HOT SANDO COOKER

At the heart of the camping experience is cooking in the wild. In Japan, this often means grilling your freshly caught fish over a fire. Why not diversify your meal options by packing a cast iron sandwich maker? This small cookware by Oigen is easy and surprisingly light to transport. All you need are some slices of bread and the filling of your choice. ¥9,350, shop.oigen.jp

Drop a Line in Lake Yamanaka



Experience the tranquil beauty of Mount Fuji while fishing for smelt, a Japanese izakaya delicacy

Words by Charlie Jones



ount Fuji needs no introduction. It's an internationally recognized symbol of Japan and one of the most sacred sites in the entire country. But while it's primarily known for its powerful, soaring beauty, the mountain also offers rest and relaxation at its base, courtesy of Lake Yamanaka.

Located in Yamanashi Prefecture, Yamanaka is the largest of the Fuji Goko – five lakes at the foot of the famous mountain – and every year it attracts visitors from all over Japan by offering something for everyone. Besides unparalleled natural landscapes, which can be enjoyed from the lake's Panorama Deck, Yamanaka also has onsen hot springs, art galleries and many other attractions, both indoors and outdoors. Interestingly, smelt fishing falls somewhere between the two.

Smelt are tiny fish no bigger than 20 centimeters (8 inches), which Japanese bar patrons might have encountered in deepfried form as shishamo. The Japanese species of smelt, called wakasagi, is native to Hokkaido and has been introduced to the waters in other regions of Japan, including Lake Yamanaka, and even the reservoirs of California.

Fishing for smelt (wakasagi tsuri) is a longheld tradition in Japan, and there are many services around Lake Yamanaka that offer fishing experiences. The service organized by Asahigaoka Kanko comes recommended because it takes place in the chill environs of a dome boat.

After boarding the boat, you take off your shoes and go to the central sitting area where you receive your special smelt-fishing rod and two kinds of bait. The lake waters are accessible through an opening in the boat floor

so you never have to leave your seat. It's like ice fishing but within a domed boat, plus you can do it in any weather and have easy access to toilet facilities. The boat guide is happy to help provide direction to beginners.

There is something special about a comfortable chair, an up-close view of Mount Fuji and a fishing rod in your hand. Most smelt-fishing services also allow guests to enjoy drinks and light food on the cruises, which can of course be shared with fellow passengers, giving the experience a communal feel that you won't find anywhere else. It's a great place to make new friends because it gives you a lot of time to mingle.

Typical smelt fishing involves baiting the hook, sitting back and checking on your catches every 20 minutes or so while admiring the view outside. Some people take it more seriously, though, keeping a hand on the rod at all times, feeling for the tiniest vibrations indicating a catch. They are the ones who get on the boat's leaderboard with massive smelt hauls numbering in the hundreds, sometimes

even thousands.

To join their ranks, you could use some high-quality gear. Varivas-brand from Morris is the serious angler's choice. Might we recommend Works Limited Series tip rods designed especially for smelt fishing. The handmade series, while incredibly durable, is also unbelievably light and more sensitive to the tiniest of tugs. Connoisseurs know

that when one of these tip rods bends, it means a beautiful smelt is waiting for them at the end of the line. Visit Lake Yamanaka and test it out yourself if you ever get the chance.



Learn more about Asahigaoka Kanko smelt fishing tours at asakan.gr.jp/ and the Varivas line of fishing equipment at varivas.co.jp/en/

The Kyoto Golf Vacation You Didn't Know You Needed

Touring pristine
golf courses and
luxurious onsen
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to discover Kyoto
Prefecture's unique
geographies

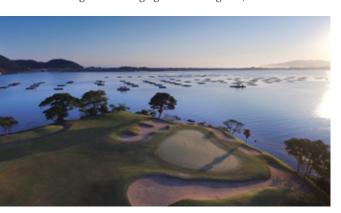
Words by Taylor Stewart

f course Kyoto, with an old-world image, is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world. But historical sightseeing, ambling temples and gardens and exploring the narrow stone streets of Higashiyama are not the only ways of experiencing and absorbing the culture. If you prefer a more leisurely or simply uncommon course, consider golfing your way through Kyoto.

There are nearly 30 golf courses within the boundaries of Kyoto Prefecture, most of which are only 30 minutes to two hours from the capital center. In accordance with the great geographic variety, the views at these golf courses range from mountainous panoramas to maritime prospects.

Hit the Links at Kumihama Country Club

For prime sea views, visit Kumihama Country Club, where the greens touch the water. Not only is the seaside course winding and challenging for the avid golfer, it also offers an



unequaled sightseeing opportunity. Its boundary runs along Kumihama Bay, and the third hole traverses the sea, requiring a 140-yard shot over the water for the second leg of the hole. There is also a wooded, mountainous course where the fairways are wide and grand compared to the delightfully precarious paths of a seaside game.

Sophisticated Accommodations at Hekisui Gyoen

At Hekisui Gyoen you can retire peacefully after treading the Kyoto coastline. Staying here is as much a way to appraise the nature as it is a site of self-care. Bathing in the natural hot springs or visiting the salon, you



are surrounded by sea, island hillocks and distant mountains. The rooms too, some with an outdoor bath and private garden, are designed airily, with large windows and much light. Conveniently, there is easy access from Hekisui to sightseeing spots like scenic Amanohashidate, the Ine Boathouses (Funaya), the public baths of Kinosaki and historic Izushi.

Nature, Peace and Golf at Kameoka Country Club

The hilly terrain, the wide fairways and the pastoral scenery of Kameoka Country Club is a golfer's paradise. Located fairly close to Kyoto city and northern Osaka Prefecture, the course can accommodate both casual golfers and long hitters, all the while offering panoramic views of Kameoka city. This area, deemed the "Kyoto of the forest," offers numerous other outdoors activities, including river rafting and

paragliding; golf is but one way to enjoy the incredible foliate scenes of Kameoka. In the fall and spring, both the country club and nearby natural wonders are particularly pretty.

High-end Hot Springs at Syoenso Inn

After so much activity, another bath is much needed. Despite its proximity to Kyoto city, Syoenso Inn in Kameoka's Yunohana Onsen is the site of natural hot springs and has a distinct placid, traditional atmosphere. While your surroundings would suggest a detachment from city life, you are nearby such attractions as the Hozu River and The Sagano Romantic train (city trolley car system). The central bath building has two open-air baths and a sauna, as well as spa services. As a five-star facility and deemed one of the best ryokan in the country, Syoenso is an ideal conclusion to an idyllic holiday.







Find Your Heart in Hakone

Escape the city at Hotel Indigo Hakone Gora, a contemporary onsen hotel surrounded by abundant natural charm

Words by Bunny Bissoux







hether you are seeking a relaxing or invigorating getaway, the Hotel Indigo Hakone Gora is the perfect destination to reawaken your senses. Waiting at the end of the Hakone Tozan mountain railway line, this boutique onsen hotel mixes stylish aesthetics with traditional elements and luxurious amenities. The structure incorporates local history, crafts and culture into its walls, literally, with exquisite yosegizaiku wooden mosaic work found throughout the building. Each room or suite includes a private hot spring bath, offering an indulgent moment to submerge yourself in serenity as you reconnect with nature.

While the foliage and mountains beyond make a impressive view, just a step out the door will find you surrounded by spectacular scenery. The Hayakawa Tsutsumi river bank alongside the hotel is revered as one of the best cherry blossom viewing spots in Hakone, with more than 120 trees found along a 600-meter stretch. A little further down the bank you will discover about 100 more weeping cherry trees along the Haya River. These sakura hotspots add a dreamlike aura

to the already picturesque landscape with the powder pink dusting usually lasting until late April. Our pick of Hotel Indigo's spring campaigns offers a one night stay, breakfast and a special sakura dessert assortment on the footpath terrance overlooking the river (from ¥46,500 per room, until May 14, 2021).

If you venture out beyond a riverside stroll, nearby attractions include the Hakone Open-air Museum and Okada Museum of Art, as well as the idyllic Hakone Gora Park with its French-style gardens. Active guests and families can enjoy the Hakone Mountain Hiking Tour & Bike Tour where an experienced guide leads you on a safe and environmentally conscious course through the wilderness of Sengokuhara, revealing the secret nature spots of Hakone, either on foot or by bike (7km hiking course ¥3,500, 17km bike course ¥8,500). Simply walking the hillside roads and slopes of Gora will present you with the area's rich history and awe-inspiring views around every corner.

Following a day of exploration, a pampering at The Spa by HARNN, a rejuvenating dip in Hotel Indigo's high-tech communal bath and the crackling wood-fired

grill at the Riverside - Kitchen & Bar awaits you. Inspired by the local Daimonji-yaki fire festival, the flame-grilled treats on the menu include Ashigara Wagyu sirloin and 30-day, dry-aged bone-in ribeye, which you can top off with spring water-infused cocktails at the 360° counter bar. After experiencing the vast charms and flavors of the region, rest assured you'll sleep soundly in style and comfort before a new day of adventures. A stay at Hotel Indigo Hakone Gora will leave you feeling fresh and rejuvenated even after the sakura petals fall.

Exclusive offer for the TW readers

Available until June 30, 2021, let the staff know you were inspired to visit after reading this article in Tokyo Weekender and enjoy a complimentary glass of sparkling wine or soft drink at the bar lounge.

Find more information at hakonegora.hotelindigo.com/en

GUIDE



Henrique Yudi

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The Art World

Top exhibitions, including a collection of Japanese art and a showcase of women artists from around the world.

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Agenda

What's on in Tokyo during April and May, plus plenty of events to enjoy from home.

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TW Social

How our social page regulars are staying connected while staying safe.

Masterpieces from the Japanese painting collection of the Minneapolis Institute of Art

The Minneapolis Institute of Art (MIA), home to around 2,500 uki-yo-e prints, is recognized globally for its collection of Japanese art. This exhibition is a selection of fine art from the MIA describing the evolution of Japanese painting from the Middle Ages to modernity. The timeline begins with ink-wash landscape painting, which can be traced back to the Tang Dynasty. It proceeds to the Kano school, with their luminous scenes of court life,



Kano Sansetsu, Daoist Immortals (Formerly, sliding screens in Tensho-in Temple), Four sliding door panels, Edo period, 1646, Minneapolis Institute of Art, The Putnam Dana McMillan Fund, Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art

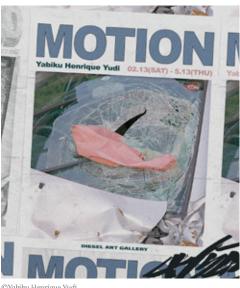
Zen patriarchs and nature; then to Yamato scenic and narrative paintings; and so on, until we reach the end of the Edo period. This latter transition period preceding the modern age saw the development of genres both innovative and inspired by native artistic heritage, like bijinga, pictures of beautiful women, and

shinhan-ga, highly influenced in technique by Western painting. The exhibition features those artists who merged the Western and Japanese traditions, like Toshio Aoki and Kano Hogai. **Suntory Museum of Art** Until June 27, suntory.com/sma/exhibition/2021_1/index.html

EART WORLD

Our pick of the city's best exhibitions

Compiled by Taylor Stewart and Lisa Wallin



©Yabiku Henrique Yudi



©Yabiku Henrique Yudi



©Yabiku Henrique Yudi

Yabiku Henrique Yudi: MOTION

Collage artist Yahiku Henrique Yudi will hold his largest solo exhibition to date at Diesel Art Gallery. With a background in Brazilian and Japanese culture, Yabiku looks for inspiration in the beauty of incongruity and imperfections of today's world. As he expands his creative platform mainly through collages

and installation art, Yabiku is currently considered one of Tokyo's emerging artists. The exhibition will showcase more than 30 new pieces of art, including three-dimensional pieces.

Diesel Art Gallery Until May 13, diesel.co.jp/art/en/yabiku_henrique_yudi



"AKARI CLOUD" :Installation view, The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum (2018-1 Photo:Nicholas Knight©The Noguchi Museum /ARS

Isamu Noguchi: Ways of Discovery

Isamu Noguchi was prolific. He worked in many artistic spheres – gardens, furniture, light, ceramics, architecture, set design – but at heart he was a sculptor. The stone sculptures he created towards the end of his life at his studio in Mure, Kagawa Prefecture, in collaboration with stonemason Masatoshi Izumi, he considered exemplars of his life's work. This exhibition traces the "ways of discovery" that led the great artist to these stone works. We can see that his life experience continually shifted his creative course: how his meeting with sculptor Constantin Brâncuşi introduced a biological touch to an oeuvre of abstractions; how his Japanese–American heritage bred his unique philosophy of sculpture; how the Second World War left him yearning for peace. The exhibition features around 90 works, including his airy Akari light sculptures. It is the first time his late Mure sculptures have been exhibited together elsewhere since the opening of the Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum. Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum Until August 29, isamunoquchi.exhibit.jp/english.html



Artist Name: Anna Boghiguian, Title of the work: A Meteor Fell from the Sky, 2018. Installation view: Artes Mundi 8, Cardiff, Wales, 2019

Another Energy: Power to Continue Challenging – 16 Women Artists from around the World

This exhibition focuses on 16 female artists in their 70s or older, from across the globe, who continue to embark on new challenges. Ranging in ages 71-105 with their careers spanning over 50 years, these artists are originally from 14 different countries, and equally diverse in their current locations. Showcasing their wide array of powerful works from paintings, video, sculptures, to large-scale installations and performances, it contemplates the nature of the special strength, "Another Energy" of these women who have all continued challenging throughout their long-standing careers. Mori Art Museum Apr 22–Sep 26, mori.art.museum/en/exhibitions/anotherenergy/index.html



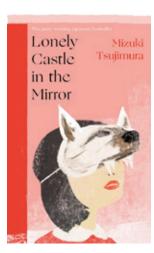
Haven't joined our online book club yet? Here's what we're reading next and where to find us

Join us as we dive into contemporary books that are either written by Japanese authors, are set in Japan or have some sort of connection with Japan.

WHAT WE'RE READING NOW

Magic in its many forms is our theme for April and May. We explore a modern fairy tale and the spellbinding enchantment of craftsmanship in the Japanese countryside.





April

Water, Wood, and Wild Things:
Learning Craft and Cultivation
in a Japanese Mountain Town by
Hannah Kirshner is a deep dive
exploration into the meditative
rituals of tea ceremony, paper
making and more, set in the heart
of Yamanaka, Ishikawa Prefecture. Chapters are interspersed
with beautiful illustrations and
enticing recipes, allowing us to
savor her storytelling through
multiple mediums.

May

Be prepared to have your heart-strings not pulled but ripped apart in this fantasy tale by Mizuki Tsujimura. Adeptly translated by Philip Gabriel, Lonely Castle in the Mirror is, on the surface, about a group of junior high school kids and their fantastical journey to a magical world beyond the looking glass. Dig a little deeper and you'll discover vivid themes of the importance of human connection and hope. Winner of the Japan Booksellers' Award.

Don't forget to share your thoughts with us by tagging us at @twbookclub on Instagram and @twbookclubjp on Twitter!
You'll also find us on Facebook at facebook.com/TWBookClub

(+H)

For more events go to www.tokyoweekender.com/events-calendar

Cherry Blossoms Bloom at TeamLab Planets



TeamLab Planets reopens with an explosion of pink in time for cherry blossom season.

- teamLab Planets
- - 🖮 Until Apr 30
- flank.defend.braked
- ¥ 3,300



Fake Type Live Tour & Album Release

The hip-hop duo perform their theme park-like live show for the first time in four years.

- Shibuya Club Quattro
- Apr 27
- 4,500
- outpost.talents.successor



Climate Live Japan

This worldwide online concert's massive lineup includes names like Little Glee Monster and KOM_I.

- (n) Online
- (iii) Apr 24



Hunters on Land Exhibition Brush up on your animal facts and dig

your claws deeper into attack tactics at this special exhibition.

- National Museum of Nature and Science
- Until Jun 13
 - General 2,000 | Elementary thru high school students
- seasonal.adopt. outraged



Metamorphosis Garden at Ginza Six

This installation of biomorphic sculptures by Kohei Nawa is suspended in the central atrium of Ginza Six.

- (n) Ginza Six
- (iii) Apr 12, 2021-Apr 1, 2022
- vaccines.pulses.slides

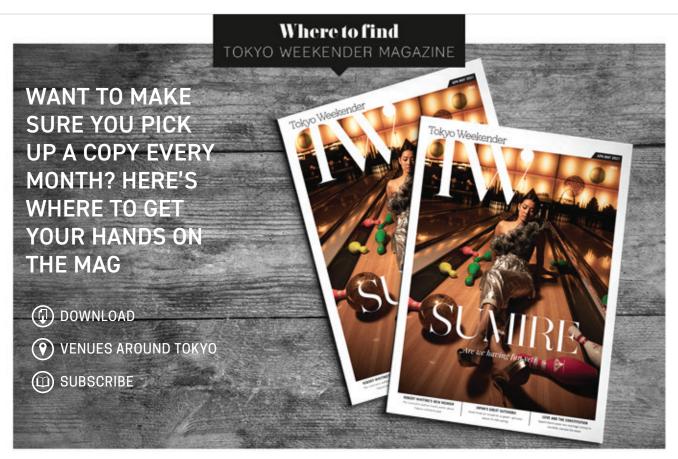


Wings for Life World Run

The charitable organization's world run raises money to fund research for spinal cord injuries.

- (n) Online
- (iii) May 9
- ¥) 2,700

Information may unexpectedly change, so please check the event's website before venturing out. Stay safe and informed with the latest Covid-19 news.



MORE INFORMATION AT WWW.TOKYOWEEKENDER.COM



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TW Social

Here at TW we've taken the coronavirus outbreak seriously and have done all we can to #stayhome. The same goes for our social page regulars. This month, we check in on the community to see what everyone is doing to stay safe while staying connected

By David Schneider



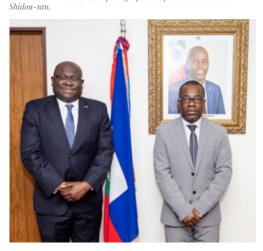
Celebrating at the 10 KOL opening party in Shirokane are, from left to right, Hiro Sugii, Hayato Fukazawa, Kenji Katayama, Yo Shitara and Takamitsu Maejima.



Celebrating the 10 KOL opening party, supported by Bottega Spa, are Yuka and Mayumi from 10 KOL presenting Bottega Gold bottles.



Photographer Benjamin Lee presenting Mr. Shiraishi, owner of the New Karuizawa Art Museum, his photograph with famous sumo wrestler



Helph Monod Honorat, ambassador of the Republic of Haiti, welcomes Mr. Darlier Dorval, the new minister-counsellor at the Haiti Embassy.



From left, Douglas Montgomery, executive producer at Global Stage Hollywood, Jane Yamano, president of Yamano Gakuen; fashion photographer Leslie Kee and husband Joshua Ogg at the Global Stage Hollywood

Master of ceremonies and wedding reception MC Greg Irwin with Realtor Akemi Sawa at her office: "Looking forward to celebrating with you all again soon!"





Caiya (Carolyn Kawasaki) and kimono designer Shito Hisayo presenting Hisayo's new kimono collection.



On the occasion of leaving Japan, Dr. Maria Jesus Herrero (center in kimono), the Japan-Latin American and Caribbean Ladies Association (ADNLAC) organized a farewell gathering at the Columbian Ambassador's residence, Antonia Sanin de Pardo (wife of Colombian Ambassador) hosted the event with Mrs. Yumiko Hashimoto, president of ADNLAC (front row, second from right).

Entertainer Steven Haynes, city council representative for Sumida-ku Noemi Inoue and Euna Lim, Habitat for Humanity representative, celebrate Haynes' upcoming new beauty contest, Today's Woman, which will be held in October in Japan for the first time.





From left, actress Natsuki Kunimoto, Eiko's World bespoke designer Eiko Gudnason, and Gudni Gudnason, executive producer of Aurora Borealis Entertainment, at the Global Stage Hollywood 'Who's Got Talent' Tokyo reception, held at Yamano Gakuen.

Santiago Pardo, Ambassador of the Republic of Colombia in Japan, with wife Antonia Sanin de Pardo at the Ambassador's residence.





Olivier Voisin of DeNA Showroom, Douglas Montgomery executive producer at Global Stage Hollywood, and Daniel L. Smith, executive producer at Aurora Borealis Entertainment, at the Global Stage Hollywood 'Who's Got Talent' Tokyo reception, held at Yamano Gakuen

Ambassador of Chile in Japan, Julio Fiol finishes his mission in Japan to assume a new position as Director General for Immigration and Consular Affairs in Chile. "On behalf of my wife Maria Jesus Herrero, our son Alexander and myself, we wish to express our warmest regards and gratitude to the government and people of Japan. It has been and honor to represent Chile in this wonderful country. Two years have given us a glimpse of the richness of the Japanese culture, its exquisite heritage, its beautiful landscapes, the kindness of the Japanese people and the strong ties existing between Japan and Chile. Next year we will celebrate 125 years of diplomatic relations, an opportunity to continue strengthening our bilateral relations. We could not say goodbye without acknowledging the excellent role that Tokyo Weekender plays in diplomatic life in Japan. Thanks for your willingness to support every activity that involves diplomats, consuls and diplomatic ladies associations devoted to charitable activities in Japan."





Shosaku Yanagida, president and CEO at Nagase Kenko Corporation, with city council representative for Sumida-ku Noemi Inoue. Yanagida-san will be the Olympic torchbearer for Sumida-ku at The New Year's Gathering.

Bill Hersey's Partyline • Connecting Communities Since 1970 •

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These pages are dedicated to the late Bill Hersey, Tokyo Weekender's original society columnist who wrote for the magazine from 1970 to 2018. Originally called "Bill's Party Line," the column featured visiting celebrities and local VIPs, and helped to connect expat communities within Tokyo, with Bill achieving legendary status amongst his peer group and our readers.



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"A Forum for Foreigners in Japan"

July 7, 1989

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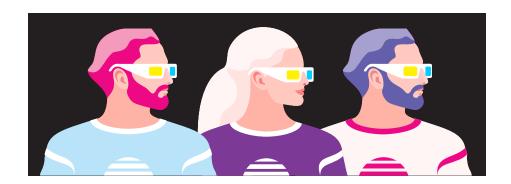


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