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When Tokyo slows down: Khaled Iwamura uncovers its hidden beauty



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Tokyo is known for its flashing neon lights and bustling crowds, but there's another side of the city that moves at a slower pace. On this journey, Khaled Iwamura uncovers three very different faces of Tokyo: a remote volcanic island, quiet mountain towns, and the cultural heartbeat of the city itself.

Hachiojima Island

A one-hour flight south of Tokyo, Hachiojima feels far removed from the city. Here, the soundtrack is waves crashing on volcanic cliffs and trees swaying in the wind.

Khaled begins his day at Kukansha in Long Beach 1983, a cabin-like spot hidden among the trees, where hand-poured coffee pairs perfectly with kakigori, Japanese shaved ice. At Gelateria 365, fresh Jersey milk from free roaming cows becomes creamy gelato flavored with sea salt and local lemon.

Later, at Hachijo-mingei Yamashita, he learns to weave Kihachijo silk, a craft that has been passed down for centuries using dyes made from native plants. "Perfection isn't the point," Khaled says. "Presence is."

The day continues with shochu tasting at Sakashita Shuzo, where one man, Okiyama-san, mills and bottles each batch by hand. Dinner follows at Ryozanpaku, a humble izakaya where specialties like shimazushi, kusaya, and ashitaba tempura capture the island's flavours.

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