

JUDGE



Ryotaro Sakurai (Chairman of Judges) Life Bridge Inc. Managing Director

Born in Sendai City. Graduated from the University of Richmond in the UK and lived overseas for 10 years. After returning to Japan, built up a career at a foreign bank and securities company, and established Life Bridge Inc. in his hometown of Sendai. In addition to conducting training and lectures specializing in inbound human resource development across the country, also opened a YouTube channel, "Abroad in Japan" (157,000 subscribers /Jan 2024) and is involved in numerous tourism promotions.



Enako Cosplayer/ Cool Japan PR Ambassador

I'm Enako, a cosplayer who also serves as a Cool Japan PR Ambassador. Although the genre of "cosplay" is still new as a culture, there are already many fans from overseas, and I think it will be a genre that will attract attention as Cool Japan's future activities.

Thanks to everyone's posts, I was able to learn about many wonderful scenery and good places in Japan that I didn't know about before, which made me very happy. I decided to serve as a judge, thinking that it would be great if people from all over the world would come to see the photos that show off the wonderful scenery of Japan.



**Akiko Toya Executive Vice President, Original Inc.
Vice President, Time Out Tokyo Inc. / Editor in chief, Open Tokyo**

Akiko Toya spent her early childhood in Manila and junior high to high school years in Bangkok before returning to Japan in 1996. A graduate of Waseda University's School of Education, where she studied English language and literature, she worked at Tokyo FM, initially in a secretarial role and later as director on a variety of radio programs, before joining Original Inc. in January 2010. As content director of Time Out Tokyo, she has overseen fields including editorial, sales and PR, drawing on a global network of contacts ranging from artists and athletes to academics. Akiko has earned wide praise for producing high-quality multilingual solutions for the benefit of both corporations and government entities.



Mao danqing ST.MICHAEL'S UNIVERSITY(K.I.U)Professor

Born in Beijing, China. Writer. Professor of ST.MICHAEL'S UNIVERSITY(K.I.U) In Kobe. After working as an assistant at the Institute of Philosophy of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, studied at Mie University in Japan. After working at a trading company, started writing. After launching the magazine "it is JAPAN" in Beijing to introduce Japanese culture, started "in JAPAN" in Shanghai, a magazine that summarizes the image of Japan drawn by international students. Translated many novels by Haruki Murakami and Naoki Matayoshi. Publications include "こっぽん虫の眼紀行" (Bunshun Bunko).

BEST



MysticWonderland

 [peggytang.photo](https://www.instagram.com/peggytang.photo)
(Australia)

Description

Misty Nachi Falls and Seiganto-ji after a typhoon, capturing both the natural and cultural wonders. This is the tallest waterfall with a single uninterrupted drop in Japan, a drop of 133 meters.

 Higashimurogun, Wakayama

Judges' Comments



Ryotaro Sakurai

The stunning scenery and composition make you think, "This is Japan". Access to Nachi Falls is not the best, but this is a photo that will make you want to visit even if you overcome that inconvenience. The contrast between green and red and the mystical view of the world created by the mist are sure to captivate many people through this photo.



Enako

This photo have a fantastic transparency that instantly draws me in, and I felt a charm that made me want to look at them forever.



Akiko Toya

There's a nice balance between the human-made tower and nature. The mist adds a dreamy touch, too; great timing by the photographer.



Mao danqing

This photo perfectly captures the moment when the sun, the only source of light, colors and illuminates the magnificent waterfall and its surroundings.

EXCELLENT

Autumn colours in Zuishin-In Temple

 cloudlands_journal
(United Kingdom)

Description

Father and son enjoying a quiet stop to look at the beautiful red maples at the Zuishin-in Temple.

 Yamashina-ku, Kyoto



Judges' Comments



Ryotaro Sakurai

This work skillfully expresses the feelings of foreigners who visited Japan in search of "Japan's autumn leaves". The father, who must have walked all the way to this temple with his child in his arms, can see the pleasant tiredness on his shoulders and the expression of being at a loss for words as he looks at the red world spreading out before his eyes. I can feel his smile even though I can't see his face. The thick pillar looks like a forehead. I also liked it looked like a painting.



Enako

I thought it was a wonderful photo that captures the best parts of Japan: the autumn leaves reflected in the gentle sunlight, the peaceful impression, and the variety of changes that occur throughout the four seasons.



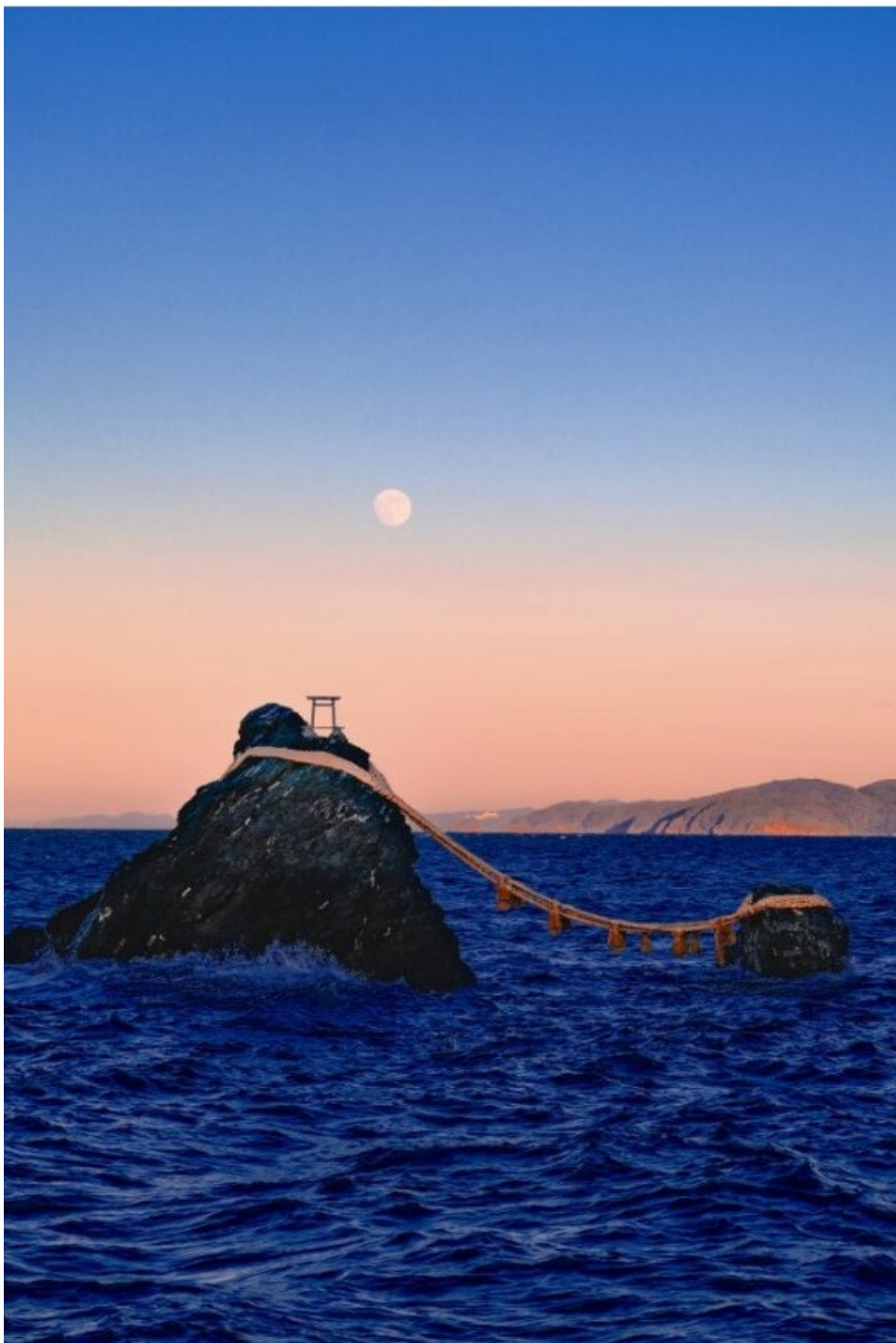
Akiko Toya

The contrast between the people depicted is very good. Temples and the autumn leaves are elements of Japan that are well known overseas, and this photo makes you want to come here and take similar pictures.



Mao danqing

Beautiful autumn leaves that look like painting, and a collaboration between the young and old. Spring has passed, summer has passed, and autumn has arrived, making the mountains themselves look like colored brocade pottery, conveying the richness of Japan's four seasons.




Full moon over Meoto-Iwa

 bixentesan
(France)

Description

Sunset and moon rising, over the Meoto-Iwa.

 Ise-shi, Mie

Judges' Comments



Ryotaro Sakurai

A large rock, a small rock floating in the sea, and a rope connecting them. Even though they are surrounded by the sea on all sides, the sight of a couple supporting each other in the moonlight is fleeting yet beautiful. The striking contrast between the deep blue and the many layers of gradation in the sky creates a mysterious worldview that almost draws you into the photo.



Enako

I first learned about Meoto-Iwa from this work. Looking at the photo, I wonder if this is the part that represents the relationship between the couple? And I was able to imagine its origin.



Akiko Toya

This photo captures one of the “this is what Japan will be like” elements that people from abroad imagine before visiting. With beautiful colors, it calms the viewer’s mind.



Mao danqing

I used to live in Mie Prefecture, so I felt close to him. It is known as a symbol of marriage and is a symbol of love between husband and wife, couples, etc., but it also has the image of being integrated into the daily lives of local people. This is a piece that conveys that kind of atmosphere.

GOOD




Holy Fire

 photobagabondo
(Germany)

Description

The Fire Walking Festival (hiwatari matsuri) -The temple's annual fire-walking festival is held annually on the 2nd Sunday of March. The event is one example of traditional asceticism practiced by a certain type of Buddhist monk called "Yamabushi". At the festival, worshippers pray for safety for their families and themselves, as well as for protection from traffic accidents. They then follow the Yamabushi as they walk barefoot over smoldering coals produced by a sacred fire. The main highlight of the event is seeing the monks walk through the flames as they chant.-

 Hachioji-shi, Tokyo

Ryotaro Sakurai



Yamabushi dances with all his heart as flames and smoke rise. I can sense a strong prayer from that grim expression. Many religious ceremonies give a glimpse of the "wishes" of a country or region, but this piece makes you want to actually visit this festival and learn more about what those wishes are.



Tunnel of Light

 [audrey_injapan](#)
(France)

Description

Amazing art for Echigo Tsumari
at Niigata



Tokamachi-shi, Niigata



Mao danqing

At the end of the tunnel, the world is clearly divided into the world of light and the world of shadow, but for some reason I feel that the sense of unity between them has become even stronger. It's as if light and shadow are swaying like clear water.




A Gateway to Nature

 sayafphotography
(United States of America)

Description

A lone torii gate stands on Onogame in Sado Island. It really makes you pause and appreciate your surroundings.

 Sado-shi , Niigata



Mao danqing

Spirits may be alive in the greenery that seems to fill the mountains and fields. This is because torii gates, which are one of the symbols of Japanese culture, have certainly existed, and it seems that they have been handed down endlessly since ancient times, regardless of their size. That's a nice piece.



The gate to the tranquility

 official_ayazt
(Indonesia)

Description

A simple traditional gate of Japanese restaurant looks picturesque with the autumn leaves as a background.

No one could resist the temptation to push a shutter when seeing this scenery.



Nishimatsuura-gun, Saga



Toya Akiko

The photo is imbued with a sense of calm, providing a glimpse of the way Japanese people value the changing of the seasons.

The Mountain's Secret

 mulletsensei
(Australia)

Description

Hidden away off the main path that runs through Kyoto's Fushimi Inari Shrine, this tranquil alcove rewards those willing to explore with a rarely seen side of one of Japan's most famous sites. Away from the crowds of tourists and worshippers, visitors are surrounded by thick forest and moss-covered walls and truly feel at one with the nature of the mountain. It serves as a reminder that even though Japan offers visitors many obvious attractions, there are gems along the road less traveled for those willing to discover them.



Kyoto-shi, Kyoto



Enako

Japan has a variety of folklore, including stories about myths and monsters, and it was a mysterious photo that seemed to connect us to the otherworldly spaces that appear in such mysterious stories.



Night walk in Osaka

 bixentesan
(France)

Description

Rainy night walk in the heart of Osaka

 Osaka-shi, Osaka




Mao dangina

As I look at the night view of the city spreading out in front of me horizontally, the buildings and signboards look like muddy light poured into a deformed mold. The ground looks magical, wet with rain and reflecting mysteriously, giving it a uniquely Osaka brilliance.



La beauté dans l'éphémère

 aniday_anitime
(Canada)

Description

"They bloom and they fall
In the blink of an eye
How about a walk under a pink sky?"

Cherry blossoms grace us with their breathtaking beauty for a short period of time each spring. Here in Fukushima, we can enjoy their stunning sceneries along with other spring flowers. Take a seat and let them soothe our heart.



Fukushima-shi, Fukushima



Enako

The beauty of Japan, such as cherry blossoms and flowers, is expressed. The soft atmosphere of spring is conveyed through the landscape and subject. I think that if foreigners see this photo, they will want to experience spring in Japan.

Snow monster

 audrey_injapan
(France)

Description

Amazing Snow monster at Yamagata in the small and cute city Zao Onsen.


 Karita-gun, Miyagi

Toya Akiko



The contrast between black and white, and the size comparison between the monster and human, make this a really interesting photo. It makes you want to see a distinctive landscape like this, a snowy Japanese mountain, in real life.

Wooden Kappa Children

 theboldbasan
(Canada)

Description

Scattered along a hiking wild raspberries, gorgeous maple trees, a trail in Shimanto-cho Kochi, you can see delicious and mysterious wooden kappa!

 Takaoka-gun, Kochi



Enako

What have these stone statues like kappa been looking at for such a long time that the moss has grown? Are there any legends related to kappa in this area? I became interested in the Shimanto River.

Times Passing

 _wonderlens_
(England)

Description

Japan historical culture meets
its Modern Culture

 Tokyo




Mao danqing

The subway makes you feel far away from the noise of the ground. This is a photo that surprisingly gave me a sense of calm and warmth.




A Short Break with a view of Fuji-san

 seudeesign
(Turkey)

Description

I took this picture in a cafe near Kawaguchiko station. I visited the Fuji region in November 2023. This was my second visit to Japan. Seeing Mount Fuji was one of my biggest dreams. When I first came to Japan, I could not see Mount Fuji due to the weather conditions. This time, after getting off the station and walking a little, I managed to see Mount Fuji. I was excited and happy at that moment. I saw a small cafe selling matcha in the area and stopped by to rest. While I was drinking my matcha latte, I noticed that the view was very beautiful and I took this photo. As I look at the photo, I feel excited and peaceful.

 Minamitsuru-gun, Yamanashi

Ryotaro Sakurai



Drink a matcha latte at an old folk house cafe while admiring the beauty of Mt. Fuji. A photo that embodies the style of tourism in Japan in the 21st century. The circular window looks like a frame, making Mt. Fuji look like a piece of art. The amount of information on the menu on the table is a bit large, so it might be a good idea to make it a little simpler.




Ohanami in the Rain: Part 2

- Yoyogi Park.

 ciaraninjapan
(South Africa)

Description

The cherry blossoms often draw huge crowds to watch the cascade of petals falling during the spring time in Japan. The only inconvenience is that it is so crowded that one can barely find a place to sit and enjoy some sakura mochi (especially in Tokyo). A solution to this: visit when it is raining. The parks are considerably less crowded (empty). Also during the spring in Japan the rain falls as a gentle mist therefore one does not need to be concerned about being drenched and the rain turns the somei yoshino blossoms from pale white to a gentle pink which creates a fantastic contrast with the grey moody surroundings.

 Shibuya-ku, Tokyo



Toya Akiko

The photo evokes the serenity and calmness of spring. It captures a wonderful moment, and the cherry blossoms provide a touch of Japan.




Parental guidance on Mount Osore

 [jeremy_leijssen](#)
Netherlands

Description

This picture was taken on July 16, 2023, at Mount Osore, which is regarded as one of the holiest sites in Japan and believed to be the gateway to the afterlife. Parents visit this sacred place to offer tributes, hoping to guide the souls of their deceased children so that they may find their way and pass on. Unknown to most, but incredibly important to those who visit.

 Mutsu-shi, Aomori

Ryotaro Sakurai



Osorezan is said to be the closest to the other world. The photo reveals the Japanese idea of the afterlife through the calm blue sand of the beach and the bouquets offered by worshipers who have lost loved ones. If the caption explained in a little more detail what kind of place Mt. Osore is, many people would be interested and visit.



Cloudy

 Michael.reichmann76

Description

Cloudy



Kyoto-shi, Kyoto

Ryotaro Sakurai



The "Showa Retro" style is well expressed, and the electric wires are very impressive, making you feel like you've traveled back in time. Even if you're not Japanese, this photo will make you feel nostalgic. I wanted to find out where this place was and go for a walk at dusk. There are some parts that are crushed in black, so I think it would be a better work if the exposure could be increased a little to clearly express the details of daily life.