

**Japan 2006**  
*Photography by Jamie Smith*



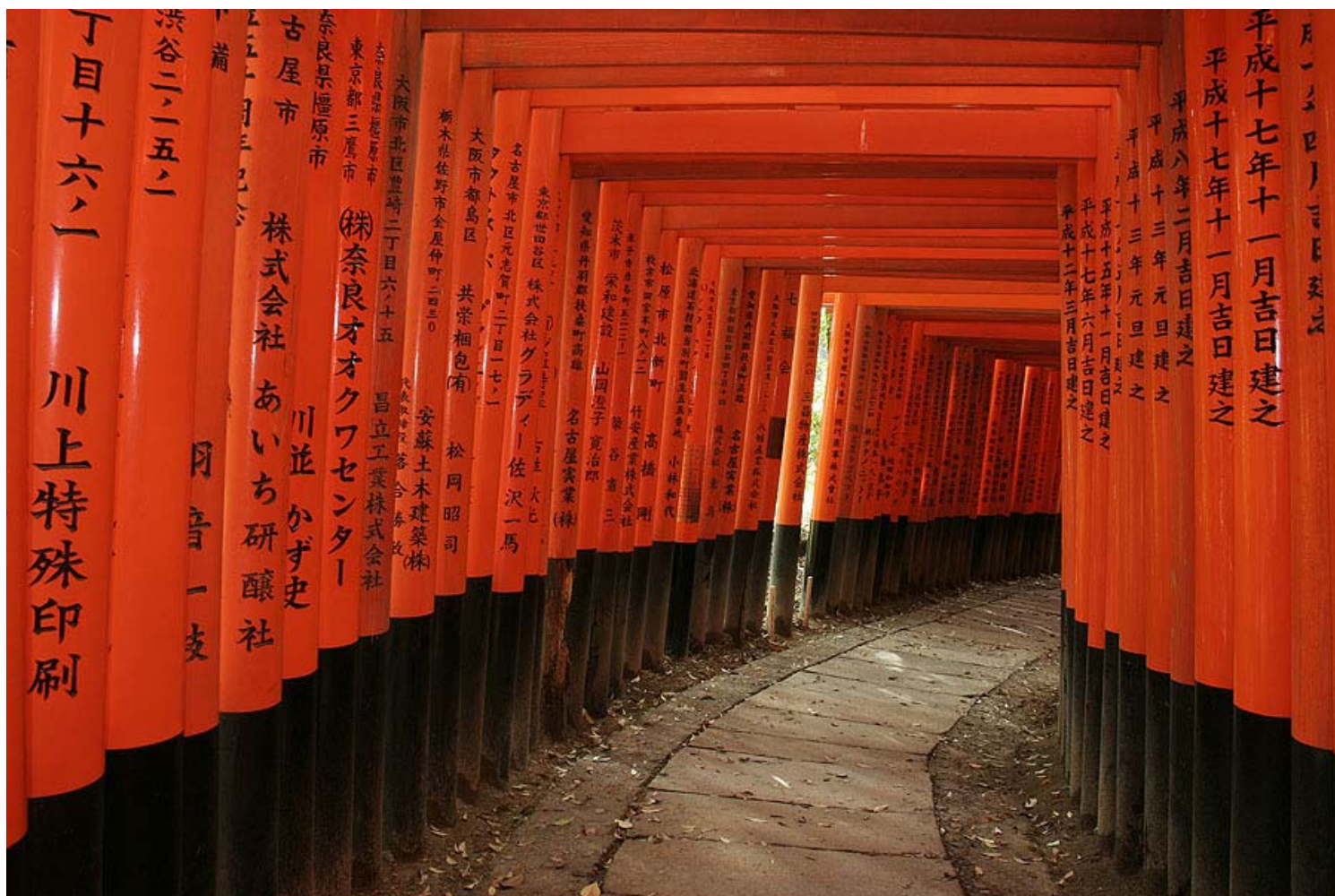
A boat docked by the Kinkaku-ji Temple (Golden Pavilion – circa 1397) in Kyoto. This is possibly one of the most beautiful temples in Kyoto; if you can manage to ignore the busloads of people that come to marvel at it. Even being in Japan a few days, you quickly acquire a knack for ignoring the crowds.

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After witnessing the traditional method of preparing green tea and sampling a traditional Japanese dessert, we had a chance to drink the tea. I went to Japan with a general distaste for tea, but the green tea in Japan is amazing and I my taste buds were quickly persuaded. This photo is one of my favourites because it is not just a bowl of green tea residue, but also traces out the shape of the Japanese flag.

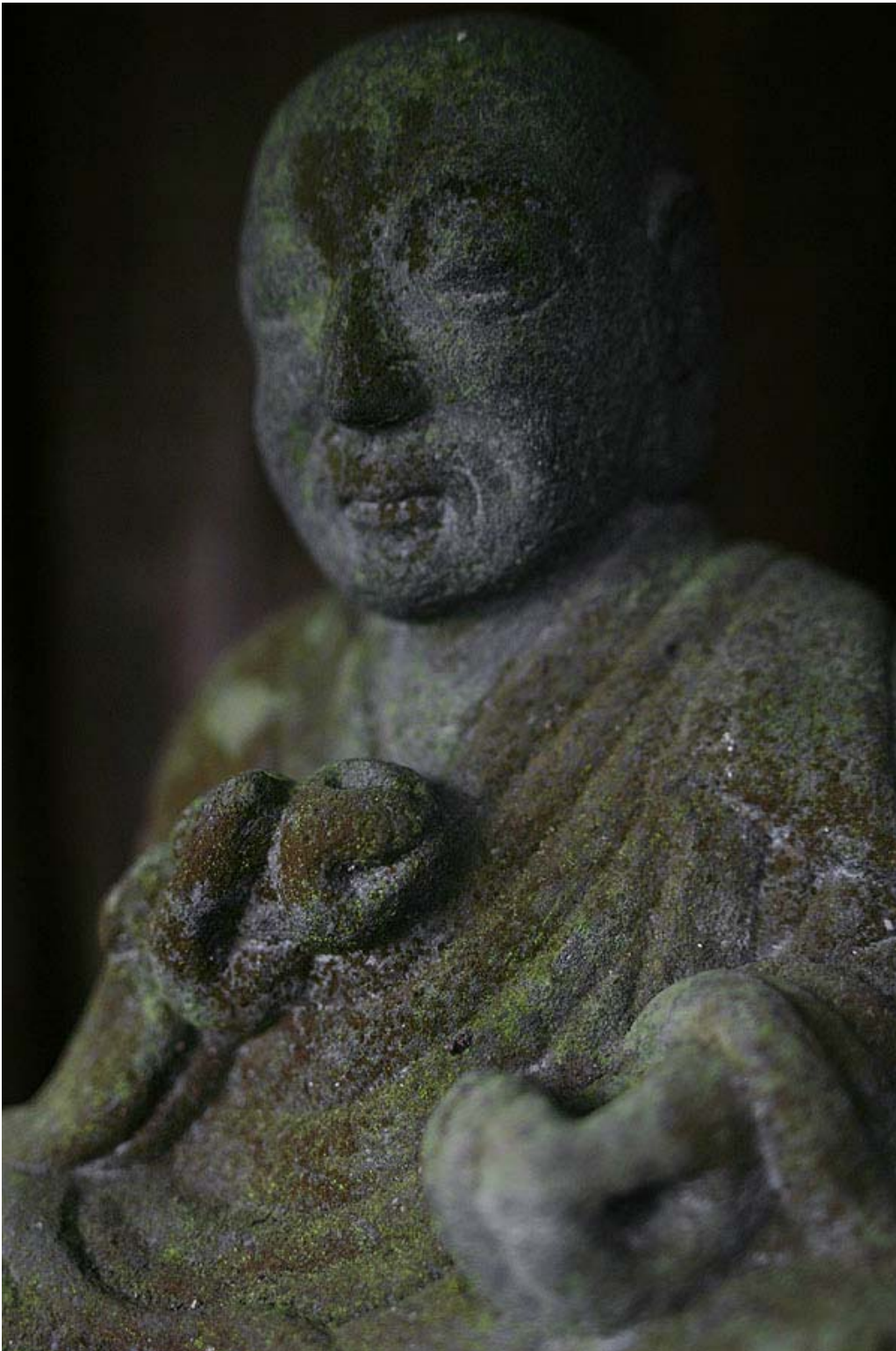
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On the first afternoon we spent in Kyoto, we went for a hike to a shrine that the hostel had recommended. Little did we know we were in for such amazement. This entire hill top shrine is dedicated to the gods of Sake and Rice. All over the grounds the pathways are accompanied by hundreds and hundreds of Torii; it was very impressive. Apparently, parts of 'Memoirs of a Geisha' were filmed here.

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Tim and I, while on Miyajima Island, decided to start on a bit of a journey. In hindsight we shouldn't have started the trek without packing some water and some food. Our trip start with an innocent suggestion that we follow some stairs leading off the path, then a second and equally well thought out suggestion to follow what looked like a narrow path that started in behind a small wooden house.

After about forty minutes of hiking the path stopped and we were forced to make our own path. In the end, we climbed to the top of Mt. Misen (530m) through the forest. But along the way, just when I had given up all hope of finding the top (or that there would even be

food or water at the top), we stumbled across this tiny shrine perched on the side of the mountain, sheltered only by a little hut and the trees. Tim and I stopped there a while, but before we left we decided to make a donation and pray that we get to the top and more importantly that there be food and water there. When we arrived at the top some while later, we were greeted with a vending machine and an old man selling chocolate covered peanuts of all things.

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In Tokyo there is a park, Yoyogi Park, which is very popular on weekends for people to visit. It is often populated with buskers and people showing off their interesting talents. For instance, I had watched two guys juggling for a while, where they would try to knock the other persons 'bowling pins' out of the air and still keep juggling their own. It was very entertaining, and I could have easily spent the entire weekend just taking in everything there is to see in the park. Usually, at the outskirts of the park, in amongst the buskers are these people who express themselves by dressing up in elaborate costumes (usually from comic books and anime – I believe the term is 'cosplay'). It's very interesting to see, such a variety of unique people all in one place.