

Les Clefs d'Or Japan

Key News



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GENJI KYOTO

A boutique
hotel inspired
by the Tale of
Genji



By Marie Antoinette Mori

Tucked between the Kamo River and Takase Canal in the nostalgic neighborhood of Gojo-Kawaramachi, GENJI KYOTO is one of the newest boutique hotels in the area. This unique 19-room sanctuary is a contemporary interpretation of Kyoto machiya, a modern tribute to the story of the “Tale of Genji” classic written some 1,000 years ago.

Upon entering the lobby, one cannot help but gaze at the washi windows designed by award-winning washi artist Eriko Horiki. Sprinkles of silver leaf on washi paper help to create a dramatic lighting effect in both the exterior and interior of the building.

We received a warm welcome from General Manager Mao Yamaguchi and her bilingual team. Check-in procedure over welcome drinks was followed by a hotel site inspection led by the hotel’s main designer - New York born, MIT trained, Kyoto based architect Geoffrey P. Moussas.

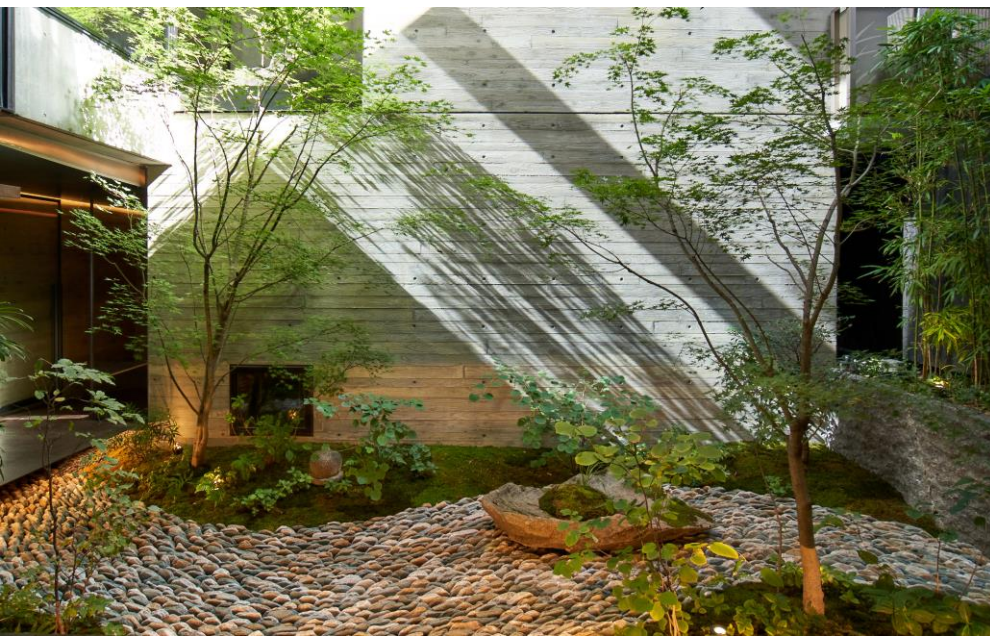
According to Geoff, “The architectural concept of GENJI KYOTO can best be described as one that is striving for a true Japanese experience through materiality and spatial techniques such as thoroughly integrating interior and exterior spaces. These techniques have been expressed in Japanese architecture through the centuries since the Heian period, the era in which the Tale of Genji was set”.

GENJI KYOTO is a product of love, a collaboration between international designers, local craftsmen and artists. Designers have made it a mission to use sustainable materials, to recycle and repurpose quality materials and objects in giving them a new life. From the bamboo-lined entrance to the Ukifune Garden in the lobby, to the elegant rooms with tatami and sofa areas, to the unique pocket gardens in every guestroom, to the rock landscape bathroom with hinoki wooden tubs, every corner boasts custom-designed traditional art & culture with state-of-the-art facilities.

Furniture pieces were designed by the famous interior designer Jun Tomita and were handmade by Kyoto craftsmen from new wave design house +veve and century-old maker Futaba Furniture. According to Tomita, “What you see and sense is Japanese WA style but what you touch and feel is modern comfort”.

After a most relaxing slumber, we headed to the Sky Forest Garden rooftop the following morning for a taste of Kyoto-style breakfast. What a perfect treat it was savoring the Chef's specialty under the serenity of a beautiful leafy garden imbued with ki and vitality. Designed by Mark Peter Keane, a landscape architect, writer and artist who has lived in Kyoto for over 20 years, Sky Forest Garden reflects a harmonious blend of Eastern and Western philosophies.

In closing, we wish to extend our sincerest thanks to Brad Walters for the kind hospitality and support to the members of Les Clefs d'Or Japan. GENJI KYOTO is indeed a special kind of place where people would love to linger and return to in a heartbeat.



GENJI KYOTO

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<https://genjikyoto.com/>

Getting to Know Our Members !!

Grand Hyatt Tokyo Asako Koike

Experience as a Concierge : 13 years

Member of Les Clefs d'Or : 2 years

Highlights of my hotel: Located in the heart of Roppongi - a lively international district that never sleeps, Grand Hyatt Tokyo is a dynamic lifestyle destination hotel with ten unique restaurants and bars, thirteen banquet rooms and over 200 pieces of contemporary artwork with an "East meets West" theme. I joined Grand Hyatt Tokyo when it opened in 2003 and we will mark our 20th anniversary next year. Something new always happens and it has been a very exciting place to work too. In comfort and luxury, Grand Hyatt Tokyo offers a dramatic experience.

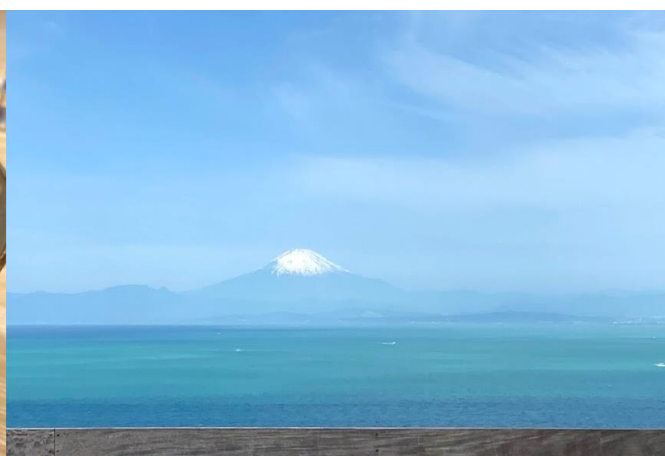
How I spend my time on my day off: I enjoy my day off with my two daughters. They both became teenagers, and we enjoy the same interests together -shopping, visiting trendy café and restaurants, staying at hotel, musical, tea ceremony etc. They are very curious Tokyo girls and always broaden my world including the world of K-POP. As they are growing too fast, I cherish the time with them together.



Special place for me: Isshiki beach in Hayama, Kanagawa prefecture is my special getaway place. It is about a 1-hour drive from central Tokyo and not so crowded compared to other beaches.

We can enjoy a great view of Mt. Fuji over a clear ocean. Whenever I need to take a break and clear my head, I head to Isshiki beach. Chilling at the beach with my family and friends and enjoying local food with good wine is a blissful moment.

Favorite Store: "Arte Classica" in Aoyama is my favorite store which specializes in antique tea bowls from the Edo period (1600-1868). Mr. Ishiguro who is the owner, educates me through antique bowls to gain insight into the true nature, which is a very important to learn as a concierge. Sometimes I am offered green tea in an antique tea bowl which has been cherished and passed down for generations. It became one of my hobbies to visit various museums to "meet" the antique tea bowls.



Hotel Nikko Princess Kyoto

Hiromi Yamada

Experience as a Concierge : 16 years

Member of Les Clefs d'Or : 15 years

Highlights of my hotel: Hotel Nikko Princess Kyoto is conveniently located in the heart of Kyoto's business, Shijo Karasuma area. Just few minutes on foot from nearby subway and train stations.

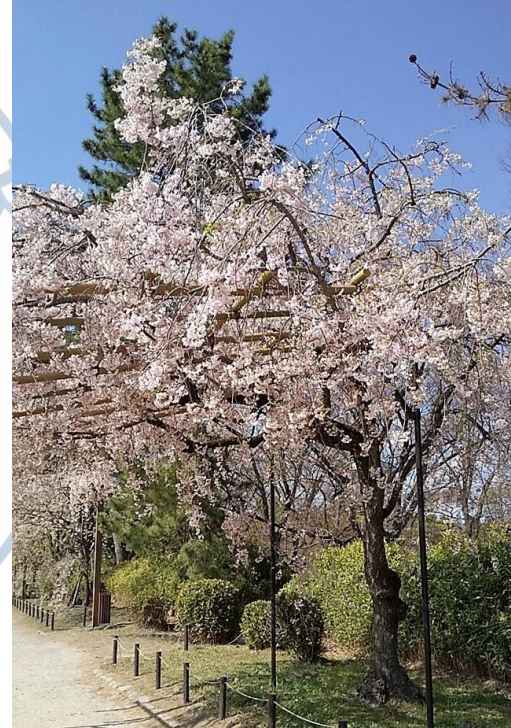
Our location provides, easy access to Kyoto's major shopping, dining and historical areas such as *Gion* and *Pontocho*. In July, we have Gion Festival, which is considered one of the three major festivals in Japan, where you can feel and enjoy the festive mood. We have 216 guestrooms with relaxed atmosphere, 4 restaurants, a bar and 6 banquet rooms. Our hotel is used by many local guests as well together with the guests from all over the world.

How I spend my time on my day off: I enjoy spending time at *Chashitsu* (Japanese tearoom) drinking *Maccha* (Japanese green tea). I feel by enjoying tea ceremony, we are free from any digital devices and time. By just listening to the sound of boiling water, I can feel peacefulness and calmness. Tearoom is a small place, but you can feel many things, such as season and master's hospitality. Of course, delicious Japanese sweet is one of my great pleasures as well. I also enjoy hiking in the nearby mountains in the pleasant season of the year. This is the other favorite way to spend my off days. Hiking eliminates the lack of daily exercise and most of all the beautiful scenery and fresh air heals me.

Special place to visit: My special place is *Kamo river* in Kyoto. We can enjoy marvelous view of cherry trees in spring. Other than spring, we can enjoy beautiful seasonal scenery such as fresh verdure, autumn leaves and sometimes even snow.

It is a relaxing place for local people to walk, jog and spend time with their family. Seeing the Kitayama Mountains, Higashiyama Mountain Range and *Mount Hiei* in the distance, Kamo river is a very special place to experience the beauty of Kyoto surrounded by nature.

Favorite Restaurant: It is not a restaurant, but I like the café called "*Shinkokan*" at Yoshida Sanso, where I visit when I want to spend time in nature. Located in the Kyoto's Yoshidayama district, it is easily accessible. Once you step inside the grounds, you will find yourself in a quiet space surrounded by greenery and fresh air. The view from this mountain hut style café is outstanding with mountains surrounding Kyoto. All menu items are delicious, but the bat shaped cookies available for gift are especially recommended. By the way, crispy cinnamon cookies go very well with coffee.



Monthly Hybrid Meeting

September at Japan Sake and Shochu Information Center



Les Clefs d'Or Japan will continue cooperating with Meikai University Hospitality Tourism Institute for Research for Middle Management seminar this year as well.

President Ms. Sumiyoshi and three members will be assisting for Tokyo Metropolitan Government's guide training program.

Ms. Hiromi Maruyama reported about her visit to BYAKU Narai in this summer

Ms. Mai Hashitani reported about her visit to Hokkaido.

Mr. Shuzo Imada, Director of Japan Sake and Shochu Information Center, provided the venue for our monthly meeting and educated us with enormous information about Sake and Shochu concerned with the overseas visitors.

Japan Sake and Shochu Information Center is a place where you can get all the information about sake, shochu, awamori, sake breweries, events, seminars and it also offers 100 items for tasting and to purchase at any time.

As we know that Japanese food is registered as an UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, so it brought sake to the attention worldwide as well. Demand is increasing for Sake products and exports are continuing to grow day by day. No doubt to say that in recent years, the Japanese Sake has gained worldwide attention through the overseas influencers, sake competitions, and collaboration with the Sommelier Association of France. Sake is now featured alongside with wine in the French Sommelier Association's competitions.

As Les Clefs d'Or Japan looking forward to welcoming inbound customers again, it was indeed a great learning experience for us, so we shall properly convey the appeal of Japanese sake to our overseas customers.



October

at Mandarin Oriental Hotel Tokyo

The details of Les Clefs d'Or Japan's 25th anniversary party in November were shared. It will be very exciting to see everybody.

Mr. Eiji Tanaka reported on SDGs initiatives at Roku Kyoto LXR Hotels & Resorts. The hotel was taking a very unique approach, such as reusing broken tableware at the hotel as a kintsugi experience for their guests.

Mr. Keita Izumi, President and Representative Director of Ginza Motoji Co. was kind enough to give us the presentation about his company.

Ginza Motoji has a store specializing in Japanese dyeing and women's and men's kimonos. Their products are precious and are known for the reliable quality. They use the threads only from pure domestic male silkworms which is very rare.

Also, they work with living national

treasures, important intangible cultural assets, and selected dyed and woven goods from all over Japan. We were informed that they are involved in SDGs initiatives as well, such as, teaching the local children (elementary school in Ginza) about Kimono's and have them experience willow tree dyeing. Willow tree leaves are from the trees in Ginza, which are cut off, so it won't be in the way for pedestrians. These leaves are used to dye the kimono or other clothes. Ginza Motoji is planning to promote their work overseas as well. It was a great learning, and we will try to explain same to our guests so they shall know about this wonderful Japanese texture culture.

We discussed the problems, issues, and advice that each of us is facing as the Japanese border opened, and we are rapidly getting busier. It was a very meaningful.

