

Press Release

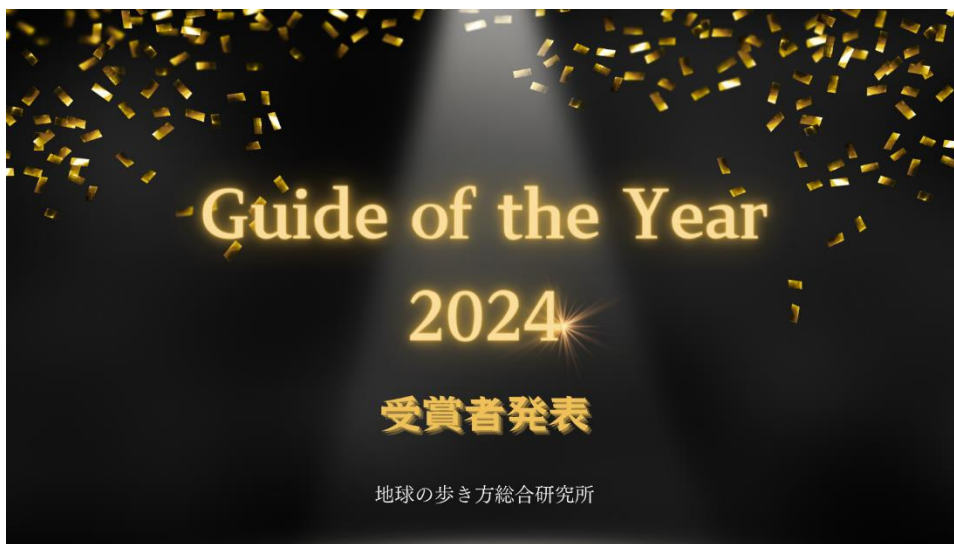
For Immediate Release

May.31,2024

地球の歩き方
GLOBE-TROTTER TRAVEL GUIDEBOOK

Globetrotter Travel Research Institute launches new award standard to overhaul the standard for multilingual travel guides! Guide of the Year 2024 Winners Announced

Globetrotter Travel Research Institute announces winners for the Guide of the Year 2024 on May 14th.



Globetrotter Travel Research Institute is operated by Arukikata.Co.,Ltd. (Shinagawa, Tokyo/President: Kunihiro Arai), a group company of Gakken Holdings Co., Ltd. (Shinagawa, Tokyo/President: Hiroaki Miyahara). The Guide of the Year 2024 award ceremony, which recognizes interpreter guides (hereinafter referred to as guides) who increase the value of travel, was held online on Tuesday, May 14, 2024.

On May 14, 2024 (Tues.), the Chikyu no Arukikata Research Institute held an award ceremony for Guide of the Year 2024 to honor interpreter guides for inbound tourists to Japan. As the movement to resume inbound tourism (travel by foreign visitors to Japan) resumes full swing with increased momentum for high value-added travel (*1) in regions across Japan, the new guide standard looks to foster high-quality guides that can respond to the increasingly sophisticated and diversifying needs of travelers. The same mechanism serves as a means to establish a resource of human talent, better recognize multilingual guides (hereinafter referred to as guides) who increase the value of travel (*1) and better fortify trips that seek discovery, learning, or a special experience that changes your outlook on life through travel.

◆ 「Guide of the Year」 Background Details

Since its launch in 1979, the Chikyu no Arukikata (eng. “Globetrotter”) name has continued to serve as a travel media resource and informational resource. As of 2009 the same name has featured not only domestic and international travel information, but also new insights for foreign visitors to Japan.

With the goal of increasing the number of foreign tourists to 60 million a year by 2030 in order to become a tourism-advanced country, "high-value-added travel" has remained a sought after topic and benchmark, especially in the luxury travel and adventure travel markets. For these segments, the necessary purpose of travel goes well beyond their sense of spend. The number of travelers visiting Japan continues to rise, as does the need for planning to learn through travel, experience that will lead to personal growth, and experience that will change their outlook on life.

With noted significant changes in traveler needs, the outlook for Japan inbound demand is expected to exceed pre-Covid numbers with a reach of some 5.9 trillion yen as of 2023, the year marked as having resumed full operation. Under these circumstances, the Japan Tourism Agency is focusing on promoting luxury tourism, adventure tourism, and strengthening sustainable tourism content as well as a newly announced initiative that aims to increase spending through high-value-added travel as one of its key pillars. This initiative, “Draft of the Basic Plan for Promoting Tourism Nation” was announced alongside a new inbound strategy for the post-Covid era.

Counterpoint to restored tourism is the state of Japan’s guide industry, which still sees a nationwide lack of sufficient quality and number of guides. This refers to the multilingual guides who provide translation service to tourists visits all areas and regions of the country, using language as a means to convey the worthwhileness of travel destinations in Japan.

The role of guide calls for an extremely high level of varied skills in order to convey the facts or notable points of a region, including language skill, a linguistic savviness and communication level that matches flexibly to the needs of the client quickly while conveying story and interest that’s relevant to the trip.

Globetrotter Travel Research Institute is moving in urgent response to the same shortage of high-quality guides, a problem not only voiced by Japan and local governments but seen firsthand at the Institute after launching multiple inbound promotions to bolster destinations across Japan and its local regions. This lack of guides with sufficient ability to respond to travelers intellectual curiosity and inquisitiveness has led to loss opportunities such as unavailable travel product planning ending in postponement. The Institute is bent on a solution that builds initiatives to improve the skill of guides, including training in rural areas led by guides with a long tenure with upmarket clients in Europe and North America.

As these activities continue, a tandem goal to raising the guide standard in quality and quantity is to shine a spotlight on guides and widely publicize how their efforts have direct impact in the industry via a dedicated research group. Industry experts and professionals have been invited to join a council that continues to reconceptualize potential solutions to the guide shortage problem. One arm of this is the Guide of the Year award schematic.

This initiative aims to widely disseminate the activities and contributions of notable guides, to help guides who serve foreign visitors to Japan become an aspirational profession, and to lay the foundation for a guiding culture to take root in Japan.

Screening was conducted by industry experts, while the Globetrotter Travel Research Institute served as the administrative office.

Judging criteria consists of accurate language and communication skills, as well as a perceived ability to build rapport with customers and tell stories that entice travelers to deepen their understanding and behavior while traveling. Candidates are evaluated comprehensively for problem-solving skills on a case-by-case basis, checking for ability to remain flexible and personable. Please note, this award system does not confer any qualifications or rank to applicants.

◆ 「Guide of the Year 2024」 Then and Now

Application season opened on the Globetrotter Travel Research Institute website as of last year. In order to reach guides involved in the inbound business, the firm received cooperation from guide associations, guide organizations, governments, and local governments in announcing and distributing information. Application season resulted in a large number of applications, with some deciding to apply not only through self-nomination, but also through recommendations from tourism-related organizations.

Based on the goal of "widely disseminating the activities and contributions of guides, making guiding a coveted profession, and creating a foundation for guide culture to take root in Japan," the same name also takes into account the opinions of experts. This led to final awards. (Number of applications and judges are not disclosed)

Nov. 2023 : Launch application window

Feb. 2024: End application window

Feb. 2024: Document review stage

March 2024: Online interviews (2nd stage)

April 2024: Council meeting among judges

May 14, 2024: Judge results announced

Awards: Guide of the Year 3pp、Special Award 4pp、Judges Special Award 1pp

◆Guide of the Year 2024 Winners List

(In no specified order/titles omitted)

Guide of the Year

工藤まや / Maya Kudo

Moved to U.S.A in the first summer of high school alongside a family job transfer. Kudo returned to Japan after graduating a local high school and enrolled at Sophia University in Japan. After graduating Kudo started at Christian Dior and gained experience in the upmarket business space. Passed the 2005 Interpreter Guide Examination. Continued to work as an English guide since July 2006. Interested include tea ceremony, a hobby since student days, and since becoming a guide Kudo has also begun dabbling in Japanese swords, Iaido and shimai. Kudo has an unparalleled love for travel, having visited some 60+ countries around the world. Kudo has extensive experience guiding high-end clients from around the world, including royalty and celebrities.



Guide of the Year

白石実果 / Mika Shiraishi

(M&Company, Co-Owner / National Interpreter Guide)

Led over 2,500 different inbound guests from around the world including VIP clients. High reviews from clients booking high-value added experiences. In addition to serving as a guide training instructor across Japan, Shiraishi also advises in the collective that creates a system for welcoming inbound tourism. Shiraishi has the unique experience and understanding of how foreign tourists in Japan truly feel thanks to a wealth of ground experience. Specialist human resources for the Japan Tourism Agency's wide-area excursion expert dispatch project. Class 1 instructor for the Japan Tourism Agency's "Training to strengthen the inbound response capabilities of local tourism personnel."



Guide of the Year

馬上千恵 / Chie Moue

Hokkaido Adventure Travel Guide (Through Guide) / Interpreter Guide / Shinrin Instructor, etc. Born 1973 in Fukushima Prefecture. After graduating Obihiro University of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine, Moue tenured at the Hokkaido Forestry Bureau for eight years. After a time of study abroad in Australia came a new stint as an English instructor, after which April 2007 Moue switched to work as an interpreter-guide, living in the Shiretoko Peninsula areas of Shari Town, Wakkanai City, and Assabu Town, working as an English nature guide planning tours for inbound tourists. Based in Sapporo since 2020, Moue also serves as a lecturer at guide training courses and English customer service seminars nationwide. Eiken Level 1/TESOL (English teaching method)/Elementary school English instructor (J-SHINE).

<https://msenglish-network.com/>



Photo by Ryoichi Kawajiri



Special Award

青崎涼子 / Ryoko Aosaki

National Interpreter Guide, Japan Mountain Guides Association (JMGA) certified hiking guide, Adventure Travel Consultant. After a 10-year tenure working at a travel agency, Aosaki trained at a U.S-based outdoors program NOLS (National Outdoor Leadership School), working primarily as an international outdoors travel guide. Aosaki became certified in March 2014 as an interpreter guide, working to offer long-end tours (mountain climbing, hiking, old-road trekking), FIT hiking and similar styles. Domestic mountain climbing guide, adventure travel planner, multipurpose trainer, writer, etc.



Special Award

原田勉 / Tsutomu Harada

Spent 30 years honing international communication skills via 30 years working for an electronics maker in the U.S., Singapore, Hong Kong. Began working as an Interpreter Guide as of March 2018. Harada is also certified by the International Society of Clinical Medicine and certified as a medical interpreter guide. Also specializes in family trips, incentive tours, and company/factory inspection tours.



Special Award

福田誠 / Makoto Fukuda

Graduated High School before moving to the U.S. for a study abroad. After attending a language school and graduating from Portland State University, Fukuda began working as a guide interpreter in March 2013. Currently guides throughout Japan on long-term tours, day tours, and FIT tours. Also knowledgeable about subcultures and loves traveling and eating out. Drive your own car and enjoy the cultural and geographical sites of the places you visit.



Special Award

安井久美 / Kumi Yasui

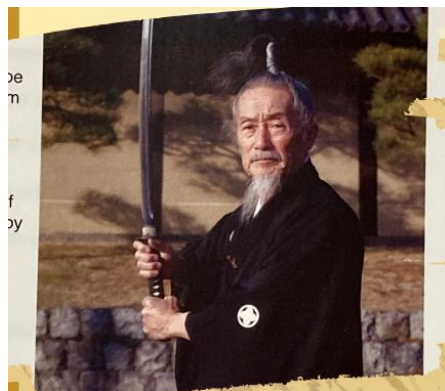
Based in Mie Prefecture. Spent her childhood in Singapore, and after working at the Japanese Embassy in Singapore as a member of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' diplomatic missions overseas, Yasui continues to work as a guide interpreter since August 2009. Moved to Mie Prefecture alongside her husband's job transfer. She guides many foreign tourists to sightseeing spots in Mie Prefecture as a translator-guide who swims 5km in the Mie sea and enjoys sake, and is a returnee to Japan who wears the kimono of a temple bride." Also active as a translator.



Jury Award (Special Judges Award)

ジョー岡田 / Joe Okada

A last samurai born in the early years of the Showa era. Worked as a foreign guide and Interpreter guide for over 60 years. Claim to fame is the Samurai Nippon Show, cutting fruit with Japanese swords at Fushimi Momoyama Castle. Commissioned in 2011 by the city Kyoto as the Kyoto Hospitality Ambassador. Known in Japan as the oldest guide at the age of 95. Self-published the English guide book BEYOND SIGHTSEEING-The Ultimate Guide to JAPAN in 2017. The title is a revised edition of THIS IS YOUR GUIDE SPEAKING (12 editions as of 1991)



◆ About the Guide of the Year Schematic

Details regarding the award and interviews with the winners are slated for release on the Globetrotter Travel Research Institute website.

<https://www.arukikata.co.jp/research/>

◆ Next Steps

The Chikyu no Arukikata brand, known for the famed “Globetrotter” travel book series and associated research arms (eng. “Globetrotter Travel Research Institute”) plans to leverage established networks to build deep global interest in the appeal of guides, fortification towards the training of better guides, symposiums launched alongside winning guides to consider the future of the guide industry, and conduct training.

New rounds for **Guide of the Year 2025** are tentatively scheduled for mid-June. Applications will be accepted via the Globetrotter Travel Research Institute Website.

<https://www.arukikata.co.jp/research/>

◆ About Globetrotter Travel Research Institute

The Chikyu no Arukikata (eng. “Globetrotter”) brand launched the Globetrotter Travel Research Institute in April 2017 as a mechanism to build better tourism in Japan and across the world. These efforts are in tandem effort to create activities that revitalize the inbound market in Japan and bolster international exchange.

Main activities are as follows:

- Create a system for regional revitalization to create a wealth for local earning and structure for the region to become self-reliant.
- Connect local DMO alongside new markets (US and American high-end markets, universal tourism, workcation markets) to foster creation of new content and better environments able to foster new market-based clientele.
- PR across brands like GOOD LUCK TRIP, the inbound media magazine run by Globetrotter to glean new insight or editing abilities.
- Linkage with domestic and international travel companies (including OTAs) to develop a new travel product and increase inbound travelers via travel agencies. Also, to leverage strategic travel professionals including travel agencies or seasoned travelers to the region who can share points of improvement for the next round of better tourism.



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- Company Details : Publishing and related operations for the sale of “Chikyu no Arukikata” (Globetrotter) Guidebook, Tourism Marketing, Insurance Agency