

# The Photographer's Guide to **KYOTO**

By Patrick Hochner and Richard Brown







ISO 64/24mm/f5.6/1/1600 sec



## About this book

Kyoto is one of the world's most photogenic cities and this book aims to walk you through the best of it with your camera in hand. There are a lot of images in the book, but don't mistake it for a portfolio. It's a guide book for photographers who are new to city and limited on time.

In the 380 square miles that make up Kyoto there are over 1100 temples and shrines, hundreds of Japanese gardens that change with the season, bamboo forests, festivals and neighborhoods like Gion where geisha still walk historically preserved streets.

Seeing it all is next to impossible in a life time, never mind a short trip to the city. The mountain of free English language maps and guides available can help, but they are written for tourists, not photographers. The city is big enough that with poor planning you can spend half your day in transport and the other half standing in lines.

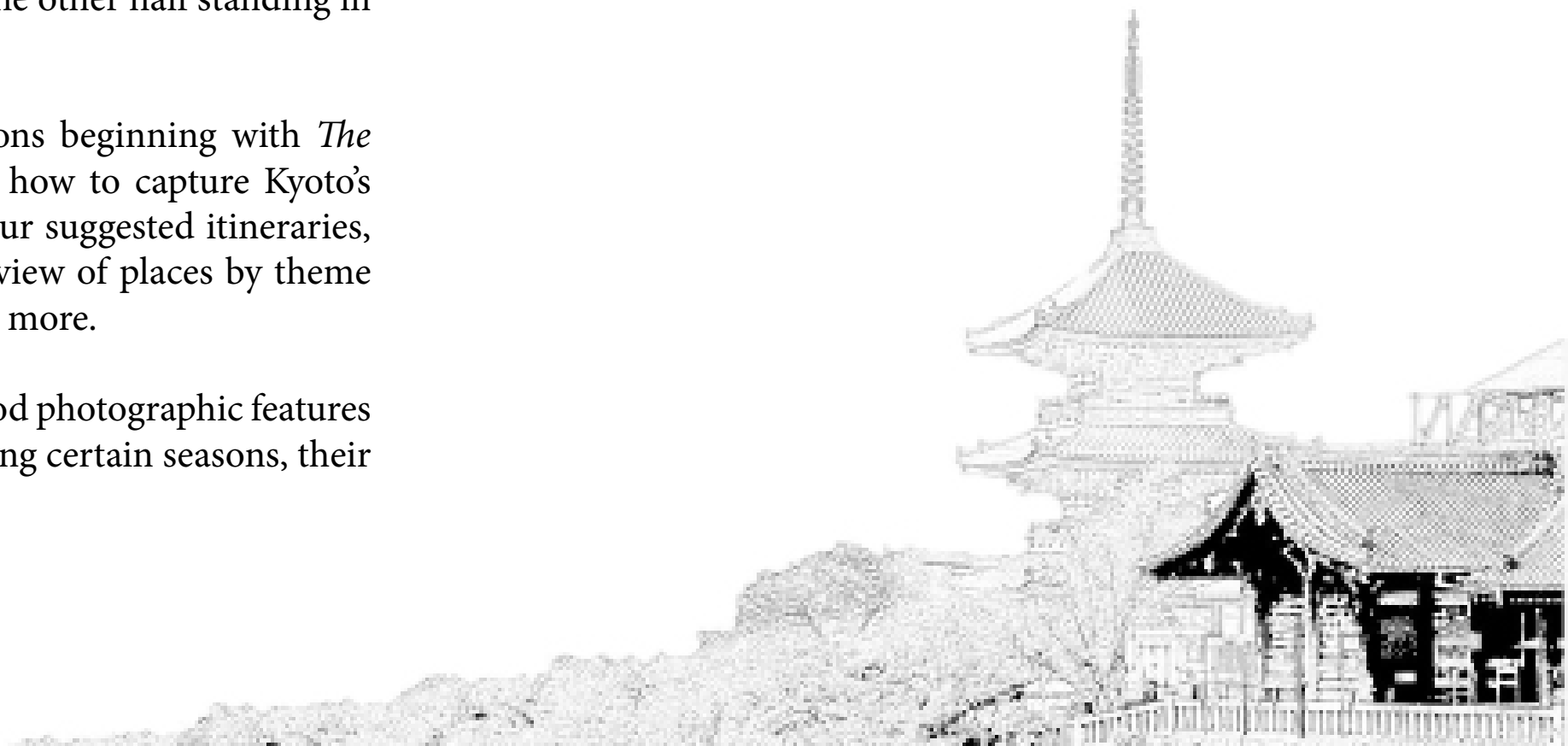
In the book we introduce over 40 locations beginning with *The Bucket List*, a quick review of where and how to capture Kyoto's most iconic images. This is followed by four suggested itineraries, a few locations in outlying areas and a review of places by theme including festivals, traditional gardens and more.

We focus on locations that have reliably good photographic features year round, those that are exceptional during certain seasons, their

convenience of location and those that have some sort of unique feature. This last point is important to keep you and those looking at your Kyoto slide show from getting *temples out*, a constant concern in the city of temples.

We do include simple maps that only aim to give you a good frame of reference. Those new to the city will benefit from a good map and a bus or train schedule.

Now grab your camera and put on a good pair of walking shoes. It's time to enjoy one of the most photogenic cities in the world.





# CONTENTS

The Bucket List	5
Geisha	18
North West Kyoto	24
South Kyoto	40
East Kyoto	52
Other Locations	71
Festivals and Themes	79
Photography in Kyoto	88
About the Authors	93



# THE BUCKET LIST

*“There is nothing worse than a sharp image of a fuzzy concept”*

Ansel Adams

Kyoto is a city spoiled for choice. Here we take a concentrated view of the scenes which time and again dominate the postcards and calendars.

Some of these locations make it so easy for the photographer that they only need to wait in a very long line for their turn to stand

where millions have stood before, raise their camera and capture a beautiful, precomposed scene of nature, ancient temple and sky.

Other places, however, demand more. The subjects, background and atmosphere are all there, but it's all up to you to put it together into a composition and into a compelling story.



Kinkaku-ji



Kiyomizu-dera



Fushimi Inari Taisha



Bamboo Grove





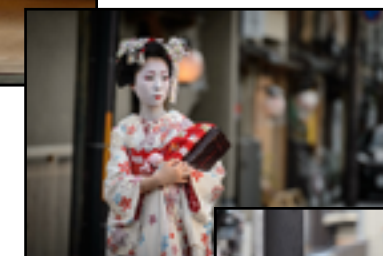


# GEISHA (Geiko and Maiko)

*You're jet lagged; you've seen more temples than you care to remember and you still haven't seen a Geisha. It's your last evening in Kyoto and you've finally spotted one. As you reach for your camera, she shuffles past, eyes trained to the ground. Your one and only chance is walking away...now what do you do?*

For every good image of a Geisha, there are thousands more of the backs of their heads. Getting a good image is not easy, but it can be done. It just takes planning and patience.

Today, Geisha still walk the streets as they have done for generations so the trick is to know their patterns and position yourself well. This tactic works for now, but the number of tourists has increased rapidly in the past decade and so have negative experiences with photographers who feel entitled to an image. This situation is driving an increase in regulation and beginning to change how Geisha, as well as monks, traditional artisans, and others interact with the public.





# Daigo-ji

There are over six square kilometers of temple grounds to navigate that include ponds, wooden bridges, gardens and a five-story pagoda. The grounds are divided into an upper and lower area, and if you are mixing tourism and photography, you could easily spend half of your day here.

Photographically speaking, the lower grounds are where you should focus your time. Be sure to visit the pond with its red-colored wooden arched bridge and the five-story Pagoda. In the spring and fall, the cherry trees and fall colors bring a whole new dimension to the grounds.

Bentendo Hall, Daigo-ji's most popular building, is next to a pond in the very back of the lower area. The hall is especially beautiful around late November when it is surrounded by autumn colors.



In all seasons be sure to keep your camera in hand. The temple is very active with Monks and others in traditional dress. A once in a lifetime chance can arise at any time.







The clouds have done a great job of diffusing the light to open up the shadows under the overhanging roof and showing us the detail hidden there



# Patrick Hochner

I started taking photographs in my native Alsace, France, when I was around 14. It's also around this time that I started to be interested in traveling. My dream was then to become a photographer, and travel around the world. It is as such that I arrived in Japan at the end of the 70's. And then I met the one who became my wife, and I stayed in Japan for some 30 years, but not as a photographer. But it's there that I restarted photography, after a lapse of almost 20 years, directly into the new digital world.

I never stopped traveling around the world, even if I probably spent more time in Asia than around the other continents. I'm always looking for something new, new encounters, something else somewhere else, and I'm always ready to leave for my next destination. I enjoy sharing these contacts, describing these encounters, and from the start, it's with pictures more than with words that I can communicate better.

It's the cultural side, the human aspect that interest me most. It's meeting other people, within their cultural environment, that attracts me. And it's these exchanges, these others that I like to meet, to take photographs of, and tell others about with images.

As it's always been the human element that was the main focus of my photographs, Kyoto has been a real challenge for me. Indeed, I often felt I had to try my best to take photos without anyone within the frame, and concentrate on other elements, the temple or the garden, or the scenery, and always the nature. This has allowed me to discover a new side of these places or these events, a new dimension. Kyoto is any photographer's paradise and I am enjoying it very much!



Patrick and his wife Akiko with a Maiko in Kyoto

## Awards and Accolades

**Popular Photography Magazine:** Monthly Photo Contest 1st Prize (March 2015)  
(photo on page 22)

**Photo Partner Kyoto:** Special mention Nov. 2015 and Nov. 2016  
<http://www.photo-kyoto.jp/maiko2015/>  
<http://www.photo-kyoto.jp/maiko2016/>

**Photo Partner West:** Special Selection (March 2016)  
[http://www.ppwest.org/maiko\\_6th/contest/index.html](http://www.ppwest.org/maiko_6th/contest/index.html)

## See more from Patrick here:

[patosan.com](http://patosan.com)  
[mykyotophoto.com](http://mykyotophoto.com)





# Thank you!

This book would not be possible without the help of a number of very kind people. Thanks to all who encouraged me in writing, discussions, feedback and more. I want to give a special thanks to Patrick, my partner on this book and the man behind the images and information provided. More important than the excellent insight and images he provided is the role he played as a dedicated and hardworking collaborator throughout the project. Always aiming for the highest quality option, he made himself available at any time, contributing without question whenever required. I was very lucky to find him as my partner on my first collaborative e-book project.

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I'd love to hear any feedback you have on the book. If interested, you can follow me on Twitter or just send me an email to keep in touch. Continuing on from *The Photographer's Guide to Tokyo*, this is just the second book in what I hope will be a longer series. Stay tuned...

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