

Traditional culture and entertainment



Tea Ceremony

Japanese tea ceremony is not only about enjoying the taste of matcha green tea but something that requires a wide knowledge and sense about religion, philosophy, arts, etc. It is such a comprehensive art form in Japan. In the Heian period, high ranking monks studying in China brought tea back to Japan. The basic form and aesthetic of today's Japanese tea ceremony is largely credited to Sen no Rikyu, who was inspired to develop a form based entirely around natural materials native to Japan. Rikyu's way of tea stands as a refined, yet simple, ritual of perfection that incorporates virtually every Japanese art. His philosophy has something connected to Zen mind. The word represents the best essence of Japanese tea ceremony is "Meeting only once in a lifetime". It tells the lesson that the encounter with someone happens only once in a life, so that making the best tea for him/her is very important.

Flower Arrangement

In Japanese flower arrangement or kado is the art form that people cut and put the flowers in the bowl and express the best beauty and the respect of life. Once it was only enjoyed high ranking people but in the mid Edo period, it gradually spread among the common people. Several schools of ikebana were born since then. The techniques, tools and flower vases vary from the schools. There are 2,000-3,000 schools in Japan and one of the majorities is Ikenobo.



To watch and enjoy traditional culture is one of the closest ways to know Kyoto. No matter how the modern world changes, there is something important in Kyoto that never changes. Learn and feel Kyoto's culture and entertainment that have been cultivated in its 1,200-year history. You will find real specialties of Kyoto from them.

Kimono

Kimono is traditional Japanese clothing. Its appearance has changed with the social changing. There are two types of kimono. One is ori (woven) and the other is some (dyed). The ori kimono are woven after silk thread is dyed and people paint some white woven kimono. Though it is not common to see someone wearing kimono, recently, kimono have attracted younger Japanese generations as antique kimono and Japanese patterns become popular.



Noh Theater

Noh is one of Japan's old theater traditions consists of dance and music. The story proceeds with the song (utai) and music (hayashi). It is like opera or musicals in the Western countries. Performers wear masks called no-men or omote, especially they play the role of some uncanny role like old man, gods, hermit, etc. The stage is about 6 square meters and tow corridor called hashigakari are set. Many of the noh stories are from ancient Japanese literature and the lines are often chanted in an old form of Japanese.

Kyogen

Kyogen was born in Japan around same time as noh theater. It is often performed with noh. Compare to the noh play, kyogen is more comical and make the audience laugh and relax. In the noh story, the characters are mainly aristocrats or historical people, but kyogen has bright, comical characters speaking in the daily language. It is because kyogen is easy to understand for people who never watch it before. It is praised as the sophisticated comical art. There are two major schools: Sensui and Okura.



Dance (Mai)

Compare to kabuki theater performed on the big stage, traditional mai dance (odori) is performed in a Japanese style tatami room. It was born about 200 years ago in Kyoto and Osaka. It is also called ji uta mai or kamigata mai. Different from kabuki, mai is practiced and flourished by geiko and maiko in Kyoto's flower towns. They dance in a small space (1 tatami mat is enough). Now it keeps its form of highly sophisticated art after other traditional Japanese entertainments like noh, kyogen, joruri puppet play, kabuki, Mibu kyogen, etc. There are several schools today: Yamamura, Inoue, Yoshimura, Umemoto, Kanzaki, etc.

