

“My Journey”
~ Discovery of Japan’s History and Culture ~
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Agency for Cultural Affairs

Japan has a long history and Japanese people in each local area have nurtured a rich traditional culture and lifestyle growing out of their history and nature surroundings.

In April 2005 Prime Minister Mr. Junichiro Koizumi made the suggestion that the public be invited to submit ideas for travel plans by which Japanese people and foreign travelers visiting Japan can understand such local culture and history.

Following Mr. Koizumi's suggestion, the Agency for Cultural Affairs invited the general public to submit plans, entitled "My Journey", which would promote a deeper and more profound understanding of Japan, its history, culture, and character, by both Japanese people and foreign travelers.

We all bring our own thoughts and ideas when we go on a journey; these add to the appeal of travel, and to our enjoyment of the experience. With this in mind, the Agency for Cultural Affairs selected the title "My Journey" for this collection of travel plans, and requested entrants to include their own ideas and thoughts about travel in their submissions, in order to elicit a variety of unique travel plans.

A total of 786 travel plans were received from the end of June to August 2005. The Selection Committee headed by Dr. Hayao Kawai, Commissioner for Cultural Affairs, chose 105 submissions which best expressed the writers' ideas about the appeal of travel, as the "Best 100". Out of this "Best 100", the Selection Committee selected one travel plan for the Grand Prix, and nine plans for the Special Prize.

Travel is a simple pleasure that everyone enjoys. The Agency for Cultural Affairs will promote the 105 selected plans so that as many people as possible will be able to experience these journeys.

The Agency for Cultural Affairs hopes, through this "Best 100", that Japanese people will rediscover the vanishing history and culture of local areas, and that this project will contribute to the creation, preservation, and transmission of arts and culture; it is hoped as well that foreign visitors will be better able to understand Japanese history and culture, and that this will lead to more active international exchanges.

Prize	Title of Journey	Name of Participant	Destination Prefecture	Category by Period	Summary of trip
Grand Prix	A journey to visit "Japan"	KANNO, Jun-ichi	Tochigi, Tokyo, Ishikawa, Fukui, Kyoto, Okinawa	Muromachi era, Azuchi-momoyama era, Edo era	A journey to visit various local producers of representative traditional Japanese craft lacquerware ("Japan") <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Okinawa Prefecture (vividly colored Ryukyu lacquerware) • Kyoto Prefecture (humble simplicity of Kyoto lacquerware) • Fukui Prefecture (historical Echizen lacquerware) • Ishikawa Prefecture (Yamanaka lacquerware for everyday use, high quality Wajima) • Tochigi Prefecture (Nikko lacquerware with carved wood) • Tokyo (lacquerware at the National Treasure, and Important Cultural Properties level in the Tokyo National Museum)
Special Prizes	A Journey to the Old Stone Age/ Visiting Ancient Ruins in Okhotsk	Study of subgroup for the Yubetsu River Watershed, NP Okhotsk Cluster	Hokkaido	The Paleolithic era, Jomon era, Yayoi era, Kofun era, Asuka era, Nara era, Heian era, Kamakura era	A journey to the Old Stone Age, the Jomon Period, the Epi-Jomon Period , and the Satsumon Period. The area around the Shirataki ruins is a source of obsidian, and stone vessels produced here have been discovered throughout Japan, and as far away as Siberia. As such, this trip sheds an interesting light on the Stone Age in Japan.
	Traveling the Hina Doll Road	YAMAZAKI, Setsuko	Yamagata , Niigata	Edo era, Meiji era	A trip to three dolls' festivals held yearly in March: "The Sakata Hinakaido" (Sakata city), "The Tsuruoka Dolls' Story" (Tsuruoka city) and "A Tour of the Dolls of the Town" (Murakami city). Comparing the various dolls is endlessly fascinating, and would appeal to a wide variety of people.
	Crossing Bunsui-rei , A winding path through the old towns	OKUNO, Naoko	Nagano, Gifu, Toyama	Edo era, Meiji era	A journey across the Bunsui-rei: the mountains through which rivers follows, in the Chubu region, slowly making one's way through the old towns by train and local bus. The route is one of austere beauty, from Narai-juku, through Tsumago, Magome, and Iwa-mura, to the World Heritage Site of Shirakawa-go and Gokayama, where groups of unique <i>gassho-tsukuri</i> peaked-roof houses can be seen, and finishing in Takaoka and Fushiki.
	Exploring craftsmanship at World Heritage Site Shirakawa-go	SHIMA, Yasuko	Gifu, Ishikawa, Fukui, Shiga, Aichi	Nara era, Azuchi-momoyama era, Edo era	This trip, designed for foreign visitors, takes in the Chubu and Hokuriku regions, offers a look into the skills involved in various traditional Japanese crafts, such as candle-making, the mechanisms behind the floats used in parades, peaked roof houses, lacquerware, pottery, Japanese paper, glassmaking, and dyeing.
	Experiencing the Sea, Mountains, and Rivers at the World Heritage Site Ancient Routs of Kumano	OHKAWA, Katsuhiro	Mie	The Mythical era, Asuka era, Heian era	A journey to the World Heritage Site of the ancient routs of Kumano in which the beauty of the sea, mountains and rivers of the area can be enjoyed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Sea Path (the unique rock formations of Onigajou, etc.) • The Mountain Path (Maruyama Senmaida) • The River Path (a canoe trip downriver)
	A Manyou Journey	OKUI, Yasunori	Kyoto, Nara, and 25 other prefectures	Asuka era, Nara era, Heian era, Kamakura era, Muromachi era, Sengoku era, Azuchi-momoyama era, Edo era, Meiji era	A visit to monuments featuring verses from the ancient anthology known as the <i>Manyou-shu</i> . The itinerary covers every corner of Japan, except for Hokkaido and the Tohoku area. Beginning in the Yoshino region, the journey is divided into nine different courses of manageable length, to various regions connected to the <i>Manyou-shu</i> verses.
	Travels in Japan through the eyes of foreign architects in the early 20th century	WATANABE, Yasunobu	Gunma, Kyoto, and 8 other prefectures	Taisho era, Showa era, Heisei era	This unique trip visits buildings constructed in Japan by foreign architects in the 20th century such as Bruno Taut and Frank Lloyd Wright, and offers an interesting look at modern Japan as seen through the eyes of foreigners who visited in the early days of the 20th century.
	The Christian Road: Shimabara and Amakusa	YAMASHITA, Rumi	Nagasaki, Kumamoto	Edo era, Meiji era, Showa era, Heisei era	This trip combines the Christian spirituality of the Amakusa region with the natural beauty of Unzen Fugen-dake in an appealing and well-thought-out itinerary. Visiting Shimabara and Unzen Fugen-dake the traveler gets a sense of the Christian spirituality of the Amakusa region.
	A journey to the sources of history and festivals	ONOUE, Hirokazu	Nagasaki	Jomon era, Yayoi era, Muromachi era, Sengoku era, Azuchi-momoyama era, Edo era	This journey visits the unique traditions and culture of Tsushima, such as Kibokushinji (scapulimancy- an ancient form of fortune-telling by burning the turtleback in a fire, then examining the cracks thus produced, in order to divine the future) and Akamaishinji (rituals to transfer the role of presidency concerning red rice, which is inherited in a part of Tsushima region). The trip, which includes visits to shrines of the historical Shikinaisha (historic shrines officially graded in the 10th century), offers a look at the uniquely appealing Tsushima culture, and gives the traveler a sense of the diversity of Japanese culture.