



Participants in this Shinto ceremony at Nikko wear a variety of traditional costumes denoting specific function and status. ©Michael Yamashita. 1



Perched on a rock at Kyoto's Ryoan-ji, a Buddhist monk is intent upon raking the fine gravel sea that swirls around him.



A bridge leading to a mist-veiled Castle in Matsumoto, one of the best preserved fortresses from the samurai's reign.



The Samurai Way - Kendo Swordsmen. Without war, many samurai turned to martial arts like kendo, sword fighting often practiced with bamboo staves.



Deerskin chaps complete the medieval hunting outfit worn by participants in a yabusame, or mounted archery, event in Nikko. In this sport, adopted from a samurai training exercise, horseman fire arrows at small wooden targets.



Women arranging flowers in Tsumago, which preserves its Edo period street front.



To die like a cherry blossom , which falls at the peak of its beauty, held deep appeal for Samurai. Warriors facing defeat would rather commit suicide than grow old with dishonor.



To preserve the precision of the sand cone at Ginkaku-ji gardeners plane the surface regularly with a wooden mason's trowel.





A young woman practices the tea ceremony at Yabunouchi Tea School in Kyoto.



Despite appearing to be the height of simplicity, swept sand and rock gardens demand excruciatingly conscientious care. At the world famous Ryoan-ji in Kyoto, finding "satori" or enlightenment among the crowds can be difficult.