

Les Clefs d'Or Japan

Key News



October 2023 *Vol.74*

Publisher: Aiko Imaizumi

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12th UICH ASIAN CONGRESS in LANGKAWI



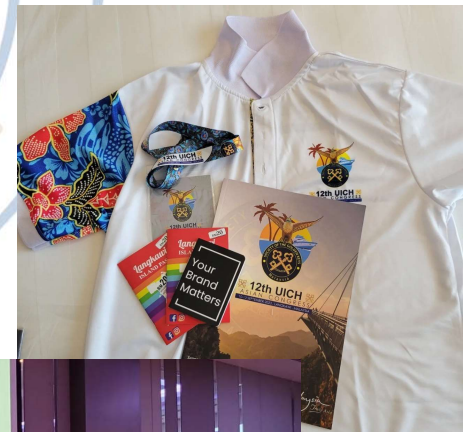
By Miki Saito

The 12th Les clefs d'Or Asian Congress was held in Langkawi, Malaysia from September 10 to 13, 2023

From Les clefs d'Or Japan participants included Ms. Mayako Sumiyoshi, Southeast Asia & Oceania SEAO Zone Director based in Palace Hotel Tokyo, Ms. Aiko Imaizumi, Les Clefs d'Or Japan President based in Grand Hyatt Tokyo, Mr. Akihi Tiwari based in Mandarin Oriental Tokyo, myself, and Ms. Miki Yoshikawa based in Grand Hyatt Tokyo from Japan Concierge Association. This was the first time after the COVID-19 Pandemic that the Asian Congress was held with 120 people from 18 countries and regions attending.

September 10 / Arrival Day, Opening Ceremony at Aloft Langkawi.

Ms. Sumiyoshi and Ms. Imamzumi arrived one day earlier and attended the President meeting and EXCO meeting from the morning. Mr. Tiwari, Ms. Yoshikawa and I were expecting clear blue skies, but unfortunately we were greeted with pouring rain. When we arrived at the venue of the Park Royal Hotel, we were reunited with many familiar members and exchanged greetings with many new members and the event got off to a good start.



In the evening, there was a welcome reception at Aloft Langkawi Pantai Tengah Hotel. Langkawi Tourism Board and the International Committee participated and it was a valuable time to interact with the participants while enjoying promotional videos of Langkawi's charms, folk dances, and dinner.

September 11 / Educational Symposium

The Educational Symposium on the morning of September 11th was a panel discussion with four guest panelists from the hospitality industry. Under the theme of Industrial Revolution 4.0, discussions progressed on how to effectively utilize rapidly evolving technologies in operations.



The use of systems that allow guarantees such as purchasing tickets and making restaurant reservations online was discussed. There was also talk about the dangers of exchanging credit card information via email, and it was a reminder that Japan is still lagging behind in the introduction of technology. In addition, while AI can collect a lot of information instantly, one limitation is that this information is not necessarily accurate, which makes it difficult to fully utilize in the short term. However, there are situations where efficiency can be improved due to lack of personnel and various other reasons so it is important to consider which areas AI can be used most effectively.

In conclusion, at this stage AI cannot provide advice that takes emotions into consideration, so it remains an important differentiating factor for concierges to respond to customers by applying a human touch.

In the afternoon, a workshop was held for all participants based on the theme of Enhancing Concierge Brand Outreach. We divided into groups of about 10 people and discussed what kind of abilities a robot that could complement the work of a concierge would need to have in order to provide a better experience for guests. The participants discussed and presented their ideas for creating robots that incorporated functions such as tourist information, interpretation, delivery arrangements, and restaurant introductions.



September 12 / Excursion, Gala Dinner

Board members planted mangrove trees in the morning as part of CSR activities. We took the Sky Cab, a cable car that goes vertically up Mt. Machinchang cliff, located about 30 minutes from the hotel. Upon reaching the top, we enjoyed the beautiful views from the sky bridge, which is 55 meters high and 125 meters above the valley floor.

For the Gala Dinner, the dress code was Malaysia's national costume, batik, which we had purchased the day before and we enjoyed Malaysian cuisine while exchanging valuable information.



September 13 / Departure Day

While we can easily communicate through email and social media anytime, we all realized that there is nothing better than getting together in person, and I had a wonderful time at the event.

We promised to all meet again at the International Congress next year in Bali, Indonesia in April 2024 and parted our separate ways back to countries.



Les Clefs d'Or Summer Party



By Shinobu Momoi

We welcomed affiliates and members, 31 in total at Le pain Quotidien in the cloudy weather.

The nice and cool winds relaxed us to enjoy the calm sunset time. Having a summer party was the big event for us since 2019.

Affiliates and members had gathered in the evening to talk about the travel industry as well as the recent guests' trends etc...

Le Pain Quotidien is a bakery located on the 1st floor in Tokyo Midtown in the Plaza area. Originally established in Belgium, and has 240 restaurants around the globe. Offering fresh seasonal, organic, food menu with colorful ingredients and served in the natural sunlight in their dining room. Open from breakfast throughout to dinner, their selection goes very well with the wines offered.

Le Pain Quotidien organized the table with a buffet setting especially for us to allow us to use the space for quality communication. The gathering was commenced with a toast by Mr. Tetsuya Omizo, Director of Sales Division and Operation Division of Tobu Skytree Tower Co., Ltd., one of our affiliates, and a welcome speech from Ms. Aiko Imaizumi, President of Les Clefs d'Or Japan. The setting with the balmy summer aroma of the sparkling wine with fresh avocado green entree on the tables definitely reminded us that "this is the way it should be!" We truly enjoyed the dream-come-true evening together.



Les Clefs d'Or Japan New Member

We are delighted to announce that Les Clefs d'Or Japan has welcomed Ms. Saori Maitani, Concierge at Hotel Granvia Kyoto as a new member. She is the second Les Clefs d'Or member from the hotel, and one of the youngest member of Les Clefs d'Or Japan.



Thank you for approving me as a Les Clefs d'Or member. I would also like to express my gratitude to all the concierges and team members who have been supporting me, as well as to the unforgettable guests I have met who have made me feel the excitement, passion and charm of this job.

I was hired at Hotel Granvia Kyoto as a part-time employee and spent a year and a half as a concierge assistant around the desk and of guest service, experiencing "What is being a concierge". After that, I started working as a concierge and it has been about 8 years. About half of those years were spent under the influence of the new coronavirus that has raged around the world. It was a challenging time, but it was also a time when I looked back on the good times I had with guests and realized how much I enjoyed and loved my job, and I was strongly reminded of the strength and importance of the connections among concierges.

Now that the guests have returned and it has regained its liveliness, I will not forget what I felt at that time, and I will respond to every inquiry with the utmost sincerity, valuing each and every guest even more than before. I will continue to seek the best concierge service that I can provide and strive to be a concierge who continues to grow and develop in accordance with the changing times. In addition, I will continue to do my best not only as one concierge but also for my team, for future concierges, and for the tourism industry in Japan, through my daily work and as a member of Les Clefs d'Or. I am delighted to be working with this organization as a Les Clefs d'Or member and am very much looking forward to taking this new step forward.

A big welcome to Saori! Les Clefs d'Or Japan is looking forward to work with you closely. As of October 2023, Les Clefs d'Or Japan consist of 27 active members, 2 honorary member, 1 retired member and 18 affiliates.



FAM Trip to Ishikawa Prefecture

By Hiromi Yamada

Nine members of Les Clefs d'Or Japan participated in a two-day inspection tour from September 21, 2023. This was the second one to Ishikawa Prefecture, and we visited the Yamanaka Onsen and Komatsu areas in the Kaga region, following last year's visit to the Noto region.

Amongst many other kilns in the Kaga region, the 110-year-old Kinzangama Kiln is renowned for its use of gold in ceramics. Mr. Yukio Yoshita, the fourth generation, kindly gave us a tour of his studio. After the tour, his wife, Rumiko, introduced us to the gallery. At the gallery, we had a chance to try our hand at "Kinsai" or making patterns on a ceramic with gold leaves.



We had lunch at a Café/restaurant called HOGA, where you can choose your favourite dishes from the works of local artists to have one's order served on. We then visited "Moss Garden" in Hiyou-machi, Komatsu City which has been proudly selected within "The 100 Most beautiful Village Scenery in Japan". We were advised to follow the rules and manners by respecting their efforts to preserve the landscape of the Satoyama village.

Natadera Temple was founded in 717 as a temple of the Hakusan faith that combines Buddhism and Shintoism. We were attracted to the old buildings and the enchanted rock outcropping garden. The final stop on the first day was MUGEN-AN, the former Kaga Clan retainer's samurai residence in Yamanaka Onsen. It is a listed wooden building from the Meiji era that is now open to the public and offers tea ceremony experiences.

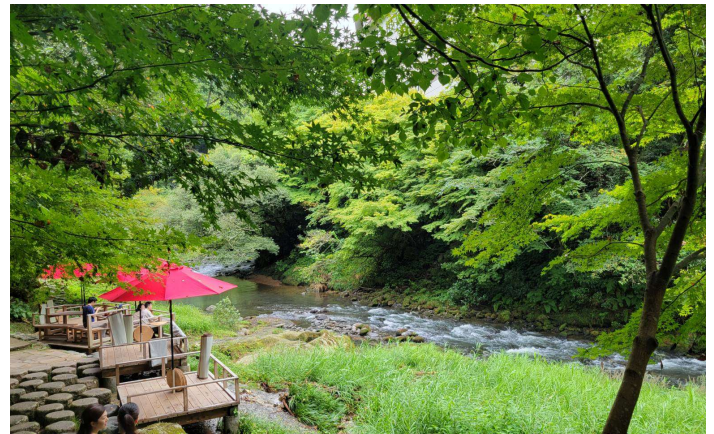
We stayed at a luxuriously authentic Ryokan, The KAYOTEI in Yamanaka Onsen. Their rooms are spacious and relaxing in harmony with nature, and some have an open-air bath. The meals were wonderful, with plenty of carefully selected ingredients, each with its own story. We felt that this is the kind of accommodation where one's body and mind are revitalized by the stay.

The next day's itinerary started at the Yamanaka lacquerware studio Senju. This is the workshop of Mr. Yasushi Satake, and we saw woodworking processes using a potter's wheel. The participants were amazed at the high level of his skills.

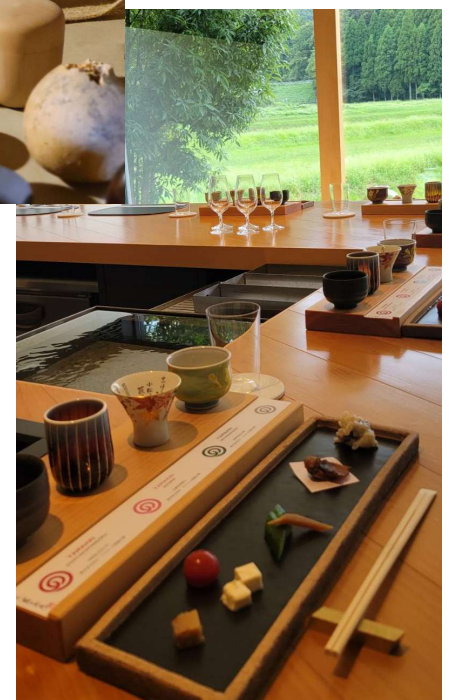
The second workshop was that of Mika Horie and Raku Terai. Ms. Horie is a photographer who makes photographic prints on handmade Japanese paper. A stream flows in the garden of the studio, and we were told that visitors can experience making washi paper.

We then strolled along the beautiful Kakusenkei gorge and Yuge-Kaido Street, the main street of the onsen district. We visited the studio of Eiko Tanaka, a wood and urushi artist. The studio was a wonderful place to enjoy installation art. We felt that our guests would be very pleased with the sushi dinner experience served on a table and utensils created by her.

The last stop on the tour was Naohiko Noguchi Sake Institute. Mr. Noguchi is a toji, or 'god of sake brewing', and even now, at over 90 years of age, he is still active in sake brewing. After the tour of the gallery, we enjoyed tasting sake while viewing the scene of the countryside out of the window.



We were fascinated by the traditional crafts, culture, nature, scenery, and food of the Kaga region of Ishikawa Prefecture, and above all, by the warmth of the local people. We felt that we would like to introduce the area to our guests and invite them to experience it for themselves.



Monthly Meeting

September

- The September monthly meeting was held at 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa. The museum stands at the site of former primary school of Kanazawa University which has an easy access from Kanazawa station within 15 minutes by taxi and it is adjacent to the renowned national garden Kenrokuen. Recently, there was a record that more than 1.7 million people had visited the museum within a year.
- There was a report from our members Ms. Aiko Imaizumi and Ms. Mayako Sumiyoshi about the Asian Congress in Langkawi Malaysia. Nearly 120 people had attended the congress from the world and 4 Les Clefs d'Or members of Japan attended. Please refer to our article in previous page for details.

October

- Mr. Hiroyuki Toda from The Museum of The Imperial Collections, Sannomaru Shozokan presented us about the reopening of the museum after renovating the museum for 3 years. Although the renovation will be still continued for next three years, the museum had opened partially. The exhibits from the Imperial Collection have a great variety, such as the treasures from the temples and shrines as there was a time those facilities were in devastating economic situation and needed supports from the Imperial Family. The contents also includes some gigantic items purchased by the Imperial Family members during their visits in abroad also includes some Japanese art crafts commissioned by the Imperial Family. At the museum, illustrated catalogues are available in multilanguage, and each exhibit has a caption both in English and Japanese. The tickets are only available online and need to select the date and timing. The exhibition will be turned over in every 4 to 8 weeks.
- Mr. Nishikawa of The Westin Osaka had given a career lecture as a CSR activity at The Kids Door's which is a Non Profit Organization who provides academic and social support to children living in a difficult environment. He spoke mainly to high school students on the theme of "How to Find Your Valuable Personality."

