

Né, a Japanese Auberge Built to Return to the Earth, Wins Popular Choice at the 2026 Architizer A+Awards

The one-group-per-day auberge in the hills of Shibata, Niigata was ranked No. 1 by public vote in Architecture + Environment, across 80+ countries.

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SHIBATA, Niigata, Japan — Né, a one-group-per-day auberge in the hills of Shibata, has been named Popular Choice Winner in the Architecture + Environment category of the 2026 Architizer A+Awards — ranked first by public vote across more than 80 countries, from a field of five finalists.



Né, a one-group-per-day auberge in Shibata, Niigata.
Photo: Hiroki Kawata

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*Motoki Kumagai, Founder of
Né*

Opened in October 2025, Né was built without concrete. The house rests on 105 timber piles and is clad in local cedar and Yasuda roof tile; its walls are made from the site's own earth, fermented for more than six months. It was designed to return, one day, to the land it stands on. The building is the work of Kenta Fukunishi Architecture Office, set on 3,200 tsubo of the former Honma estate.

"We don't think of the architecture as a building so much as a form of hospitality," said Motoki Kumagai, founder of Né. "The recognition matters to us only because it brings the idea to people who feel the same way."

At the table, executive chef Makoto Fuse — who trained under three-star chef Antoine Westermann in Paris and led IWAI OMOTESANDO in Tokyo — serves a thirteen-course dinner. Né

welcomes a single group each day for a fully private stay; its eight-seat restaurant counter is also open to non-staying guests, and the entire restaurant may be reserved privately.

Reservations are open at ne-auberge.jp.

Né has also been selected by The Aficionados, its first property in Asia.

About Né / Ahead of the Curve Inc.
Né is operated by Ahead of the Curve Inc., founded by Motoki Kumagai — a Shibata native and Wharton MBA who founded GODENYA in Hong Kong in 2014 (Michelin one star, 2023–2026).

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Ne's foundation: 105 timber piles, built without concrete. Photo: Hiroki Kawata



Ne's dining room with fermented-earth walls. Photo: Hiroki Kawata

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