



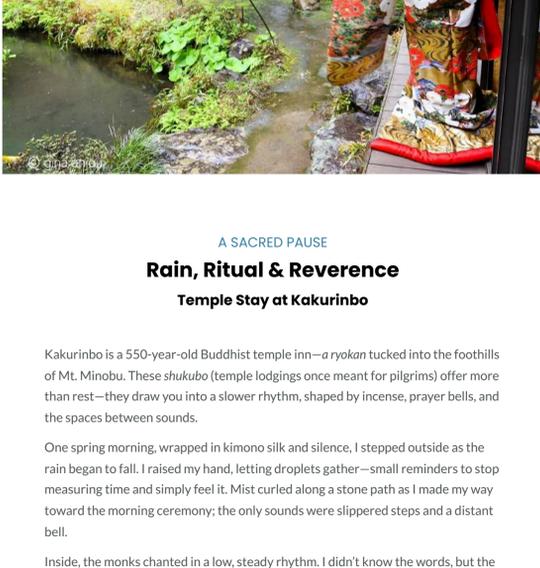
Ancient Echoes, Pixel Dreams

Hey there,

Japan is a place where the quiet speaks—where a single blossom, a cup of tea, or the pause between footsteps can feel like a conversation. This spring, I moved through that quiet, finding poems in the flicker of lanterns and the hush of cedar forests. From manga cafés to mossy temples, I wandered through a country that seems to rush forward while holding still.

What began as a journey through place became something subtler: a shift in how I listened, felt, and moved. In a world so unfamiliar, attention sharpened. I didn't just travel through Japan—I noticed my way through it. And I returned more awake to the small, quiet gestures.

Here are a few moments that shimmered and stayed.



A SACRED PAUSE

Rain, Ritual & Reverence

Temple Stay at Kakurinbo

Kakurinbo is a 550-year-old Buddhist temple inn—a *ryokan* tucked into the foothills of Mt. Minobu. These *shukubo* (temple lodgings once meant for pilgrims) offer more than rest—they draw you into a slower rhythm, shaped by incense, prayer bells, and the spaces between sounds.

One spring morning, wrapped in kimono silk and silence, I stepped outside as the rain began to fall. I raised my hand, letting droplets gather—small reminders to stop measuring time and simply feel it. Mist curled along a stone path as I made my way toward the morning ceremony; the only sounds were slipped steps and a distant bell.

Inside, the monks chanted in a low, steady rhythm. I didn't know the words, but the sound moved through the room like breath—quiet, continuous. That morning, I didn't try to hold on to anything. I simply sat. The stillness was enough.

NATURE, NEON, AND THE NOW

In Japan, the past and future often share the same sidewalk. Here are three places where reality blurs and time folds in unexpected ways.

1. Fuji — Stillness at the Crosswalk

Fujiyoshida was once a town of pilgrims and Fuji worshippers. After 1912, it became a center of Japan's textile industry, where craft and tradition were tightly woven. Today, its quiet streets still carry that legacy.

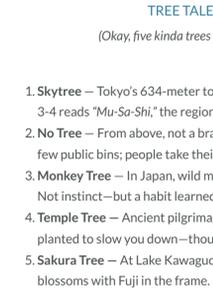
Highlight: From Honcho Street, Fuji feels impossibly close—less a view, more a presence.



2. teamLab Planets — Into the Digital Wild

Imagine walking through a jungle of light — waterfalls crash beside you, and luminous creatures drift past in immersive silence. The water, the light, even the walls respond as you move.

Highlight: *The Waterfall of Light* installation dissolves the line between the real and the unreal.



3. Manga Cafés — Japan's Secret Time Machines

Tucked into side streets and quiet basements, manga cafés are great hideaways where you rent time — by the hour, half-day, or night. Inside are private booths, bottomless drinks, and endless shelves of comics.

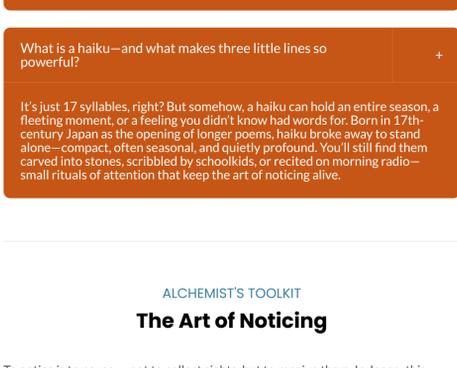
Highlight: In a country that never stops, this is where doing nothing feels like everything.



TREE TALES IN SIX FRAMES

(Okay, five kinda trees and one very ambitious grass)

- Skytree** — Tokyo's 634-meter tower is Japan's tallest—and a vertical pun: 6-3-4 reads "Mu-Sa-Shi," the region's old name.
- No Tree** — From above, not a branch in sight—just spotless streets. Tokyo has few public bins; people take their trash home. Now that's a system.
- Monkey Tree** — In Japan, wild monkeys climb down to soak in hot springs. Not instinct—but a habit learned from watching humans.
- Temple Tree** — Ancient pilgrimage paths are lined with towering cedars, planted to slow you down—though the stairs often do that too.
- Sakura Tree** — At Lake Kawaguchiko, spring means cycling under cherry blossoms with Fuji in the frame. Like pedaling through a painting.
- Bamboo (Not a Tree)** — Technically grass, which races skyward over a meter a day. In Arashiyama Grove, its stalks open a gateway to another world.



Sakura Quiz Master

Which is more traditionally Japanese—sushi or tempura? +

Most people would bet on **sushi**—raw fish and rice, right? But tempura, that crispy-fried seafood and veggie magic, has been part of daily life in Japan for centuries. Brought over by Portuguese missionaries in the 1500s, it was so good, Japan made it its own—long before sushi took center stage.

When did Gion have the most geisha—and how many remain today? +

In the early 1900s, Kyoto's Gion district was home to over 3,000 geiko (Kyoto's word for geisha) and maiko (apprentices). Today, fewer than 100 remain—about 60 geiko and 20 to 30 maiko still live, train, and perform behind Gion's sliding doors. Their lives are rooted in tradition—quieter, more disciplined, and far less like the bestselling "Memoirs of a Geisha" than many imagine.

What is a haiku—and what makes three little lines so powerful? +

It's just 17 syllables, right? But somehow, a haiku can hold an entire season, a fleeting moment, or a feeling you didn't know had words for. Born in 17th-century Japan as the opening of longer poems, haiku broke away to stand alone—compact, often seasonal, and quietly profound. You'll still find them carved into stones, scribbled by schoolkids, or recited on morning radio—small rituals of attention that keep the art of noticing alive.

ALCHEMIST'S TOOLKIT

The Art of Noticing

To notice is to pause — not to collect sights, but to receive them. In Japan, this practice lives in quiet corners: a pair of slippers outside a temple, the flicker of lanterns in Asakusa, the fall of light on a kimono's fold. It's in a single cherry blossom, the hush of bamboo, the steam rising from a bowl of temple food.

The Japanese word *kansei* speaks to this refined sensitivity—an ability to feel deeply, simply by paying attention. Noticing isn't just what you see, but how you see: slowly, with care, without rushing past what's already there.

This way of seeing isn't something you master — it's something you return to. You slow your pace. You look twice. You notice the cat in the doorway, the pattern in the cloth, the sound of your own footsteps on a temple path. The art of noticing isn't about escape — it's about arriving fully, again and again, in the world as it is.

Up for a little practice? Here are fifteen glimpses of Japan — some fleeting, some still — all better felt than explained. If words speak louder to you, linger on Issa's haiku below and feel the gentle connection it invites.



In the cherry blossom's shade
there's no such thing
as a stranger

— Kobayashi Issa (1763-1828)

桜の花の陰に
他人といふことはない

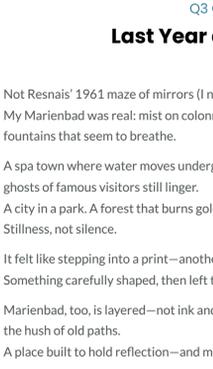
SPOTLIGHT

Hokusai and the Producers

While exploring Tokyo's Sumida Hokusai Museum, I was drawn to an exhibition called *Hokusai and the Producers*. I was struck by how even *The Great Wave*—one of the world's most iconic images—wasn't the work of a lone genius.

Hokusai (1760–1849), best known for his woodblock prints, created within a collaborative ecosystem of artists, editors, and Edo-era publishers known as *hanmoto*—partners who shaped not only the work, but also how it reached and moved people.

Tsutaya Jūzaburō first backed Hokusai's promise. Nishimuraya Yohachi turned *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji* into a hit. Eirakuya Tōshirō helped expand his reach.



What stayed with me was the shift in narrative—from the myth of solitary brilliance to the reality of shared craft.

In 2024, *The Great Wave* appeared on Japan's new 1000 yen note. And yet, like all lasting work, it began as a draft — then shaped by many hands.

Amari chose one of those early versions for the cover of *Uncertainty and Enterprise*—a fitting echo of the book's message: that progress doesn't come from perfect prediction, but from narrative judgment, collaboration, and the courage to keep shaping the unknown.

If that resonates, you might enjoy his book.

[Take a look on Amazon](#)

Q3 OUTLOOK

Last Year at Marienbad

Not Resnais' 1961 maze of mirrors (I never really "got" that film). My Marienbad was real: mist on colonnades, trails through gold-tipped forests, fountains that seem to breathe.

A spa town where water moves underground and history clings to colonnade walls; ghosts of famous visitors still linger.

A city in a park. A forest that burns gold in September.

Stillness, not silence.

It felt like stepping into a print—another world made by many hands.

Something carefully shaped, then left to weather.

Marienbad, too, is layered—not ink and paper, but mineral springs, fading grandeur, the hush of old paths.

A place built to hold reflection—and maybe release it.

In the next issue, I'll share more about what I found there: places that still shape how I look, and what I see.



Until then, let the season turn slowly. Curiosity makes better use of time than urgency.

I'll catch you in the wild,

Gina Anjou

Founder of the Soulful Nature Shift Programs

Join the Journey

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