

thejapan times

Head Office:
Ichibancho Daini TG Bldg., 2F, 2-2-1 Ichibancho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-0082
Advertising (Media Solutions) Tel: 050-3646-8421
Email: jta-media-solutions@japantimes.co.jp
Web: www.japantimes.co.jp

WORLD COSPLAY SUMMIT 2025

Wednesday, July 30, 2025





2024
GRAND CHAMPIONS



Naruto
Mioshi, Mamemayo

(Left) Mioshi
Character: Sasuke Uchiha
(Right) Mamemayo
Character: Naruto Uzumaki

Maiko Muraoka
Contributing writer

Vibrant, true-to-character visuals and re-creations of iconic anime scenes — these are not the only things that are evaluated in the World Cosplay Summit Championship. How much respect is shown for the original work and the culture behind it and how much effort was poured into expressing it greatly influence the results. That is why the world of cosplay competitions is so profound and captivating.

The World Cosplay Summit is one of the world's largest cosplay events, held annually in Nagoya since 2003. The WCS Championship has been held every year since 2005, with the exception of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2024 WCS Championship brought together teams from 36 countries that had won their national selections. The Japanese team of Mamemayo and Mioshi won, portraying characters from the ninja manga “Naruto,” which has also been adapted into an anime. This was the third time for a Japanese team to win the championship.

Mamemayo played Naruto Uzumaki, the main character of “Naruto,” known for his strength, never-quit spirit and sunny disposition. Mioshi played Naruto's rival Sasuke Uchiha, a cool strategist with a fiery spirit hidden within.

世界コスプレサミット (WCS) チャンピオンシップでは、ビジュアルだけでなく、原作や文化への敬意や努力も評価対象となる。2024 年大会では、日本代表の Mamemayo さんと Mioshi さんが『NARUTO -ナルト-』のうずまきナルトとうちはサスケを演じて優勝。日本の伝統的な素材や、祭りや歌舞伎、さらにはペンライトを使っ



The team's performance re-created the final battle scene between Naruto and Sasuke, their pivotal third clash in the series. It incorporated various elements unique to Japanese culture, including traditional materials, aesthetics from festivals and kabuki theater, and even modern “idol” culture, such as a call-and-response performance using penlights that they prearranged with the audience via social media. These efforts to showcase Japanese culture were highly praised by both judges and audience.

Both Mamemayo and Mioshi later said that when their victory was announced, they felt more relief than joy. This was partly because it was their second time competing in the WCS Championship, after representing Japan in 2018. The pressure to win this time, coupled with high expectations from those around them, weighed heavily on them.

Moved by their determination, many people offered support in various ways. For example, in order to incorporate Aomori Prefecture's Nebuta Festival lantern floats into their costumes, they sought advice from experts on traditional Nebuta crafting techniques and paints. “We wanted the Nebuta on our backs to inflate on stage during the performance, so we consulted experts on how to inflate them completely within a certain amount of time. It was like scientific research and experimentation,” Mioshi said.

た演出など、現代の「アイドル文化」まで幅広く取り入れた日本文化の魅力を伝える工夫が高く評価された。

衣装には青森のねぶたの技術を取り入れ、舞台上で長時間で膨らませる技術の実験も行ったという。「まるで科学の研究や実験のようでした」と Mioshi さんは振り返った。また、江戸時代の刺し子入りの消防半纏も採用し、

They also incorporated an Edo Period firefighter's durable *hanten* jacket with traditional *sashiko* stitching into the costumes. “It is easy to move around in. But we also wanted to introduce people to Japan's history and culture while conveying the meaning of extinguishing the flames of the battle between Naruto and Sasuke,” Mamemayo said.

They faced immense time pressure from preparations that spanned planning, designing, costume creation, screenwriting, choreography, performance practice and liaising with supporters and public relations. On top of this, they were adamant about also practicing their five-minute presentation for the

costume judging, a segment separate from the stage performance judging.

According to the competition rules, presentations could be in either Japanese or English. “We are not very good at speaking English, but we wanted to convey the details of our costume designs and the meaning and passion we put into our performances in our own words to all the judges, including those from overseas,” Mamemayo said.

Winning the championship significantly broadened Mamemayo and Mioshi's world and expanded their friendships with people from many nations. They were deeply touched when other participants flocked to them after their performance, holding smartphones with translation apps to convey their excitement and praise. At the request of an organizer from Mongolia, they flew to Mongolia and served as judges for its national contest this April.

They will also serve as judges at this year's WCS Championship, which will feature representatives from 42 countries. “We look forward to encountering new ideas and ... want to explore the reasons behind their choices in various elements of their performances, including stage direction and the selection of costume materials,” Mamemayo said.

“For example, someone with experience in apparel manufacturing might excel in sewing or have specialized tools,” Mioshi said. “But beyond judging the perfection of their strengths, we want to see how much they have faced their weaknesses. The beauty of the WCS Championship lies in the opportunity to gain new knowledge, learn and grow through new encounters with various people during the preparation process.”

Last year's WCS Championship winners, from first to third place, pose for photos. © WCS



今年のチャンピオンシップでは、2 人も審査員として参加する。得意分野の完成度だけでなく、自分の弱みにどう向き合ったかにも注目したいという。「WCS チャンピオンシップの魅力は、準備の過程でいろんな人と出会い、新しい知識を得て、学び、成長できることにあります」と語った。

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Introducing regional representatives

Listed below are all 41 cosplayers representing their nations in this year's World Cosplay Championship, the globe's biggest cosplay competition. Only the chosen are here to take the stage and compete for the title of grand champion. The stage promises to be a spectacle for all.

(© WORLD COSPLAY SUMMIT)



Elle Luvkii



Sabaku Ziora



Lilikoi Shibuhara



Ketniz Garou



Kellthy Luis Telles



Gia Stef



MoonMoth Daragonne



Xin Ba Xiao Yi



Bass Garcia maguri cos



StanCosplay William AS



Tery Kate



Lotuss Shidu



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Yami-no-tenshi Xx_LiL_xX



Redemption Props Kiku Art and Krafts



Camellia Zahra Kagami Yuuto



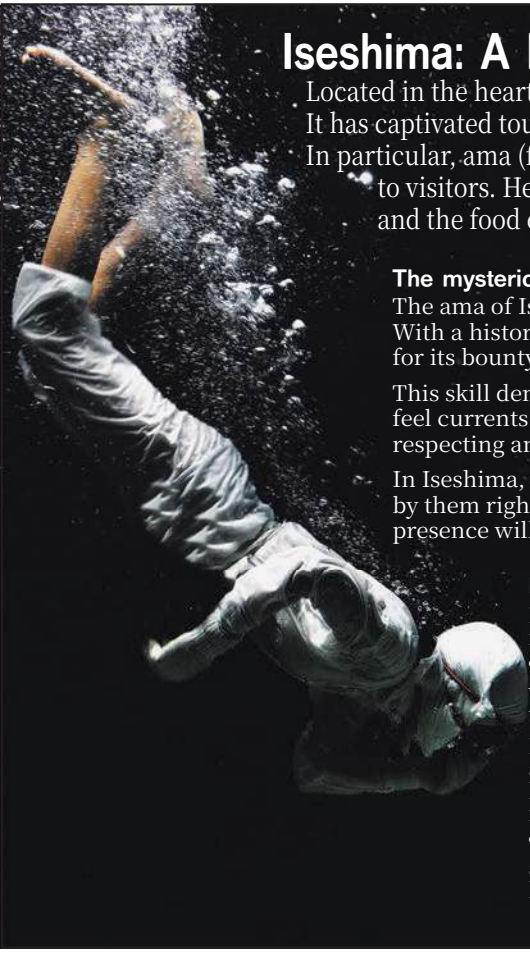
RE VEGA MATT OF THE MONSTERS



Kaori! Sallna



HONA Yeong Wol



Iseshima: A Harmony of Mysterious Ama Culture, Sacred Nature and Rich Food

Located in the heart of Japan, Iseshima is a part of Mie Prefecture that has been known as the spiritual home of Japanese for centuries. It has captivated tourists as a place where the lives of people intertwined with the sea truly flourish. In particular, ama (female diver) culture, a unique presence in the world, promises to bring deep emotion and unforgettable experiences to visitors. Here, we introduce the ama culture of Iseshima, focusing on its deep connection to Ise Jingu, Japan's holiest shrine, and the food culture born from the abundant blessings of the sea.

The mysterious ama: Women who hold their breath and nurture life

The ama of Iseshima are legendary "sea women." They free dive to harvest delicacies like abalone, turban shells and spiny lobsters. With a history stretching back thousands of years, even appearing in ancient Japanese texts, the ama have coexisted with nature, grateful for its bounty and preserving their traditions. Their diving is truly a master craft.

This skill demands deep breathing, resilience to cold water and a profound love and knowledge of the sea. They expertly read conditions, feel currents and understand marine life. This allows them to fish sustainably, avoiding waste and preserving resources — a vital lesson in respecting and coexisting with nature for our modern world.

In Iseshima, you can try one of our Ama Hut Experiences (Amagoya Taiken). There, you will savor fresh seafood harvested and grilled by them right before you. Amid the salty air, hearing their wisdom and sea stories offers a unique experience. Their strong, mystical presence will surely leave a lasting impression.


Iseshima's food culture and Ise Jingu

Iseshima's incredible food culture is deeply tied to Ise Jingu. This connection isn't just about location, it's fundamental to local traditions, from catching seafood to preparing key Japanese ingredients.

The ama divers of Iseshima play a vital role as the abalone harvested for the offerings at Ise Jingu is processed in Kuzaki, where Princess Yamatohime-no-mikoto reportedly met the ama Oben. This continues a millennia-old tradition, honoring the divine link formed by the princess's encounter and showing lasting respect for the skill of the ama and the sea's bounty.

Even the core of Japan's umami culture, which includes components such as *katsuobushi* (dried bonito flakes) and *konbu* (kelp) has been processed here since ancient times and similarly offered to Ise Jingu. This highlights how fundamental elements of Japanese cuisine are woven into the nation's spiritual heart. Offering these key ingredients emphasizes the belief that nature's blessings, refined by human skill, are worthy gifts to the gods.

This lasting bond between local food and Ise Jingu reflects profound gratitude for nature's provisions and a continuous cycle of giving and receiving. It truly shows how Iseshima's daily life and culinary heritage are intimately linked to Ise Jingu's spiritual sanctity.



"Visit ISESHIMA" Bureau
Official YouTube Channel



Katen Salma



Dinarin NatsumiPon



KingRusydi Nekota



Roy Irma



Krul ASAMI



Sirius Cosplayer Amira Kuster



Iloon LevyLike



Kerrang Hanakura



Pink Neko Yan Zhou



Bish Talon



Glin Miss Bakemono



Tomie LaRana



Yuko Exion



Ignition.cos TripTrap cosplay



Tanysa C-IConception



Michael Ink



Tucky Lucky



Kalypso Vin



Furano Vinnie



We Need Disguises Cosplay



Aka Red qi



What is the World Cosplay Championship?

The World Cosplay Championship is the premier global competition in cosplay performance, where top teams from around the world compete for the title of world champion. Participants qualify by winning official preliminary contests held by WCS partner organizations in their respective countries and regions.

The championship finals take place in Nagoya, and are widely recognized as a launchpad for aspiring cosplayers. Many past participants — known as WCS alumni — go on to appear at international pop culture events, gain media exposure and remain actively involved in WCS-related activities long after their stage debut.





Organizers

World Cosplay Summit Executive Committee (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Aichi Prefecture, Nagoya City, Nagoya Convention & Visitors Bureau, Central Japan International Airport Co. Ltd., Osu Shopping District Federation, The Japan Times, TV Aichi, WCS Inc.)

Cooperators

Tribute, WCS Hospitality Student Committee, WCS Academic Committee, Oasis 21, Nagoya Chamber of Commerce & Industry

WORLD COSPLAY SUMMIT 2025

Where global fans gather to create cultural exchange

The World Cosplay Summit 2025 will be held from Aug. 1 to 3 in the Sakae area of Nagoya in Aichi Prefecture. Main venues include Oasis 21, Hisaya-odori Park, the Aichi Arts Center and the Osu shopping district. Now in its 23rd year, the event brings together pop culture fans from around the world who share a passion for cosplay. It fosters new forms of international and cultural exchange through Japanese manga, anime and video games. The highlight of the summit is the World Cosplay Championship, scheduled for Aug. 3 at the Aichi Arts Center. This year, a record 41 countries and regions — five more than last year — will send representative cosplayers who have won regional qualifiers. Competing in pairs, they will be judged on their costumes and stage performances, each team having two and a half minutes to showcase

their creativity and skill. The excitement doesn't stop there. The event also features a vibrant array of programs across the city, including the Red Carpet Ceremony, the Osu Cosplay Parade, live stage shows, exhibitor booths, cosplay runways and photo spots. The theme, "COSPLAY EVERYWHERE!!," turns the entire city into a celebration of cosplay culture. Come and experience this summer's celebration of creativity, friendship and cultural exchange in Nagoya!



World Cosplay Summit official characters © WCS / QP:FLAPPER / KISHIDA MEL

YouTuber Akidearest: From *otaku* to cultural ambassador

Jacob Reed
Contributing writer

In the world of online Japan-related content, Akidearest stands out not just for her reach, but for her depth. With over 2 million subscribers on YouTube, Aki — an American-born creator based just outside Tokyo — has made a name for herself by blending fandom, personal experience and cultural exploration, making videos that fans globally adore. While she is not directly involved with the World Cosplay Summit, her YouTube channel and journey offer a glimpse into the community that



A screenshot from Akidearest's YouTube channel, where she shares content with fans worldwide. AKIDEAREST

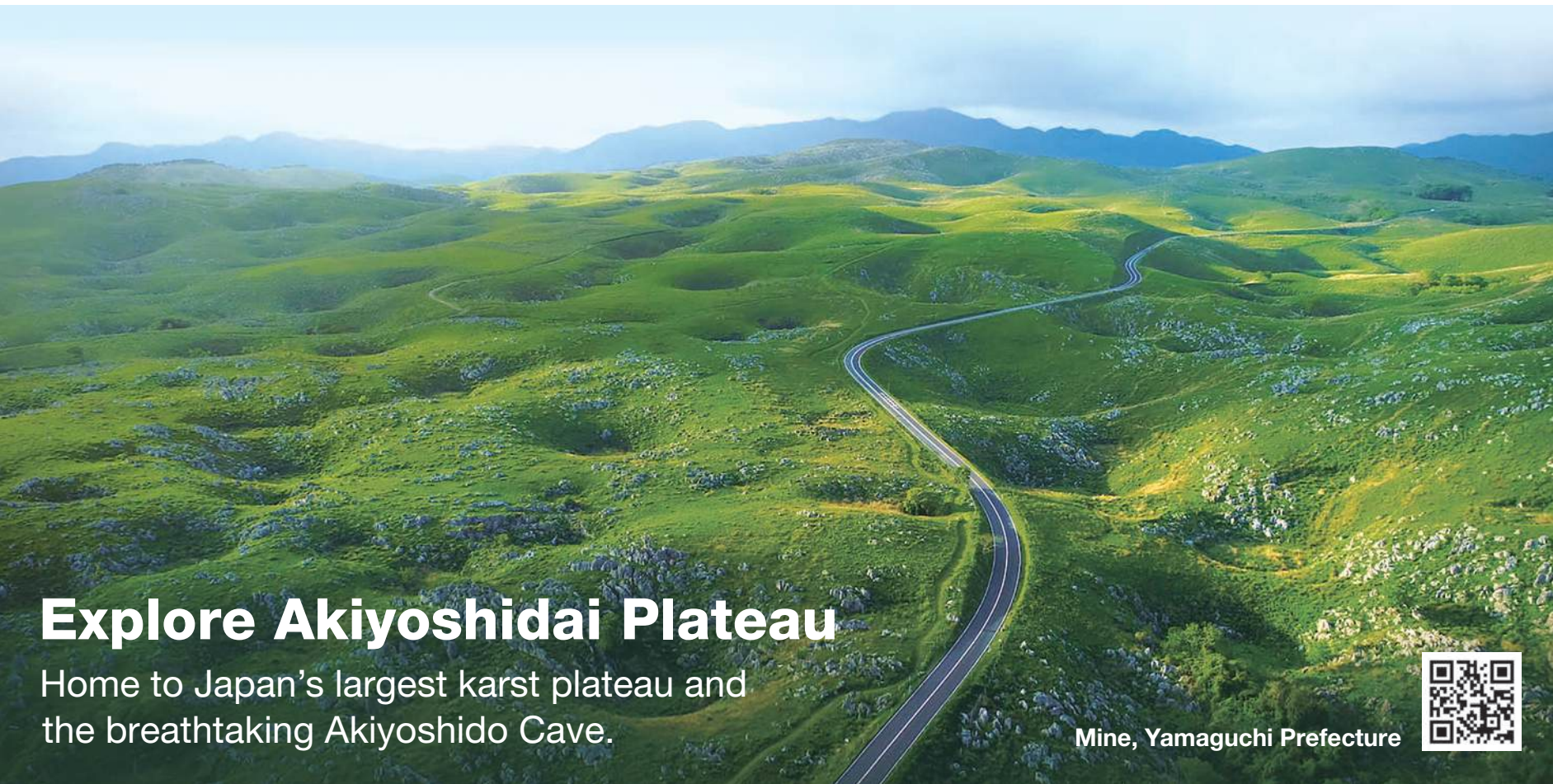
such events celebrate. "I started my channel with anime, gaming and *otaku* culture," she explained. Now her content is centered around broader issues related to Japan and Japanese culture — "it's focused on my life here, and what it's like being a foreigner in Japan." Her journey from anime fan and video gamer to cultural ambassador mirrors the experiences of many foreigners in Japan. At first engrossed in the fictional worlds depicted in anime, they then find themselves yearning to experience the real Japan. Aki credits anime as the catalyst for her interest in Japan. "Due to the language and culture barriers, the only thing we really have is games and anime," she said. Growing up in the U.S., she encountered Japanese culture through anime like "Sailor Moon," "Dragon Ball Z" and "Death Note." Cosplay also played a role: "It's a form of fandom. And if you make it

yourself, it's also an expression of craftsmanship." Though her own cosplay has slowed down, she still lit up when talking about the creative and expressive energy within cosplay culture. Aki noted that anime is only a starting point for understanding Japan. "It's definitely a window into Japanese culture, but it's not the whole picture," she said. "I wouldn't say I 'graduated' from anime. It's still a part of who I am, and it would definitely have been more unlikely I would be in Japan without anime and games." But the cultural barrier works both ways — just as anime lovers outside Japan may lack the resources to appreciate subtle Japanese cultural values embedded in their favorite media, so too do many in rural Japan lack the know-how to attract tourists. That is where Aki's YouTube channel comes in. Since moving to Japan seven years ago, she has been offering her audience a deeper perspective born of her experiences. "Japan is so much more than 'Tokyo Drift,'" she said. Companies regularly reach out to her and ask her to promote places far from urban, touristy hot spots like Tokyo and Osaka. "They want me to expose people to what Japan is really like," Aki explained. "I'm really happy that I've



@EDO


become a bridge for them. It gives me a job that I love to do." For those discovering her for the first time, Aki keeps it simple: "I really like anime and cosplay. And if you're reading this at the Cosplay Summit, I think you do too, so check out my channel!" It is easy to find a video you are interested in because she makes the titles clear: "If my mom can understand the title, then that's what I go with," she said with a laugh.



Explore Akiyoshidai Plateau

Home to Japan's largest karst plateau and the breathtaking Akiyoshido Cave.

Mine, Yamaguchi Prefecture



Nagoya symbols are at the heart of WCS — experience the excitement!

Oasis 21: Main venue and live stage
Oasis 21, a landmark in Nagoya, will serve as the main venue for the World Cosplay Summit 2025. Its multilevel structure — featuring the Spaceship-Aqua rooftop, Green Earth ground level and Galaxy Plaza underground — offers ample photo opportunities and convenient access via bus and subway. Visitors can enjoy daytime photo shoots and magical nighttime views. A special stage will also host key WCS events.



Hisaya-odori Park
Located in the heart of Sakae, Hisaya-odori Park is a spacious urban oasis ideal for cosplay photography. The expansive lawn, with natural light and greenery, is perfect for solo or group shoots. Mirai Tower (formerly Nagoya TV Tower) serves as a striking backdrop for urban-themed cosplay. Surrounding streets with trendy cafes and stylish shops attract many cosplayers during the event.



Osu shopping district
A fusion of history and subculture, the Osu shopping district is one of Nagoya's most cosplay-friendly areas. Lined with retro shops, trendy boutiques and anime-themed stores, it offers a unique blend of old and new. During the World Cosplay Summit, the lively streets fill with cosplayers from Japan and abroad, turning the neighborhood into a vibrant, anime-like scene that captures the spirit of the event.



The Aichi Arts Center
Located in the heart of Nagoya's Sakae area, the Aichi Arts Center will proudly host the final stage of the World Cosplay Championship at the World Cosplay Summit 2025. Top cosplayers from around the world will present their best performances, combining elaborate costumes, dramatic acting and striking stage effects in a well-attended event watched by audiences worldwide, both in person and via livestreaming.



Hisaya-odori Garden Flarie
Flarie, a tranquil garden retreat in Hisaya-odori Park, features seasonal flowers, fountains and European-style architecture — an ideal setting for cosplay photography. Open as part of the World Cosplay Summit 2025 event area only on Saturday, Aug. 2, and Sunday, Aug. 3, this popular spot offers a rare chance to enjoy a picturesque backdrop. Don't miss the opportunity to capture something special.



WORLD COSPLAY SUMMIT 2025 EVENT SCHEDULE			
	Friday, August 1	Saturday, August 2	Sunday, August 3
	WCS 2025 eve festival 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm	DAY 1 11:00 am - 9:00 pm	DAY 2 11:00 am - 9:00 pm
10:00 AM			
10:30 AM			
11:00 AM			
11:30 AM			
12:00 PM		Opening (11:55 am - 12:20 pm)	Opening (11:55 am - 12:20 pm)
12:30 PM		WCS Selection- Block 1 (12:20 pm - 13:20 pm)	WCS Selection- Block 1 (12:20 pm - 12:50 pm)
1:00 PM			WCS Selection- Block 2 (13:00 pm - 13:30 pm)
1:30 PM			
2:00 PM		WCS Selection- Block 2 (14:00 pm - 14:35 pm)	WCS Selection- Block 3 (14:00 pm - 15:00 pm)
2:30 PM			
3:00 PM			
3:30 PM		WCS Selection- Block 3 (15:30 pm - 16:05 pm)	WORLD COSPLAY CHAMPIONSHIP 2025 Live Viewing & Special Talk Show (15:45 pm - 20:10 pm)
4:00 PM		Cosplay of the Year / Ikebukuro Halloween Cosplay Festival 2025 (16:10 pm - 16:55 pm)	
4:30 PM		WCS Selection- Block 4 (17:00 pm - 17:30 pm)	
5:00 PM			
5:30 PM			
6:00 PM	Red Carpet Cosplay Meetup & Photoshoot (6:00 pm - 6:50 pm)	SPECIAL STAGE (18:00 pm - 18:25 pm)	
6:30 PM		WCS Selection- Block 5 (18:30 pm - 19:05 pm)	
7:00 PM	Nagoya University of the Arts presents Red Carpet Ceremony (7:00 pm - 8:30 pm)	WCS Selection with FINAL FANTASY XIV (19:15 pm - 20:15 pm)	
7:30 PM		Ending (20:15 pm - 20:30 pm)	
8:00 PM			
8:30 PM			
9:00 PM			
9:30 PM			
10:00 PM			
10:30 PM			
11:00 PM			
11:30 PM			

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Yamagata Pref.

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Deway
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- 11 Italian
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Restaurant Uozen
- 13 Japanese
Satoyama Jujo
- 14 Sushi
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- 15 Japanese
Shintaku

Ishikawa Pref.

- 16 Japanese
Kataori
- 17 Sushi
Mekumi
- 18 French
L'Atelier de Noto
- 19 Japanese
Ipponsugi Kawashima

Toyama Pref.

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Cuisine régionale L'évo
- 21 Japanese
Oryouri Fujii
- 22 Japanese
Ebitei-Bekkan

Tokyo

- 23 Italian
Don Bravo

Kanagawa Pref.

- 24 Japanese
Kamakura Kitajima

Shizuoka Pref.

- 25 Japanese
Chakaiseki Onjyaku
- 26 French
Chisou Nishi Kenichi

Yamanashi Pref.

- 27 Innovative
Terroir Ai to Ibukuro

Nagano Pref.

- 28 Japanese
Nihonryori Yukimoto
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Pesceco
- 36 Italian
Villa del Nido

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Okinawa Pref.

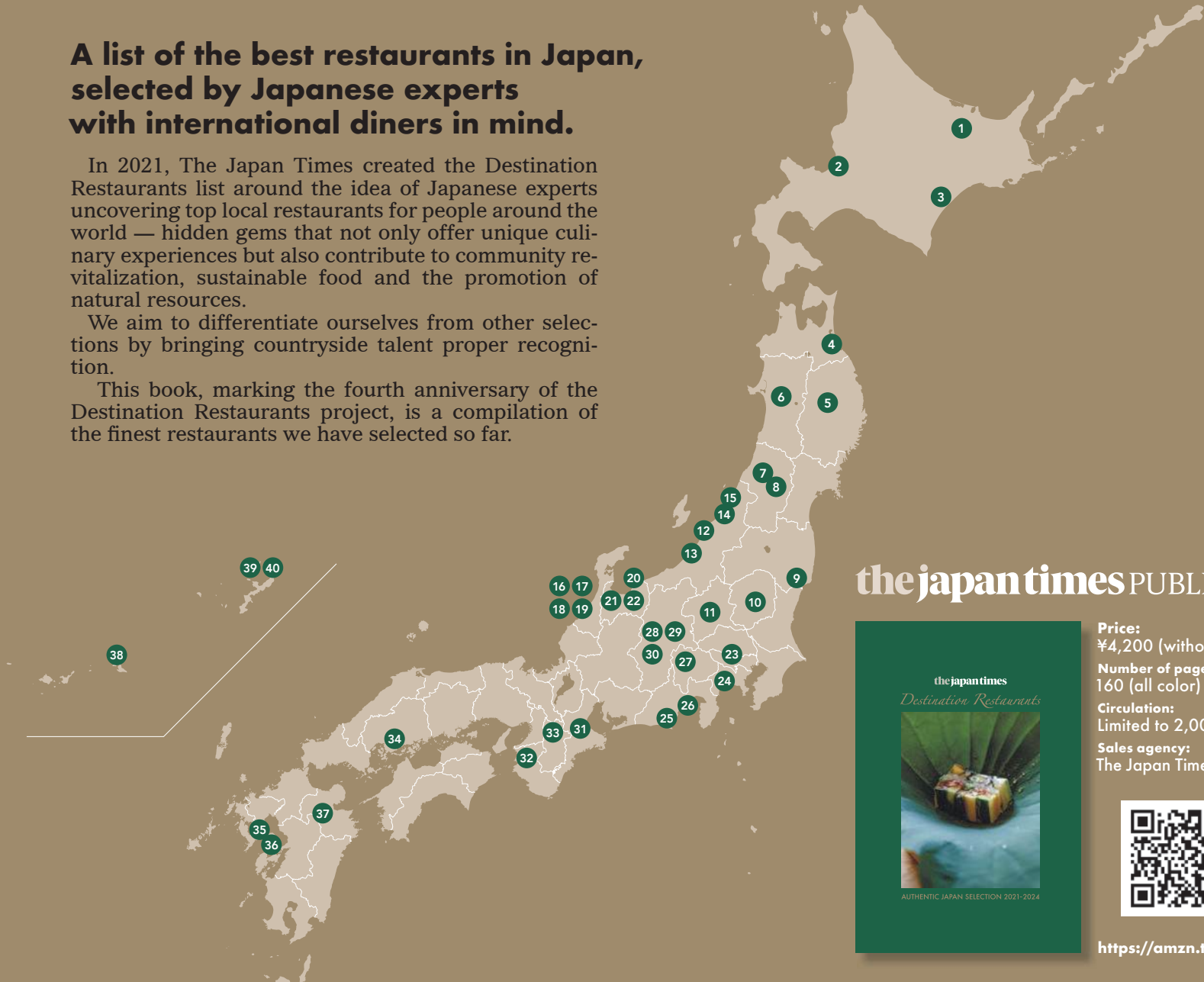
- 38 French
État d'esprit
- 39 French
6 Six
- 40 French
Mauvaise herbe

A list of the best restaurants in Japan, selected by Japanese experts with international diners in mind.

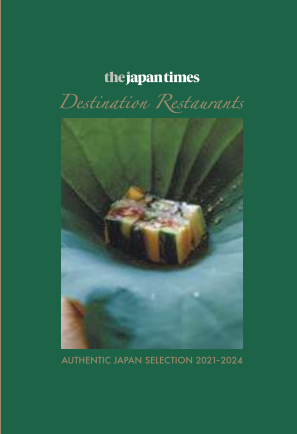
In 2021, The Japan Times created the Destination Restaurants list around the idea of Japanese experts uncovering top local restaurants for people around the world — hidden gems that not only offer unique culinary experiences but also contribute to community revitalization, sustainable food and the promotion of natural resources.

We aim to differentiate ourselves from other selections by bringing countryside talent proper recognition.

This book, marking the fourth anniversary of the Destination Restaurants project, is a compilation of the finest restaurants we have selected so far.



the japan times PUBLISHING



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