

International Crafts Study Tour
Japan:
Kyoto and Environs
September 30 – October 10, 2008

Since 1991 Country Workshops' Drew Langsner has been organizing an annual crafts tour in a country selected for its outstanding craft traditions and Drew's personal contacts. We had our first Japan tour in 2003 and went again in 2004. In subsequent years Drew has continued to develop his friendships with various Japanese friends, so it was decided to revisit Japan in 2008.

The tour begins when our group gathers at our accommodation in Kyoto on the afternoon of September 30. Days 2-4 will be to the north-east in mountainous Gifu Prefecture. Days 5-9 will be to the west of Kyoto, with our home base in Sasayama. Days 10-11 will be back in Kyoto. We will be staying in a mix of accommodations, including traditional *ryokans*. These are very different from western hotels; we feel that the unique experience is a worthwhile trade-off compared to staying in more conventional western accommodations. Our tour guide will be Lena Kamigata. Drew Langsner is the tour director. We will be traveling in two rented vans.

As with our other tours, this year's itinerary is truly off the tourist path, taking us inside the homes and workshops of outstanding artisans who you will meet on a personal basis. Each of our hosts has set aside valuable work time to share their knowledge about their respective crafts. It is truly a rare honor to be received by these dedicated craft artists.

We have arranged for demonstrations at many of our visits, and it will be possible to buy outstanding craft work directly from our hosts. Although the tour focus is woodworking we will include visits with artisans working in other materials including pottery, paper and metal work. Production of traditional foods will be an additional focus. A highlight will be a special lunch prepared by our friend Minoru Enomoto, a master ceramicist who is one of the artists whom we will visit.

The tour also includes cultural and historic sites and opportunities for exploring and shopping in the towns and cities we will visit. We are also hoping to include some type of music or theater performance. The maximum size for our tour group is limited to 12 clients.

Photo highlights from our 2003 and 2004 Japan tours can be seen at our web site: www.countryworkshops.org If you have questions about the tour you can contact Drew by e-mail or phone (828 656 2280.)

Tour Highlights

(Details subject to modification.)

We suggest that tour members plan to arrive in Japan one or more days before September 30. You can fly into Kansai International Airport (near Osaka, and closest to Kyoto) or Narita International Airport (Tokyo). From either point of entry you can take the *Shinkansen* “bullet train” to Kyoto, our first destination.

The tour will begin with our Welcome Supper and a night at our ryokan -- Hotel Motonango -- which is located in an old residential part of Kyoto. This will also be a time to meet the other tour members, Drew Langsner, and our tour guide and translator, Lena Kamigata. After breakfast Wednesday morning (October 1) we will drive to Mino City, located in Gifu Prefecture in the foothills of the Japanese Alps.

In Gifu Prefecture

This portion of our tour has been specially arranged with Masashi Kutsuwa, a woodworker and teacher at Gifu Academy of Forest Science and Culture, located in Mino City. <http://www.forest.ac.jp/english/index.html> (Drew will be teaching a greenwood chairmaking course at Gifu Academy, with sessions split into segments before and after our craft tour.) Masashi’s students will join our group for several of these visits:

A *tansu* (chest of drawers) maker’s shop. Traditional Japanese cabinetry is made of paulownia wood and distinctive rustic hardware. The traditional finish is *urushi*, a type of natural lacquer which is often applied by another artisan. The owner of this shop collects old chests and has set up a museum where we have a guided tour.

<http://chigaku.ed.gifu-u.ac.jp/chigakuhp/html/KYO/seikatsu/tansu/index.html>

A cormorant fishing boat builder’s workshop. There are several places in Japan that carry on the tradition of cormorant fishing, and Gifu is the oldest and most famous. The traditional fisherman’s boats are still made from local timbers. Night fishing with cormorants should be happening while we are in the area.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cormorant_Fishing_on_the_Nagara_River

A lantern maker’s workshop. Gifu is the biggest production center for traditional lanterns (and paper umbrellas) because of the high quality supply of *washi* (handmade paper) from Mino. Mino City is also the location of a famous lantern festival which takes place just after our tour ends. <http://www.minokanko.com/akari/hyoushi.htm>

We will be introduced to the woodworking program at Gifu Academy, and have an opportunity to see Masashi’s personal work. <http://japancraft.blogspot.com>

We will also visit nearby Inuyama-Jo, Japan’s oldest castle that has been preserved in its original state. <http://web-japan.org/atlas/architecture/arc13.html>

In Kyoto and Hyogo Prefectures

We will be staying in the historic, small old market town of Sassayama, at Takasago Ryokan. All of our breakfasts and most suppers will be served in the Takasago dining room. Drew has selected Sassayama as our home base because the town has preserved a special feeling of traditional Japan before modernization. The markets are easily accessible, and there are shops that specialize in clothing, hardware, old household wares and even a shop where Drew once bought an antique silk kimono for Louise at a bargain price. All within short walking distances.

Our longest drive will be further west to Himeji, where we are guests at the Enzan Kinen Kogei. This is a private museum (opened by appointment only) that focuses on the highest level of Japanese folk arts. The museum includes a model hand-crafted traditional house interior -- with complete furnishings, a Zen rock garden, and displays of traditional crafts, particularly pottery and lacquer ware. We will be hosted by the executive secretariat, Chizuko Mitsumoto-san and her staff. (Unfortunately, there is no web site.)

A day with Minoru Enomoto-san. Minoru-san is a potter who specializes in collector level ceramics for dining – both serving dishes and the various plates, cups and bowls that are a major element in Japanese dining. He is the former owner of a restaurant in Osaka, and he has offered to prepare a meal for us. We are leaving the menu to Minoru-san, who will shop for the best ingredients that are in season. Of course we are expecting that he will also show us his pottery shop, with it's wood fired kiln, and the showroom where tour members can purchase his work. (Shipping to the U.S. is not a problem.) Minoru-san and Lena Kamigata were house guests of the Langsner's in March 2005.

A visit with Manabe Sumihara-san, a master craftsman who is considered to be one of the foremost samurai sword blade makers in Japan. His process begins by collecting high iron content sand from a running riverbed. This sand is melted down several times. The molten ore is poured into thin sheets which are broken up and visually inspected and sorted for quality. After several repetitions, the purified ore is worked into a special ingot that contains several qualities of steel, for different sections of the blade. This is then hand forged into a highly precise sword blade. Sumihara-san will explain the full process, and also introduce us to the very specific ritual that is observed when these blades are inspected by makers and collectors who are devoted to this rare craft. Sumihara-san produces both the long and short version swords that were formerly carried by the samurai class in feudal Japan. Sumihara-san's web site is at:
www.eonet.ne.jp/~sumirira

We will also be hosted by Hideharu Kobayashi-san, a master bowl turner and urushi lacquer artist. Hideharu-san specializes in producing bowls, cups and serving containers. His process starts by turning very thin wooden forms from paulownia that become an armature for multiple coats of lacquer. This natural, organic lacquer, know as *urushi*, is derived from the sap of the urushi tree, *Rhus vernicifera*, a close relative of *Rhus toxicis* – the poison ivy that most people are familiar with. The purified sap is applied in multiple coats that are rubbed into a smooth finish. Urushi can be clear, red and black, or a burnt

umber that combines red and black. During this process skin contact with the urushi (or even it's vapor) can result in a skin reaction very similar poison ivy. For this reason, not everyone can work with this finish. Once cured, Urushi is non-toxic and extremely durable, probably more so than any synthetic wood finish. Kobayashi-san has 1-2 apprentices in the workshop. During our past tours there was an opportunity to try his Japanese-style bowl lathe. Adjacent to the workshop is his very impressive showroom, with Kobaysashi-san's wares available to purchase.

Back in Kyoto

Kyoto will be our opportunity to experience a large city that still retains old neighborhoods and even a few family scale rice patches scattered around. Kyoto is a former capital of Japan. It's also the location of many famous and interesting temples and shrines.

In planning our itinerary we had to pick one outstanding temple to visit. Lena Kamigata has selected Daitoku-Ji. Also known as Ryuho-Zan, which translates as "dragon treasure mountain." Daitoku-Ji is a temple village. The Karamon is believed to be a remnant of Emperor Toyotomi Hideyoshi's palace and is rated as a national treasure. There are also many famous gates, and 6 sub-temples surrounded by Zen rock gardens. Established in 1319, it is the headquarters of the Daitoku-ji school of the Zen Buddhist Rinzai sect. www.japaneselifestyle.com.au/travel/kyoto_daitokuji_temple.htm

One highlight of our past visits in Kyoto was getting to know Takeda and Kieko Ryosaku. The Ryosakus live in an old style, very narrow two story house that has been lovingly restored (and also updated with modern conveniences.) Takeda-san is a highly respected woodworker and teacher who specializes in carving contemporary sculptural serving trays and shallow bowls, often from highly figured oak. These are finished with traditional clear urushi lacquer. He has also made most of the furnishings in the house.

Lena Kamigata will also be taking us to meet a long-time friend of her family who is a *ranma* carver. In a traditional Japanese home or temple, the ground floor consists of a single room that is divided into units based on a standard units of tatami floor mats. The sliding shoji screen partitions are typically less than 6 feet tall. The space between the upper shoji rail and the ceiling is occupied by wooden ranma which can take many forms, ranging from formal carving to selected slices of rustic wood or even bark. Ranma do not fill the entire space; openings are important to allow light and air to flow freely throughout the structure.

Kyoto will also provide a chance to do some shopping. For just about anything. Takeda-san suggests that we should visit a small woodworker's tool shop that specializes in hand saws, but also stocks an excellent selection of planes, chisels and tools for wood carvers. We are hoping to include some type of musical or theater performance, depending on what is available. The tour ends with a Farewell Supper.

Tour Fees and Financial Details

The tour fee for reservations received by March 1 is \$3,650. After March 1 there may be an adjustment in the tour fee.

The tour package includes: services of two full time staff members, land travel beginning on October 1, lodging beginning September 30 and ending October 10, all meals (excluding special beverages and ordered deserts), all admissions, host honorariums and guide fees.

The tour package does not include overseas air travel. We can assist in locating good airfare prices and reasonable accommodations if you wish to extend your stay in Japan.

Please note: We will be staying in a mix of accommodations. When staying in traditional ryokans we will be sleeping on futons, placed directly on the tatami mat flooring. Some ryokans have double rooms, but at other times we may be divided into men's and women's groups, with 3 or 4 in a room. We realize that this is not customary for western travelers, but also believe that ryokans offer a very special traditional Japanese cultural experience that cannot be duplicated.

Tour participants will need to limit their luggage to one maximum airline carry-on size case plus one handbag, briefcase or day pack. This is necessary due to the size and limited luggage capacity of the Japanese vehicles which we will be using.

To reserve your place on the tour, return the attached Reservation, along with a deposit of \$1,000. The balance is due July 2. If you need to cancel, you must notify us in writing. Refunds will be made under the following schedule:*

<u>Number of days before Sep 30</u>	<u>Cancellation fee</u>
90 days or more	50% of deposit
89-60 days	50% of tour fee (assuming full payment received)
59-30 days	75% of tour fee
29 days or less	no refund

*Note: Airfare, baggage, and tour cancellation insurance can be purchased from your travel agent.

RESERVATION
Country Workshops
Japan Craft Tour

September 30 – October 10, 2008

1. _____
Last Name First Name

2. _____
Last Name First Name
(Please use full name as on your passport)

Address

City State Zip

_____ / _____

Home Phone Work Phone

E-Mail

Do you have any dietary or health considerations that we should be aware of?

Release of Claims

This Reservation constitutes a release of all liability. Country Workshops, Inc. (herein known as "Tour Operator") serves only to assist in making necessary air travel arrangements for its tour participants, and in no way represents, or acts as agents for transportation carriers, hotels, and other suppliers of services connected with this tour. Tour Operator will not be held liable for any personal injury or property damage, loss, accident, delay, or other irregularity which may be caused by the defect of any vehicle or the negligence or default of any company or person engaged in carrying out or performing any of the services involved. Additionally, responsibility is not accepted for losses or expenses due to sickness, accident, weather, etc.. The Tour Operator staff reserves the right to make changes in the published itinerary whenever, in their sole judgment, conditions warrant, or if they deem it necessary for the comfort, convenience or safety of the tour participants. Tour Operator reserves the right to cancel the tour due to under-enrollment or unforeseen circumstances. In case of cancellation by Tour

Operator, responsibility will be limited to a refund of tour fees received. Tour Operator also reserves the right to decline to accept any person as a participant, or to require any participant to withdraw from the tour (without refund) at any time, when such action is determined by the staff to be in the best interests of the health, safety, and general welfare of the tour group or of the individual participant. Because of the inherent risks Tour Operator suggests that tour participants purchase trip cancellation insurance from an independent agent.

Tour applicants should not purchase airline tickets until receiving a confirmation letter stating that they have been accepted as tour participants.

____ I/we would like to register for the Country Workshops 2008 Japan Craft Tour. I/we have read the Tour Prospectus, including "Tour Fees and Financial Details" and "Release of Claims." I/we understand that the tour staff or others may take photographs that include my image. I agree that these photos can be used for Country Workshops publicity or other purposes without personal compensation or further permission.

Date _____ Signature _____ Passport # _____

Date _____ Signature _____ Passport # _____

Enclosed Deposit _____

Payment may be personal check, bank draft or money order. Credit card payment is not available.

In the case of a personal emergency during the tour, who should be contacted in the US?

Name _____ Relation _____

Address _____ City _____ State ____ Zip _____

Phone Day ____ / _____ Evening ____ / _____

E-Mail _____

Upon acceptance, participants will receive a confirmation letter, along with a listing of travel suggestions regarding luggage, clothing, etc. You must carry a valid US Passport. A visa is not required for travel in Japan.

Country Workshops, Incorporated is a nonprofit, educational organization chartered by the State of North Carolina. We accept participants of any race, sex or creed.

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