



Description of Fences

フェンスの説明 / Description des obstacles

Fence 11a - Kanto Matsuri. Akita Festival.

The Kanto Matsuri (竿燈まつり, "pole lantern festival") is a Tanabata related celebration in Akita City, held every year from the 3rd to the 6th of August.

From out all the different actions which take place at the Akita festival, the most fascinating one, is how all the participants are able to keep the Kanto (long poles made out of bamboo with a paper lantern on the top) in equilibrium. These poles can reach a length of 12 metres and a weight of approximately 50 kilograms. They can have up to 46 paper lamps with lit candles inside them. Once the drums, flutes and songs start to sound ("Dokkoisho", "Dokkoisho"), each kanto is pulled up by only one person, which using different techniques makes it keep on equilibrium. Gradually, more extensions are added until the pole reaches its maximum height.

The main event of this festival are the night-time parades where different groups participate and there are approximately 250 kantos. This event takes place along Chuo Dori street in Akita.





Fence 10 - Japanese Gong.

Gong, sacred and ancestral instrument, venerated by warriors, emperors, princes and priests. Essential in Buddhist temples, where their notes mark the beginning and end of each day, call to the temple and changes in the sequences.

It has a powerful and deep metallic sound, of very long vibrations, that encompasses a great resonance and sound capacity. Due to this sound depth it is used in meditation sessions, as it causes a state of instantaneous consciousness.





Fence 8ab - Traditional Japanese Theatre. Kabuki.

Kabuki (歌舞伎) Japanese traditional theatre

Noh and Kabuki are old theatre forms that are still performed today and are part of the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Kabuki is a Japanese theatrical genre, where we can see a combination of dialogue, dance and music. It is considered to be one of the most ancient forms of Japanese theatre and its representations were the only moment when different social classes mixed together.

Nowadays nearly every single stage play is formed exclusively by men, dressed up with different, colourful costumes. Even though they do not wear any kind of mask, they completely transform their facial expression by applying keshou, a kind of make-up which is really characteristic, it is one of the fundamentals in this kind of theatre. Each colour has a different meaning, red is for heroes, as it represents vigour and passion; it might represent anger or other negative feelings associated with rage and fury. Indigo blue represents melancholy, whilst other like purple or black stand for arrogance and fear respectively.

This make-up is made to be tremendously exaggerated, and it is even more depending on the level of dramatism of the character. It becomes particularly intense if associated to someone with a 'supernatural' character.





Fence 16 - Hachiko.

Hachikō's statue, Shibuya (Tokyo)

Since 1924, Hidesaburo Ueno, professor at the University of Tokyo, and his puppy Akita, breed of the ancient guardians of the Emperors, became inseparable. Every day they walked to the Shibuya train station located in the centre of Tokyo where the dog waited for him until his return so that they could walk their way back home together. This routine lasted 2 years, until Ueno died of a cerebral haemorrhage while he was in class.

His wife donated Hachi to a new family, but he continued to wait for his former owner at the train station for 10 years. They began to publish Hachi's stories in local newspapers, and in 1934 a statue was erected in front of the Shibuya train station, with Hachi as the main guest at its inauguration.

A year later, in 1935, Hachiko died at the station, and was buried next to his owner at the Aoyama Cemetery in Tokyo.

This story was taken to the cinema in 1987 by the Japanese filmmaker Seijiro Kojama; the film, in black and white, is titled Hachiko Monogatari (The story of Hachiko). In 2009 a remake was made in the United States directed by Lasse Hallström under the title "Hachi: A Dog's Tale".





Fence 12 - Mount Fuji.

Mount Fuji (富士山 a.k.a. Fujisan)

We can find it looking west from Tokyo, located between Yamanashi and Shizuoka.

It is an active volcano with a height of 3.776 metres, included in the list of Patrimony of Humanity, but above all, it is the most emblematic mountain of all of Japan.

It is considered as one of the Three Sacred Mountains in Japan, which are known as Sanreizan (三霊山) which are tremendously popular. Under this record, we find that only Mount Fuji receives over 300.000 annual visits.





Fence 13 - Sakura.

The cherry tree flower is seen as a metaphor of life, which is considered to be beautiful but at the same ephemeral. This is why it is so admired.

Cherry trees (Sakura Zensen) start blooming during March, the flowering front (Kaika Zensen) moves from Okinawa towards the north of the country, ending with the flowering of the cherry trees up in Hokkaidō during the month of May.

Japan's Meteorology Office annually predict the pattern the flowering front will follow so that everybody is able to search and find which will be the optimal locations to watch the flowering of the cherry trees. This is actually really important, as the cherry tree flower only lasts for one week, something that matches really well with the traditional Japanese spirit and ideology based upon the shortness and continuous movement of life.





Fence 14 - Mascot of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

Japanese illustrator Ryo Taniguchi.

Manga and gamer references are seen, in representation of the Japanese contemporary visual culture and with a character design inspired by the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games' Logo.

The pair of futuristic characters combine tradition and innovation.

The name of the Olympics mascot, Miraitowa, fuses the Japanese words for future and eternity. Someity, the Paralympics mascot, is derived from Somei-yoshino, a type of cherry blossom, cherry blossom variety "Someiyoshino" and is a play on words with the English phrase "So mighty".

The two mascot designs were selected by elementary schoolchildren across Japan, Tokyo 2020 organizing committee president Yoshiro Mori said at the ceremony:

"These mascots are your friends," you have helped to pick them, and across the country, ... five million children helped to pick this. And the name is also something we have picked together. So, this Olympics belongs to everyone."

