

Les Clefs d'Or Japan

Key News



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Les Clefs d'Or Japan 26th Anniversary Dinner

By Eiji Tanaka

This year, the annual anniversary dinner was moved to December and held at the restaurant GINZA KAZAN on December 13th with a total of 26 concierge and affiliate members.

Mr. Kuniaki Hashimoto of G-Concept Ltd, the management company of GINZA KAZAN, gave a speech at the beginning of the dinner. G-Concept celebrates its 26th anniversary this year and GINZA KAZAN has been in operation for 22 years. Les Clefs d'Or Japan has been in a cooperative relationship with GINZA KAZAN for about 20 years.

GINZA KAZAN is a meat-free, seafood-only restaurant that also caters for vegetarians. We were also introduced to their sister restaurant, the Edomae Sushi restaurant Shimon. A toast was made, and a nine-course meal was served. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the sumptuous seafood, including prawns, cold yellowtail, lobster, abalone and king crab.



During the meal, the members and corporate members from all over the country, who normally don't get to meet each other, enjoyed talking with each other and deepened their network.

The 2023 anniversary dinner was a great success, and members left on to their journeys back to their respective cities.



Forbes Travel Guide's "A Celebration of 2023 – Asia Pacific Star Award Winners"



The luncheon, held in the magnificent banquet room of the Palace Hotel Tokyo, began with remarks by Ms. Amanda Frasier, PRESIDENT - RATINGS, who shared current traveler trends and needs, and the direction Forbes Travel Guide is heading. This was followed by a cocktail reception in the evening where general managers and management of each hotel, travel agents, and invited guests involved in the industry, socialized. This event was a great opportunity to meet key people from Forbes Travel Guide in Japan and to interact and exchange ideas with people in the industry.

By Aiko Imaizumi

On November 9, Forbes Travel Guide's "A Celebration of 2023 - Asia Pacific Star Award Winners" event was held at the Palace Hotel Tokyo. Zone Director Southeast Asia & Oceania, Mayako Sumiyoshi and Les Clefs d'Or Japan President Aiko Imaizumi attended the event.



FAM Trip To East Hiroshima Saijo City

By Saori Maitani

We had the pleasure of visiting the sake breweries in "Saijo" located in East Hiroshima which is, one of the three major sake brewing regions in Japan. From Hiroshima Station the journey to Saijo is about 35 minutes on the JR-Sanyohonsen. After getting off at Saijo Station you will find the Saijo Sake Brewery Street right away, where seven sake breweries gather. The unique streetscape, with red brick chimneys, white-walled sake breweries, wells used for brewing and others gives a sense of the history of town. Out of 7 breweries, we visited 3 breweries, Kamotsuru, Hakubotan and Saijotsuru.



Kamotsuru, since 1873, is one of the largest sake breweries in Saijo, and this year Kamotsuru's "Junmai Daiginjo Hiroshima Nishiki" was served at the working dinner for G7 Hiroshima Summit! We took a tour of Kamotsuru's sake brewery to see how sake is made, requiring advance arrangement. After watching an introductory movie of sake, we experienced the history of Kamotsuru and the delicacy of sake and observed each step of sake making process. At their restaurant, we also enjoyed a pairing experience, where we could match each

sake with the flavor of their meal and experienced the difference in taste depending on the temperature of the sake. Secondly, we had visited the Hakubotan the oldest brewery in Saijo with a history of over 350 years. The brewery was loved by famous writers and artists such as Shiko Munakata and Soseki Natsume, and the sake named Shirobotan uses engraved characters chiseled by Shiko Munakata, and prints made for Shirobotan, which are also used on the sake label, displayed in the store adjacent to the brewery. Although the brewery has a long tradition, they also produce a variety of new and interesting sake, such as a sake liqueur made with Kamiishi Kogen ginger, which is gaining popularity for its spiciness and delicious aroma, and unfiltered sake that has been flash frozen. Quick-frozen sake is unique as it is frozen before the fermentation process has ceased, giving it a fizzy fermentation sensation when enjoyed that could only be experienced in the brewery.

Lastly, we had stopped by Saijotsuru a smaller sake brewery which is the only one in Saijo with their residential building. Designated as a Registered Tangible Cultural Property of Japan in 2016, the brewery and main building have been in use since its establishment, with reminders of those days remaining everywhere. This brewery produces sake in a warm homely atmosphere that emphasizing the flavor of Hiroshima, to match its climate and compatibility with local cuisine. The tour here was guided by the Toji, master brewer and the president themselves and led us through the brewery. The president added that he is fluent in English and can accommodate overseas guests but would require advance arrangement.

Getting to Know Our Members !

Palace Hotel Tokyo
Chief Concierge

Mayako Sumiyoshi

Experience as Concierge: about 25 years
Member of Les Clefs d'Or: 22 years

Highlight of the Hotel

Palace Hotel Tokyo commands some of the city's most exclusive real estate and stands as the heir to a legacy dating back more than half a century as one of the city's most iconic hotels. With an imitable perspective on the city and a sublimely tranquil moat-side location adjacent to the Imperial Palace gardens, the hotel opened with a splash in 2012 following a complete three-year rebuild from the ground-up. Imbued with understated luxury, sophisticated restraint and subtle Japanese touches throughout, the hotel stands as a tribute to design and *omotenashi* (Japanese hospitality). It was the first wholly Japanese-owned and managed hotel to garner the prestigious Forbes Five-Star rating – the industry's most coveted mark of distinction and one which the hotel has held since 2016.



My Favorite Place

View from the peak of Mt. Kinuhari – 121m height Mountain in Kamakura. There are various theories as to the origin of the name of Mt. Kinuhari, but it is said that Minamoto no Yoritomo who is the founder and the first shogun of the Kamakura shogunate of Japan stretched white robes to show his wife the snowy landscape in Summer time to fulfill her wish.

I highly suggest you hike on the top of the mountain and enjoy the beautiful sunset and the view of Mt. Fuji and Pacific Ocean.

How to spend my Day Off

When I spend time in my hometown of Kamakura, I take walks around the city to see flowers, finding new places or take walks or drives to the seaside. Also, when I can take consecutive holidays, I go on trips to different parts of Japan and to refresh with my family. I love visiting "Roadside Station" to find local specialties. Recently, I go out to Tokyo on my days off for dining at new restaurants or to develop new contents in Tokyo with the Tokyo Convention Visitors Bureau such as visiting Sake Breweries in Tokyo, outdoor activities in West Tokyo area, Anime related experience, Japanese ingredients cooking classes.

My Favorite Restaurant

Taverna Rondino- A casual Italian restaurant established in 1980 on the seafront in Inamuragasaki, Kamakura. I have been going to this restaurant since I was a child, and I have even taken other section members of Les clefs d'Or.

Recently, the terrace seating has been expanded, and on a sunny day, while looking out at the shining sea from the terrace seats, you can enjoy variety of appetizers, my favorite the squid ink spaghetti which is their special dish and recommended dishes on the day. I go to this restaurant when I want to relax.

Monthly Meeting

November

- November meeting was held at Hotel Granvia Hiroshima in Hiroshima City.
- There was Forbes Travel Guide event “A Celebration of 2023 Asia-Pacific Star Award Winners” at Palace Hotel Tokyo on November 9th and our members Aiko Imaizumi and Mayako Sumiyoshi attended. At the event, some important information was shared such as the post COVID regulations.
- There was a networking event by Ryokan Collection on November 15th and our member Mayako Sumiyoshi attended. At the event, nearly thirty properties from Ryokan Collection made short presentations followed by networking dinner.
- Ms. Mayako Sumiyoshi talked about her experience in Boracay Island in Philippines where the Zone Directors Meeting and AGM was held on October 16th for 3 days. She told us that there were many banners of the event everywhere in town and a welcome dinner was prepared on a private beach at Movenpic Resort. Mayako shared with us a picture of perfectly clean beach and told us that the island had been shut down for all the tourists just before the COVID, continued deep cleaning and completed some project whilst in COVID to welcome back the tourists from the world in the perfect condition. Les Clefs d'Or Philippines was founded by the legend Mr. Andy Pongo and this year the society had celebrated their 30th anniversary. The son of Mr. Pongo attended the event who is a doctor and is currently proactively volunteering and seeing the patients.

The event was highlighted in the local largest newspaper as well. Mayako told us that she was impressed with the close friendly relationship among Les Clefs d'Or Philippines and the local concierge members and affiliates.

December

- December meeting was held at Tokyo Kotsu Kaikan in Central Tokyo.
- As one of the international CSR programs, members decided to participate in Tree Planting program here in Japan. The committee had proposed to plant a tree in Kaga area located in Ishikawa prefecture most likely in middle of May in 2024. Also, as part of local CSR program, the committee asked us to continue our talking session at childcare house called Kidsdoor and talk about our career and English conversation. The committee also asked affiliate members to participate in the program in the future.
- Aiko Imaizumi talked about the SEO president meeting held on November 19th. At the meeting, the president talked about Asian Congress in Malaysia, SEO AGM meeting and 30th anniversary in Philippines.

