

# *Les Clefs d'Or Japan*

# *Key News*



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# TRUNK (HOUSE) Kagurazaka Visit

By Marie Antoinette Mori

On a particular evening of last June, we had the privilege to attend a most fabulous event held in Kagurazaka. A good combination of the old and the new, Kagurazaka district offers a mingling of cultures to the present day. A community with distinct character of establishments surrounded by old Japanese-style houses and stone pavements as symbols of the elegant ryotei architecture of Old Edo.

After navigating the back alleys of Kagurazaka, we finally found the venue TRUNK(HOUSE), tucked in a blind path known as “hide-and-seek alley” (Kakurembo Yokocho). In an effort to keep the house exterior harmonious with the district’s ambience, the original ryotei signage YAMAJI in Japanese characters remain. A humble stamp which says TRUNK on its noren warmly welcomes guests to this renovated 70-year old ryotei house. The subtle beauty of its interiors, reassures a unique, new vibe of an experience.

At the main dining room, we were introduced to Mr. Kimiaki Kohno, an award-winning shamisen craftsman of Katsushika Ward who also serves as the new Director of Katsushika Traditional Crafts Association. Director Kohno made a thorough presentation of the traditional crafts concentrated around Katsushika Ward’s Tateishi area. With a common goal of keeping the craft industry alive and well through the next generations, categories include copper plate, Edo-kiriko glass, Hagoita



paddles, Inden leathercraft, Japanese knives, Noh masks, tawashi brush, silverware, shamisen and more. He also mentioned the challenges of continuity due to the lack of craftsmen and in creating new designs that can adapt well to contemporary lifestyles.

The presentation was followed with a site inspection of the property by our host, Mr. Hironori Sugimoto. He highlighted the artworks created by famous local and international artists symbolizing a fusion of traditional and present-day technology with dynamic innovative designs revealing a cultural entertainment story very unique to Kagurazaka.



Art deco stained glass of Mt. Fuji, round shoji, frog stained glass and other traditional interior decors with modern twists are carefully displayed to blend well with the contemporary interiors. A secret door leads to its one-bedroom accommodation area on the second-floor. In Japanese contemporary design, it features an open-space living room, tatami room with irori, futon-style mattress and hinoki bath adorned with ukiyo-e tiles. Furniture and lighting fixtures chosen were simple yet functional. Selected amenities from established brands offer ecological, stylish patterns of subtle luxury.

Inside the property, we were then taken to what might be the smallest disco room in Tokyo. Complete with a 4-seater bar, neon sign and mirror ball, we had a taste of the finest IWA sake of Shiraiwa Brewery, a sake founded by the famous Dom Perignon Champagne's Richard Geoffroy using the method of Assemblage. Its sake brewery is located in the natural landscape of Toyama Prefecture, designed by Kengo Kuma.

We were ushered to the main dining room to experience the most sumptuous and creative Kaiseki-inspired chef's signature course, prepared in the open kitchen, paired with selected Japanese sake and teas. The highlight was enjoying the geishas entertain with music and dances - an experience which took us back to the time when shamisen music and geisha dances define what Kagurazaka was. Ozashiki asobi was a delight to participate in, even for non-Japanese speakers.

In conclusion, TRUNK(HOUSE) is highly recommendable to guests who are looking for a unique venue that offers a traditional one-of-a-kind experience. From 500,000yen(tax and service excl.) per night for a party of two, it includes the services of a dedicated chef and a butler for 24 hours. Pairing dinner prepared with the freshest seasonal ingredients and other delectable snacks are also available upon request, as well as tailored activities such as Geisha experience. Its location in the cobbled-street back alleys of Kagurazaka makes it more captivating as if discovering a hidden treasure whilst in the heart of the city.



# Site inspection to Shiojiri city in Nagano prefecture

By Rise Kamei

On July 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, nine of our Les Clefs d'Or members gathered at Narai and had a great opportunity to participate for a sight inspection in Narai-juku, Kiso Hirasawa and Kikyogahara wine valley in Shiojiri city, Nagano prefecture.

Narai (Narai-juku) is located on the historic Nakasendo highway, which was one of the five main routes built in Edo period from Nihonbashi in Edo to Sanjo Ohashi in Kyoto. It covered a distance of around 534 kilometers and had 69 post-towns along its route. This post town of Narai-juku marks the midpoint of the route. Around 400 years ago, it took about 8 days to travel from Edo to Narai on foot, but now we can visit this beautiful town in 3 hours from Tokyo by express train Azusa and local train.

First, we visited “BYAKU Narai” which opened in Narai-juku last August. Their concept is to experiences 100 local stories in a 200-year-old architecture. They have 2 buildings, main and annex with 12 different layout rooms, restaurant, bar, big baths, gallery and suginomori brewery. During our site inspection with a 1-night stay in the building, we were able to experience superb food, encountered local stories and above all, enjoyed interacting with wonderful people working over there.

<https://byaku.site/>





On our second day in the morning, we walked around the area of Narai-juku with a tour guide. One-kilometer-long Narai-juku walking path is designated as a preservation district for group of historic buildings. It is the longest existing post town in Japan which was flourished with many travelers in the past. This well preserved picturesque small town brings your feelings back to Edo period.

Next, we visited Kiso Hirasawa which is often described as a mecca of Kiso lacquerware. In Ito Kanji store, Mr. Ito explained the history of Kiso lacquerware and invited us to his workshop as well. In Maruyoshi Kosaka Wood & Urushi Works, all of us got attracted with the beautiful and delicate products using a new technique combining glass and lacquer.

Afterwards we enjoyed lunch in La Maison Gourmandise. We visited two wineries as well named Shinano Wine (from 1916) and Domaine KOSEI (from 2019) in Kikyogahara Wine Valley which is a leading wine region in Japan.

Through this site inspection, we were highly motivated to see how everyone worked so hard in order to develop this wonderful region and carried over the great history and cultures passed down from generation to generation. We all are grateful to those who have given us this great opportunity and we very much looking forward to introduce this beautiful region to travelers from all over the world in the near future!



# Les Clefs d'Or Japan New Member

We are delighted to announce that Les Clefs d'Or Japan has welcomed Mr. Shuta Takeuchi, Concierge at Conrad Tokyo as a new member. He is third Les Clefs d'Or member from the hotel, and the youngest member of Les Clefs d'Or Japan.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to everyone for welcoming me into the Les Clefs d'Or family. Additionally, I am grateful to everyone who has supported me throughout my journey up to this point.

My introduction to the Concierge profession and Les Clefs d'Or was at the 9th Asian Congress held in Tokyo back in 2015.

In those few days, I was fortunate to meet with professional Concierges from all over the world, as well as the numerous companies, organizations, and people supporting this sensational congress. Every moment was extraordinary and inspiring. This experience was a critical turning point for me, leading me to devote my life to a career as a Concierge.



My hospitality career started at Kayotei (Ishikawa prefecture), where I first realized the beauty of hospitality. Thereafter, my hotel Concierge career further developed with the great assistance of The Prince Gallery Tokyo Kioicho. Now, I find myself at the Conrad Tokyo, home to one of the best and most competent teams in hospitality, surrounded by magnificent leaders and colleagues.

I very much look forward to my new chapter as a Les Clefs d'Or member, and I am confident that I will deliver the finest hospitality with this organization.



# Gaen 7<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gathering

By Aiko Imaizumi

On June 26, members, mostly from hotels in Tokyo attended the 7th anniversary event of Gaen Corporation.

Event was originally scheduled to be held in 2020 as a celebration of the 5th anniversary but was postponed due to the spread of the new coronavirus. It finally took place this year.

Gaen Corporation and Concierge have been interacting and working together for past few years. They introduce best interpreter and guides to all of us as per



our requirements. Gaen Corporation have great bunch of experienced and knowledgeable guides.

During the past 2 years or so when overseas tourists were restricted visiting Japan due to COVID-19, Ms. Wada, representative of the company, remained enthusiastic and devoted. She took it as an opportunity to further develop her team and furthermore took the initiative to add some knowledge to hotel concierges by inviting us to Awaji Island, Ishikawa prefecture and other places which were far out of our reach, it was a great learning opportunity.

Huge thanks to Ms. Wada, for an introduction of the history of Gaen Corporation and her continuous support to Les clefs d'or Japan.



# Getting to know our members !

Shangri-La Tokyo

**Miki Saito**



**Experience as a Concierge** 15 years  
**Member of Les Clefs d'Or** 7 years

**Highlights of my hotel** Shangri-La Tokyo, is located in central Tokyo and surrounded by some of the city's most popular shopping areas. A 10 minutes' walk from the hotel brings you to The Imperial Palace and the world-famous Ginza shopping district. Shangri-La Tokyo, is home to 200 of Tokyo's spacious and elegantly furnished guest rooms and suites with magnificent views of the Tokyo city skyline. We host people to the colorful joys of life in a sustainable manner and serve our customers as if they were our own friends and family.

**How I spend my time on my day off** Due to the COVID-19 situation, unfortunately less often than before, I enjoy spending time with my friends and eating at new or popular restaurants on my off days. When I receive good service, I have learned many things, which I use as a reference for my daily service. Spending time with my dear friends makes me feel relaxed and rejuvenated.

**Special place to visit** Minatomirai is a special place for my life. I started my journey as a hotelier here and was also the location that gave me inspiration to become a member of the Les Clefs d'Or. Even now, I still sometimes visit Minatomirai and reminisce about my early beginnings. My recommended place to visit is the Sky garden (Observation) in Landmark Tower, they are located 273M above sea level and you are able to enjoy wonderful views. In the winter season, you are able to see Mt. Fuji when the weather is clear.

**My favorite restaurant** I have many favorite restaurants, so it is difficult to choose only one. However, my most memorable restaurant would be SPOON by Alan Ducasse. Almost 15 years ago, when I visited that restaurant in Hong Kong, my friend told me it is highly recommended by his own concierge team. They were already a Michelin starred restaurant with each dish being beautifully presented and complemented with an impressive ambience. Unfortunately, they have already closed, but I wish someday I could visit that restaurant again.



### Hotel Nikko Kanazawa

## Hisae Kojima

**Experience as a Concierge** 28 years  
**Member of Les Clefs d'Or** 25 years

**Highlights of my hotel** It is located in a beautiful old castle town in the Hokuriku area, central part of Japan, the tallest building in Kanazawa city. The views from the rooms and restaurants are amazing. You can see Mt. Hakusan (2,702 meter-high) and the Tateyama Mountain Range (rising more than 2,500 meters) Also you can see the beautiful sunset of the Sea of Japan.



**How I spend my time on my day off** I enjoy spending time in my garden. Pruning the trees, arranging beautiful flowers from the garden and arranging garden stones. Fireflies appear in my garden every year. This year I saw numerous fireflies glowing under the biggest tree, it was so fantastic!



**Special place to visit** Amaharashi coast. About 20 minutes from my house. Sometimes I go there with my husband who takes photos of migratory birds. The majestic view of the Tateyama mountains and Toyama bay is breathtakingly beautiful. It is very rare in the world where you can see mountains and the sea in one view (it can be seen only in Italy, Chile and Toyama). Time flies when I listen to the sound of waves with amazing views.

**My favorite restaurant** In Kanazawa there are many fantastic restaurants. Le nene goose (French restaurant) is my special restaurant. I choose this restaurant because of a special reason. My colleagues invited me to this restaurant as my wedding gift over 20 years ago. They made a handmade invitation card and arranged beautiful flowers and message card on the table. Madam at the restaurant said she was impressed by their passion, I and my husband were moved. The service and dishes were so wonderful. We often go there after that, every time we go both my stomach and heart are satisfied.



# Monthly Hybrid Meeting

## JULY

Monthly meeting in July was held at Hotel Nikko Princess Kyoto. First time in the Kansai region after resuming the hybrid meeting system. Most of the participants from Kansai region were able to gather and we all celebrated and enjoyed the face-to-face meeting after a long time.

Sight inspection presentation was shared about TRUNK (HOUSE) Kagurazaka by Ms. Koike.

Ms. Kyoko Ito, main curator of Hosomi Art Gallery in Kyoto, gave us a presentation about the gallery. She provided insightful information to enjoy the Japanese art exhibition in depth. Hosomi Art Gallery is a privately-owned gallery and will be celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary soon.

Visitors can enjoy the private collections from the Hosomi family which are mostly related to the Rimpa school. The Rimpa school is the distinct drawing technique mainly developed during the Edo period. We learned about the Rimpa masterpiece and where to find them at galleries nationwide. This presentation and information added a great knowledge to all of us to enjoy Japanese art crafts during the exhibitions. We learned about the Key facts that we should always bear in our mind such as **“When”**, in which year the art craft was made, **“Where”** where it was made, **“Who”** name of the artist, **“What”** the meaning of the art craft itself, **“Want”** if you can take home a piece of art from a gallery, which masterpiece would you choose? It was a very thoughtful and interesting presentation appreciated by all of us.



## AUGUST

August Hybrid meeting was held at Palace Hotel Tokyo. It was a great pleasure seeing each other and hearing about each other's recent activities.

Grand Hyatt Tokyo was selected as the venue for Les Clefs d'Or Japan's 25th anniversary event which scheduled to be held on November 15.

Mr. Shuta Takeuchi of Conrad Tokyo is the youngest and the latest member of Les Clefs d'Or Japan. He extended his greetings, and we all are looking forward to working with him as a team.

Ms. Nanako Naka, Ms. Yoshimi Xu, Brand Marketing, Cruise Train Division, Railway Business Headquarters, Kyushu Railway Company and Mr. Mizuho Sensui, crew member, gave a presentation about Kyushu's luxury sleeper train "Nanatsuboshi".



At the presentation we had an opportunity to learn all insightful details about this luxurious train. Train route is designed for the passengers to experience and enjoy the rich charms of Kyushu. Luxurious interior infused with Japanese cultural beauty, food and beverages made with the finest ingredients from Kyushu, first-class chefs with the first-class hospitality will make your ride an unforgettable experience.

Ms. Nozomi Sagasaki of Grand Hyatt Tokyo gave a presentation about the SDG's being implemented at her hotel. Presentation was very informative. Grand Hyatt Tokyo has been involved in several activities and taking a lot of initiatives to enrich our society.



# National Parks of Japan 中部山岳国立公園 Chubusangaku National Park

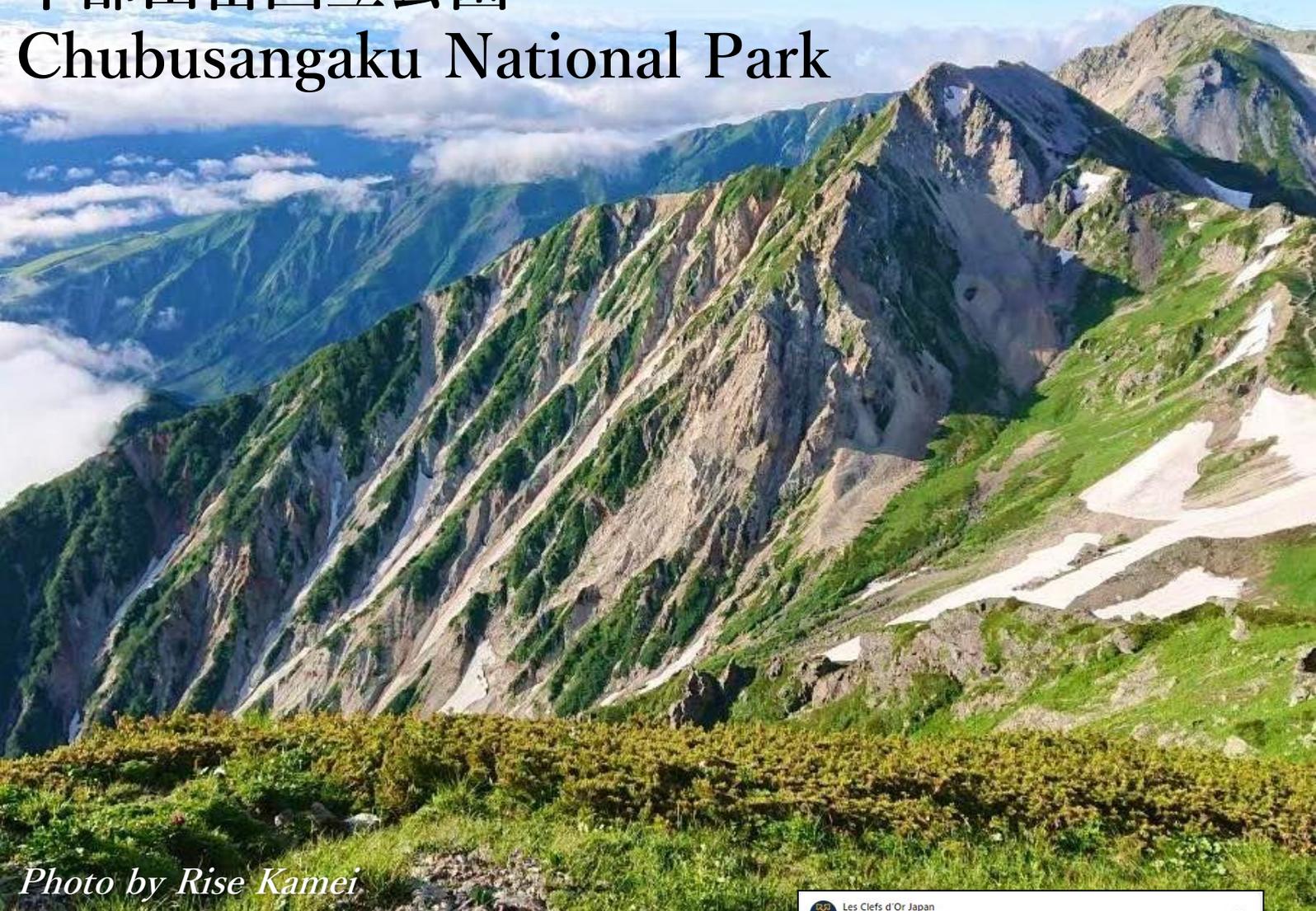


Photo by Rise Kamei

## Outstanding Mountain Landscape that Represents Japan

- Breathtaking mountains, beautiful  
valleys and rock ptarmigans -

Date of Designation: December 4, 1934

Area: 174,323 ha

Related Prefectures: Niigata, Toyama, Nagano, Gifu



Les Clefs d'Or Japan is  
an official partner of  
the National Parks of Japan



National Parks of Japan  
Official Partner

Les Clefs d'Or Japan  
作成者: Rise Kamei 8月6日 9:23

先月の視察で訪れた長野県、県の8割が山地で、3000m級の名峰も達なり「日本の屋根」と呼ばれています。音が静け、高山植物が山を彩る夏山の美しい季節が到来です！さあ、日本アルプスの山々へ出かけましょう！

Feel fresh with magnificent scenery of summer mountains and blossoming alpine flowers! 'Roof of Japan' is a nickname of Nagano prefecture we visited for site inspection last month. It is home to the three ranges of the Japan Alps including Chubusangaku National Park and Minami Alps National Park.

Les Clefs d'Or is an official partner of National Parks of Japan.  
<https://www.env.go.jp/en/nature/nps/park/chubu/index.html>  
<https://www.env.go.jp/.../nps/park/minamialps/index.html>

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