

# Les Clefs d'Or Japan

# Key News



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## 13<sup>th</sup> UICH ASIAN CONGRESS 2025 BORACAY, PHILIPPINES

**By Shinobu Kojima**

*The 13<sup>th</sup> Les Clefs d'Or Asian Congress was held in Boracay, Philippines from October 23 to 26, 2025*

*Representing Les Clefs d'Or Japan were 5 delegates:*

*Ms. Imaizumi, President of Les Clefs d'Or Japan (Grand Hyatt Tokyo);  
Mr. Tiwari (Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo);  
Ms. Sagasaki (Grand Hyatt Tokyo);  
Ms. Hashitani (Palace Hotel Tokyo);  
and myself, Kojima (Hotel New Otani Tokyo).*

*From Japan Concierge Association, five members participated:*

*Ms. Ueda (Fairmont Tokyo);  
Ms. Kurokawa (Hotel New Otani Tokyo);  
Ms. Toya (SORANO HOTEL);  
Mr. Takekawa (The Peninsula Tokyo);  
and Mr. Nishikawa (Conrad Tokyo).*

*In total, our delegation consisted of ten participants.*

*This year's Asian Congress welcomed attendees from countries across the Asia–Oceania region as well as other parts of the world, bringing together approximately 200 participants, including 56 local members.*



### **Day 1 – Arrival & Opening Ceremony**

On October 23, all members except President Imaizumi, who had arrived a day earlier, reached the destination. Under the brilliant blue sky and sea, we were warmly welcomed with shell necklaces before transferring by boat to Boracay Island. Upon arrival at the hotel's private beach, we were greeted with a traditional dance performance, which heightened our excitement and anticipation for the Congress.

At the Opening Ceremony that evening, a vibrant performance of the *Sto Niño* dance—an expression of Filipino tradition blended with Catholic culture—was presented, marking the official start of the event in a festive and colorful atmosphere.



### Day 2 – Presidents’ Meeting & Andy Pongco Day of Service (CSR Activities)



On the morning of October 24, the Presidents’ Meeting was held, with Ms. Imaizumi representing representing our group.

In the afternoon, participants were divided into three groups to take part in the following CSR activities:

- 1. Yapak Elementary School** – Visit to a local elementary school
- 2. Medical Mission at the Ati Community** – Distribution of medical supplies and other essentials in the Ati tribal settlement
- 3. Mangrove Tree Planting** – Mangrove reforestation activity

The Ati people, an indigenous community, have been significantly affected by the rapid resort development on Boracay Island, facing economic hardship as a result. Additionally, mangrove planting efforts are underway to restore and protect the environment damaged by such development. Learning about these lesser-known aspects of Boracay—beyond its bright and joyful resort image—made this experience particularly meaningful and insightful for all of us.



### Day 3 – Education Day Zone Directors' and Country Presidents' Presentations

On October 25, the morning program featured lectures by two guest speakers, followed in the afternoon by activity reports delivered by the Presidents of each country chapter.

The first speaker, Mr. Jude Medida, Assistant Vice President, Learning and Development -Shangri-La Group, introduced three key Filipino concepts at the heart of hospitality—*Lakbay* (to journey), *Tunghay* (to witness), and *Ugnay* (to connect). He also spoke about hospitality and cultural values in the Philippines, the ways Asian cultures interpret and experience hospitality, the importance of building professional networks, and the need for lifelong learning and sustained engagement with the industry.

The second speaker, Mr. Bobby Gonzalez, Brand Experience & Delivery Manager, IHG Luxury & Lifestyle Managed Hotels, Americas, shared insights on the importance of empathy and personalization in hospitality. He emphasized that technologies such as AI should be used as *supportive tools* to complement, rather than replace, human-centered service.

During the group discussion on current challenges in the hospitality industry, it was particularly interesting to discover that many issues are shared across countries, regardless of regional differences.



In the afternoon, the Country Presidents delivered presentations, providing a valuable opportunity to learn about the initiatives and ongoing efforts of each national chapter.

### Day 4 – Site Inspection Activities & Gala Dinner

On October 26, although the morning brought unfortunate rain, we carried out site inspections and experienced several beach activities that are among Boracay Island's key tourist attractions. During parasailing, we enjoyed breathtaking aerial views of the ocean and surrounding islands, and through helmet diving, we were able to witness the beauty of the underwater world filled with tropical fish.

In the evening, the final program of the Congress—the Gala Dinner—was held in the ballroom of Crimson Resort & Spa Boracay. The event opened with a message from the Mayor of Boracay, Hon. Mayor Floribar Bautista, followed by remarks from Malay Tourism Officer Dr. Felix G. Delos Santos Jr., former UICH Les Clefs d'Or International President Mr. Randy Santos, and Les Clefs d'Or Philippines President Mr. Jerome Uy. Les Clefs d'Or Philippines engages in scholarship activities that support students studying hotel and hospitality management. A presentation was given on this scholarship program, followed by the introduction of the scholarship recipients and the formal awarding ceremony. This initiative served as a commendable example of investing in the next generation of hoteliers.

Throughout the dinner, guests enjoyed musical performances and traditional dance presentations, creating a festive atmosphere in which everyone could celebrate and savor the final program of the Congress.



### Day 5 – Departure

On October 27, the final day after four full days of programs, the island seemed to lament the end of the Congress, as the morning was marked by heavy thunderstorms, with loud claps of thunder echoing across Boracay. However, the weather calmed shortly after noon, allowing us to depart the island by boat. Each participant began their journey home, reflecting on the meaningful time spent with colleagues from around the world.

It was a five-day experience in which we were truly able to embody the Congress's core themes: **Lakbay** (to journey), **Tunghay** (to witness), and **Ugnay** (to connect).



## Welcoming New Member to Les Clefs d' Or Japan

*We are excited to welcome two new members in November 2025, Mr. Philippe Muller, Chief Concierge of Intercontinental Tokyo, and Ms. Mayumi Kaneda, Assistant Chief Concierge of Hotel Granvia Kyoto. We would like to introduce a message from the two of them.*

### Mr. Philippe Muller

It is a great honor to rejoin Les Clefs d'Or Japan, an association that has profoundly shaped my professional journey since I first became a member in 1997. The guidance and inspiration I received from distinguished mentors and colleagues continue to influence my approach to service and leadership today.

As Chief Concierge at the ANA InterContinental Tokyo, I place particular importance on nurturing the next generation. Our profession thrives not through individual excellence alone but through collaboration, shared knowledge, and a collective dedication to service. It is this spirit of cooperation and mutual support that allows us to create meaningful experiences for our guests.

My return to Les Clefs d'Or represents a renewed commitment to mentorship. I aim to support young concierges as they develop their skills, discover their voice, and grow with confidence. Empowering them to take pride in their craft and to uphold the values of our association is, to me, both a responsibility and an honor.

I look forward to contributing to our community and to passing on the passion, integrity, and professionalism that define Les Clefs d'Or.



## Ms. Mayumi Kaneda

I am truly honored to have been accepted as a member of Les Clefs d'Or Japan. I am deeply grateful to my fellow concierge team members and to all those who supported me along the way, helping me reach this special moment. The friendships I have built with everyone continue to be a great source of motivation in my work as a concierge.

It has been over 10 years since I began my career as a concierge in my hometown of Kyoto.

Throughout these years of meeting many wonderful guests and gaining invaluable experiences, one moment in particular strengthened my aspiration for Les Clefs d'Or when I attended the Asian Congress held in Singapore in 2019.

Being inspired by the professionalism of fellow concierges from around the world, all sharing the same dedication to our craft, further strengthened my own motivation. I vividly remember how strongly I felt, "I want to become a concierge who can share Japan's spirit of hospitality with guests from all over the world."



The warm words I have received from guests over the years are treasures I hold close to my heart.

Through Les Clefs d'Or Japan, I hope to share the value of the concierge profession with many more people, and to support individuals who aspire to follow this path. As always, I will continue striving to help ensure that guests visiting Japan feel as though they are returning to see family or friends — and leave with the genuine wish to come back again.



# CSR Keys For Trees

By Marie Antoinette Mori

On November 12, Les Clefs d'Or Japan conducted its second CSR tree-planting initiative on the Noto Peninsula, advancing the global “Keys for Trees” program and reaffirming our long-term commitment to environmental stewardship and community support. Building on last year’s inaugural planting in Japan, this year’s visit strengthened our ongoing partnership with Kaga Mokuzai Co., Ltd., its President Mr. Masue, their dedicated team. Relationships first established during our pre-earthquake visit in 2023.



We were pleased to revisit last year’s commemorative planting site and confirm the healthy growth of those trees—an encouraging sign of the continuity and effectiveness of environmental initiatives. In the afternoon, we traveled to Wajima to explore the area’s craftsmanship and resilience. At Hiyoshi Brewery, which remarkably withstood the earthquake despite surrounding devastation, we heard firsthand accounts of the community’s recovery efforts. We also visited Wajima Kirimoto, where we observed the precise artistry behind traditional lacquerware, deepening our respect for the region’s cultural heritage.



Upon arrival at Noto Airport, President Masue provided an in-depth overview of their sustainable forestry and reforestation efforts. Guided by their expertise, our members planted 50 Noto Hiba saplings, a culturally significant cedar native to the region. The serene atmosphere and ideal weather underscored the meaningfulness of the activity and reminded us of the impact that sustained CSR engagement can have over time.

Although reconstruction is steadily progressing, tourism in the area has yet to fully rebound. Seeing these realities firsthand was invaluable for us as concierges committed to supporting local communities.

Les Clefs d'Or Japan remains dedicated to contributing to the Noto Peninsula’s recovery and will continue advancing CSR initiatives that preserve its environment, heritage, and future.

## MONTHLY MEETING

### November

The November monthly meeting was held at 9201 Gallery.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> part, a presentation was given on the inspection visit to Fukui Prefecture conducted in September. In addition, a report was shared on the anniversary dinner held the previous evening, on November 19, at the French restaurant “Collage” at Conrad Tokyo.

The dinner was attended by members from Sweden, Mr. Steve Watson and Mr. Adam Von Mentzer, and provided a valuable opportunity to further strengthen mutual relationships. Other agenda items included regular updates and general reports.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> part, participants took part in a workshop from “EGAKU,” a creativity development program offered by White Ship Inc. The workshop was facilitated by Ms. Yoko Maria Nakamura, Director & Curator of 9201 Gallery. The gallery was established by White Ship Inc. as a space to express and embody the vision of artist Mr. Kunihiro Yazawa. The gallery offers EGAKU, an experiential, training-based program that views art as an experience and aims to cultivate the ability to navigate a diverse and uncertain future. We were able to experience part of the program in groups which was a very exciting experience.

### December

The December monthly meeting was held at the Kamishichiken Kaburenjo Theater in Kyoto, providing a rare and valuable opportunity to visit a venue that is not usually open to the public.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> part, activity reports were shared along with an update on the progress of a joint seminar scheduled for January.

New members Mr. Kaneda and Mr. Muray, as well as transfer member Mr. Jacobo García Bobadilla from Park Hyatt Kyoto, also joined the meeting, bringing a fresh and energizing atmosphere. In addition, Mr. Shuta Takeuchi, who was nominated for the Les Clefs d'Or Award for the first time from Les Clefs d'Or Japan, attended the meeting and shared insights into his experience and the nomination process.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> part, Ms. Sachimi Yamaguchi of the Kamishichiken teahouse “Katsufumi” gave a talk on the history and culture of the hanamachi (geisha district), followed by a guided tour of the Kaburenjo Theater. We were able to deepen our understanding of Maiko and Hanamachi in Kamishichiken. The Kaburenjo Theater was elegant and vibrant, and as a filming location featured in the movie “Kokuhō”, it was a deeply moving and memorable experience.

