GUIDED BY LIGHT

Spend a day in Japan with Travel Designer Mark Lakin, where light leads the way—and powers his Citizen watches at every turn.

Light is essential to human life, but few places honor it with the same quiet reverence as Japan, where it shapes everything from the cadence of a morning tea ceremony to the glow of alleyways after dark.

For Mark Lakin—a member of Travel + Leisure's Travel Advisory Board and the founder of Legacy Untold—Japan is a study in intention, where light and mastery are intertwined. "So many of the experiences travelers are interested in seeing in Japan were developed in complete isolation during the Edo period, so they're completely distinct," he says. As he's curated journeys there for both clients and himself, Lakin has been struck by the country's cultural expectation of perfection: "They're singular in their pursuit of doing something with excellence."

For over 50 years, Citizen has been similarly focused in its mastery of Eco-Drive, the innovation that established the brand as a pioneer in sustainable watchmaking. First introduced in 1976, Eco-Drive continues to evolve—harnessing both natural and artificial light to power timepieces designed for wherever the day leads.

Below, follow Lakin and Citizen through a carefully curated day in Tokyo, and discover how light not only defines the city, but powers every moment along the way.

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>
> MARK LAKIN

MORNING: LIT BY RITUAL

"Japan forces you to slow down," Lakin says. "It's just in their culture." Perhaps nowhere exemplifies that more than a traditional Sakurai Japanese tea ceremony. Here, the morning sun filters gently through floor-to-ceiling windows and a soft lamp casts a quiet glow, illuminating the tea master as he performs each step with measured precision.

"What's so distinct here is that every leaf of tea is precious, each drop of water is sourced from a very specific place, and every gesture has so much intention, down to the angle of the spoon," Lakin says. "In Western societies, speed is often prioritized over excellence," he adds. "This is antithetical to that idea. It's a reminder that even the smallest moments and details should be savored."

That sensibility, which is so deeply rooted in Japanese customs, is echoed in the design of Lakin's Citizen Promaster Land GMT: As he takes in the meditative stillness of the morning tea ritual, his watch quietly draws power from the ambient light around him. From this light-powered Eco-Drive technology to its rugged construction and streamlined silhouette, every detail reflects the same unwavering commitment to precision and purpose—making it an understated, essential companion for travelers like Lakin who value both.

MIDDAY: REFINED BY FIRE

In the afternoon, Lakin pays a visit to Hirata Swordsmith, where raw Tamahagane steel is melted, molded, and expertly pounded into traditional Japanese swords. In this workshop—lit only by the flames of a thousand-degree furnace and the bright flashes of molten steel flying through the air—both Lakin and his Citizen ATTESA Shades of Red Collection Limited Edition H874 get energized by the sparks.

"In Japan, there's so much value in being dedicated to the mastery and perfection of one thing," Lakin says. "You can really feel it here. In fact, you can hear it in the rhythmic clang of hammers before you even set foot in the building." You can feel it in his Super Titanium™ ATTESA timepiece, too, which is powered by Eco-Drive and features Atomic Timekeeping for superior accuracy down to the trillionth of a second when connected—a level of precision echoed in both the formation and the use of these handcrafted blades.

"There's that same sense of discipline, meticulousness, and repetition when practicing with swords, too," Lakin says. From the proper grip to the traditional techniques for each strike, *kendo* (swordsmanship) is all about doing each movement over and over until it becomes second nature.

As they'd say in Tokyo, Lakin's Citizen ATTESA Shades of Red Collection Limited Edition H874 is the *saikōhō* (pinnacle) of watchmaking technology, where sustainable energy and advanced material science meet in a design that feels both purposeful and refined, echoing the unspoken artistry of steel blades.

EVENING: ALIVE WITH LIGHT

As evening falls, Tokyo reveals a different kind of light. "What I've learned about Tokyo is that in the morning, light filters between buildings and trees in a way that feels spiritual, meditative, and even calm," Lakin says. "But at night it's electric, diverse, and dizzying, in a cool way." An evening stroll through Golden Gai, one of the city's historic nightlife districts, highlights the vibrant display. Here, neon signs, glowing screens, and paper lanterns cast a kaleidoscope of color across narrow alleyways, illuminating a hidden world of bars and late-night spots—and quietly powering Lakin's sleek, sporty Citizen ATTESA as he slips inside for a nightcap.

"In these tiny bars, the atmosphere can be really varied depending on who's in there with you," he says. Whether it's the soft laughter of a couple tucked into a corner or the lively energy of tourists passing through, that sense of unpredictability is part of the allure. "Being able to roll with the punches is the key to everything in terms of being a great traveler," Lakin says.

That same adaptability is built into his watch. "For somebody like me who is constantly on the move, it's really cool to know that my Citizen watch will just keep working no matter what," he says. Thanks to Eco-Drive technology, the spellbinding evening sights of Tokyo will keep Lakin's watch running long after the sun goes down—and ensure he's ready to begin again with the first light of morning.

Your Next Adventure

Read the articles below to learn more about the power of Eco-Drive, and see why a Citizen watch is the perfect travel companion for your next adventure.

The Art of Traveling Lightly

Between Light and Time

Explore Citizen watches designed to move with you, wherever the light leads.

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