

Japan

日本



Cherry Blossom Time, Spring 2016

Bob and Molly Hillery

Japan, Spring 2016

This was our first real visit to Japan; although we have changed planes in Tokyo on several visits to Southeast Asia, we have never actually spent any time in the country. We had decided on taking a tour as we had been advised that traveling on our own might be a little difficult without any knowledge of the language.

We had chosen a tour operated by All Japan Tours, about whom we knew nothing, but the 12 days seemed to cover a large area of the country and certainly visited all of the cities and areas that we had wanted to see. In addition, the tour was to take place at (we hoped) the height of the Cherry Blossom season so we expected to see some beautiful countryside.

We chose to arrive at the starting city of Fukuoka a day before the beginning of the tour to allow us to get settled and a little relaxed before what we anticipated would be a fairly hectic two weeks. In fact, it would be about 2 ½ weeks total time in country as we also planned to stay for an extra two days in Tokyo after the tour finished.

The tour turned out to be excellent in all respects except for the guide! He was a personable individual but, unlike most guides we have experienced, spent very little time on the things we wanted to hear (history, culture, demographics, politics, food, etc) and did little more than take us from one place to another and try to keep the group together.

Despite this significant drawback, the tour was absolutely fantastic and every day we were surprised and pleased with the things we saw and, in general, how different things were from what we had expected. The scenery (mostly mountainous) was magnificent; the temples, shrines and castles were interesting and different; the food (almost all meals were traditional Japanese except for breakfast) was VERY different but good; the people were very friendly; and, the cherry blossom was about at its best.

We found the country to be one of contrasts; high tech side by side with deep-rooted cultural politeness and a genteel nature; traditional gardens and 21st century skyscrapers; organizational excellence alongside an almost obsessive paper trail mindset. It was a fascinating experience and, while the image of Japan as a world-class design and manufacturing country was not dispelled, it was definitely supplemented - and at times contradicted - by an old world charm and dedication to service.

We had a wonderful time, would repeat without hesitation, and wondered why we had not been here before this.

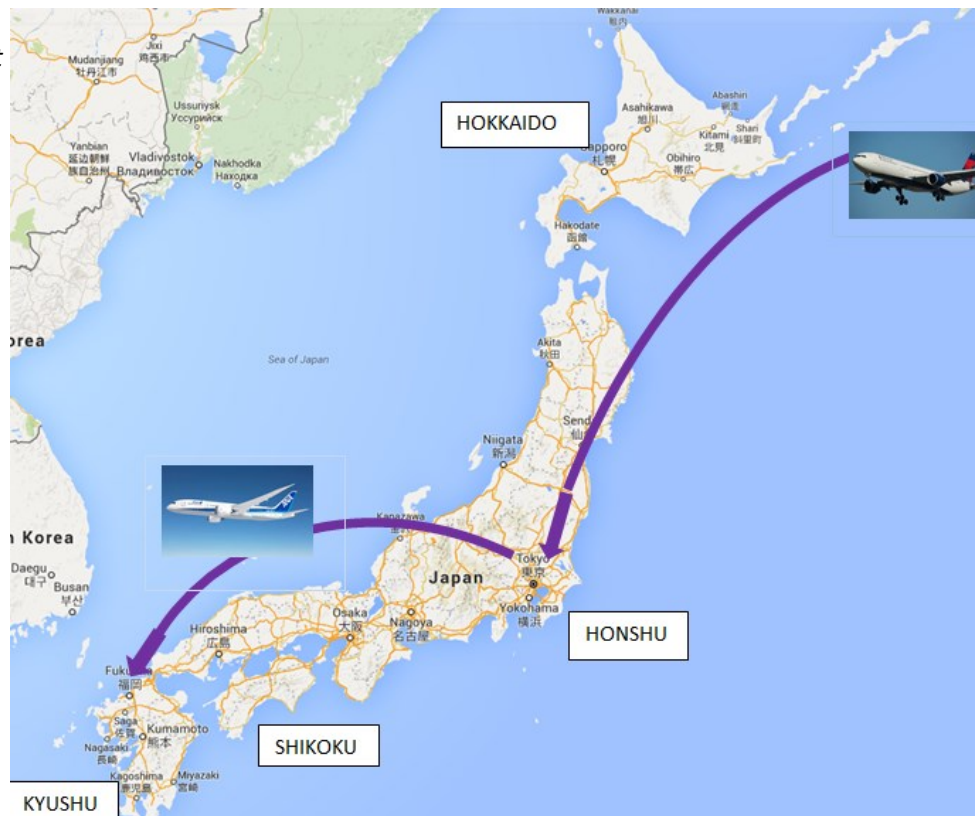
Japan is an island country in East Asia. Located in the Pacific Ocean, it lies to the east of the Sea of Japan, the East China Sea, China, North Korea, South Korea and Russia, stretching from the Sea of Okhotsk in the north to the East China Sea and Taiwan in the south.

Japan comprises 6,852 islands, the four largest of which are Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu and Shikoku, which make up about ninety-seven percent of Japan's land area. The country is divided into 47 prefectures in eight regions. The population of 126 million is the world's tenth largest and Japanese make up 98.5% of the total. Approximately 9.1 million people live in the core city of Tokyo, and with several surrounding prefectures, is the world's largest metropolitan area with over 35 million residents.

The first written mention of Japan is in Chinese history texts from the 1st century AD but it was not until the sixth century that tribal power was consolidated and an emperor was installed. The country has been under the rule of an emperor ever since, with two notable exceptions, the second of which emanates from the post-World War II imposition of a constitutional monarchy. In the first (from the 12th century until 1868) Japan was ruled by successive feudal military shoguns who governed in the name of the Emperor.

Japan entered into a long period of isolation in the early 17th century, which was ended in 1853 when Japan was pressured to open to the West. Nearly two decades of internal conflict and insurrection followed before the Meiji Emperor was restored as head of state in 1868, with the Emperor as a divine symbol of the nation. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, victories in the First Sino-Japanese War, the Russo-Japanese War and World War I allowed Japan to expand its empire during a period of increasing militarism. The Second Sino-Japanese War of 1937 expanded into part of World War II in 1941, which came to an end in 1945 following the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Since adopting its revised constitution in 1947, Japan has maintained a unitary constitutional monarchy with an Emperor and an elected legislature called the National Diet.

The country has the world's third-largest economy by nominal GDP and the world's fourth-largest economy by purchasing power parity. It is also the world's fourth-largest exporter and fourth-largest importer. Although Japan has officially renounced its right to declare war, it maintains a modern military used for self-defense and peacekeeping roles. Japan is a developed country with a high standard of living whose population enjoys the highest life expectancy and the third lowest infant mortality in the world.



Our Cherry Blossom Special Tour

Friday March 25

We had rented a car on Thursday to go to the airport today for our late afternoon flight to Los Angeles. For a number of reasons, we had decided to stay in LA overnight and take our onward flight to Tokyo on Saturday. With the time difference we would arrive at Fukuoka (the starting point for the tour) on Sunday, which would give us a full day to relax before the two weeks of traveling across the country.

The 4pm flight to LAX was about 20 minutes late leaving Cincinnati but we were not concerned as all we had to do in LA was get to the airport Marriott. We had a good meal on board and the flight was very smooth throughout and we actually arrived at LAX essentially on time at 6pm local time. We collected our bags and then waited about 20 minutes for the shuttle to the Marriott. Although it was still early evening here we were still on Eastern time and relaxed in the room until an early bedtime.

Saturday March 26

We were up soon after 6:30 and had a light breakfast in the Concierge Lounge before checking out. There was a long line for the airport shuttle but we managed to get on the first one that came and were at the airport by 8am. We used the new Delta One check-in facility and have to admit that it was a seamless and efficient process. Our bags were checked and our documents readied while we sat in a small lounge where snacks were available. Once we got our boarding passes (bags checked to Fukuoka) we went upstairs, through the TSA Pre Check security line and were soon in the Delta Sky Club. We relaxed there until we left for our flight to Tokyo which left LAX at 10:30. We were on our way!

Sunday March 27

The almost 12 hour flight to Tokyo went relatively quickly; we enjoyed a good meal, slept for about 4 hours and, despite about 1 ½ hours of turbulence, we arrived feeling reasonably awake. It was cloudy and in the mid-fifties in Tokyo as we cleared Immigration and Customs and found our way to the ANA check-in for our flight to Fukuoka. This flight didn't leave until almost 6pm and we had arrived at 2:30 so, after all formalities, we still had over 2 hours in the ANA lounge. This passed quickly and we left on time on our flight to Fukuoka. It was a clear evening (already dark at 6pm) but I am afraid we both were soon asleep and missed dinner! However, what I saw of it didn't appear too appetizing and when we woke the flight attendant brought us wine/coffee and some snacks. Once in Fukuoka our bags were first off the carousel and we also quickly found an ATM and a taxi to the hotel. The drive was less than 20 minutes so we were checked in shortly after nine and unpacked soon after that. We both felt a need for something to eat and drink but the hotel restaurant was serving full-on meals, which didn't really appeal. So, we walked outside and soon found a coffee shop where we had a drink and cookies which fit the bill nicely. We then returned to the hotel, showered and retired around 10:30pm (9:30 am in Cincinnati).

Monday March 28

We slept well until around 5am and finally got up soon after six. We thought we would have the breakfast room to ourselves but it was crowded when we arrived shortly after its 6:30 opening. We had a good buffet breakfast and then set out on a walk around the local area. We were out before 8:30 and it was quite chilly (less than 50F) but it was a bright and sunny morning.

We completed a three mile walk by about 11 and returned to the hotel for a while. Our stroll took us along a number of shopping streets and across several rivers, some areas quite attractive, others less so. Everywhere was clean and the public services seemed to be very efficient, as one might expect. People were courteous although generally made little eye contact and seemed intent on going about their daily routine. However, service personnel were extremely gracious and friendly and we were learning to bow at every opportunity.

We had coffee in one of a local chain of coffee shops and spent some time in a new mall quite close to the hotel. There were a few restaurants in there and one (Italian) looked like a good choice for dinner tonight.

Around 2pm we went out again and walked about 15 minutes to a complex called Canal City. This is an area of shops, restaurants and hotels built around a canal (specifically built as part of the project). It was reminiscent of something we had seen in Las Vegas. The canal (only about a quarter mile long but with some impressive fountains) is outdoors but most of the shopping is in a huge indoor mall. We wandered through just a small area of one floor (there looked to be about six) and there was an impressive collection of well-known stores. Interestingly, although English is not commonly seen and few people appear to speak it, the large stores display all their goods with English signage.



***Our first day in Fukuoka
before the Tour began***



An unusual shopping center and an attractive river walk



When we returned to our room, there was an Easter gift from Christopher, Cyndi and Sammy; a lovely presentation of fresh fruit - a large orange, a kiwi, three enormous strawberries and two other fruits we couldn't name but were delicious.

Tonight we walked just a few hundred yards from the hotel to an Italian restaurant that sits alongside a river. We felt that we weren't yet ready to immerse ourselves in Japanese food and would save that until we had some better advice from the tour guide when we start the trip tomorrow.

We had a good, simple Italian meal and a bottle of wine and then walked home and went straight to bed.

Tomorrow the tour proper starts with three days to be spent on the western-most large island of Kyushu.



Tuesday March 29

We had breakfast in the hotel and finished our packing before meeting our group in the lobby at 7:45. Our bus (parked a few hundred feet away!) left promptly at eight and we then had a two hour drive to Nagasaki. The route followed an expressway virtually the whole way and the driver kept an essentially constant speed in fairly light traffic.

The countryside was not unlike that of parts of Northern California: hilly with lots of trees and many fruit, rice and vegetable growing areas. We had several long views across valleys and occasional glimpses of the ocean, particularly as we neared our destination. We passed through at least two dozen tunnels, ranging in length from less than 100 yards to two miles or more. The weather was mild and quite bright but there was significant haze much of the way so the wide valleys and distant hills were not as clear as we might have preferred. However, it was an

extremely pleasant ride through some beautiful and at times quite spectacular scenery.

As soon as we arrived at the port of Nagasaki we began our first visit of the day. This was to a very small island (480 meters by 160 meters) which for over a hundred years was a coal mining town of up to 10,000 inhabitants, making it the most densely populated place in the world. The mine shafts ran as much as 1000 meters under the island and surrounding sea and the town covered the rest of the small area.

The island was surrounded by a concrete wall to resist encroachment by the rough seas and much of the town comprised high rise apartment blocks for the miners, their families and store owners. Consequently, the island looked from a distance like a huge battleship and Gunkanjima is known as Battleship Island. The town also provided schooling and some recreational facilities for the families who lived there.

Housing was cramped for the miners and, of course, the work itself was difficult and dirty - but apparently they were well compensated, at least in the latter years of its existence. Conversion to oil and gas in the sixties and seventies brought to an end the need for the coal mined here and the island was eventually abandoned and fell into decay. Buildings crumbled and fell and much of the space was overgrown with weeds and vegetation. However, in the beginning of this century, the government felt a need to commemorate this important piece of Japan's industrial past and work began to make the site safe for visitors and in 2015 the island was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site.

The island is almost 5Km from the Nagasaki port so we took a high speed ferry boat to make our visit. As we approached, the boat circled the island so that we could get an appreciation of its size and shape and then we docked for a short walking tour. Some of the high rises are still recognizable as buildings, although the concrete structures (dating back to 1916) have not weathered well, but much of the island consists of huge slabs and rubble. It is not a particularly attractive sight but it was interesting to see how this industrial site was established and lived in and to acknowledge its importance in the industrial revolution of Japan.



***Battleship
Island
and one of its
last workers!***



Nagasaki is still an enormous port and shipbuilding town and seems to be owned by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries.

They build commercial and military ships here for both domestic and worldwide customers. The Diamond Princess Cruise ship was built there, for example, and another large passenger ship was in the process of being assembled at this time.



Nagasaki sits about two thirds of the way down a long peninsula and has a large natural harbor and dozens of islands in the bay. The land is mountainous close to the ocean so comparisons with San Francisco are often made. Certainly the terrain on the shore and immediately outside the port has many features similar to the Bay Area. The city even has a thriving street car system - one of only two still operational in Japan we were told (although proved incorrect as we saw three on our trip) - and the town buys cars from cities than have no further use for them.

After the visit to the island we were taken to lunch in the city. This was a typical Japanese meal with about a dozen dishes served at two very low tables. Getting into position to eat was quite challenging and the dishes were most unfamiliar but most of the group seemed to enjoy both the food and the experience. This is perhaps as well since we got the impression that lunch (and some dinners) on the tour would be of this style.



*Our first real
Japanese
Meal
おいしい
Delicious!*

In the afternoon we first visited the Glover Gardens. Glover was a Scot who came to Japan in 1859 and is widely recognized as the architect of the industrial revolution of the country. His home was built on one of the hills overlooking the port and the house and gardens are now a significant tourist attraction. Ours was something of a whirlwind visit and we were hurried through the house and then walked back to the bus through the gardens. The cherry blossom was out so this was our first exposure to this major attraction. We certainly expect to



see much more as we continue the tour.



Our final stop of the day was at the Nagasaki Peace Park, a hilltop area of open public space dedicated to the victims of the second atomic bomb which ended the war with Japan.



At 11:02 A.M., August 9, 1945 an atomic bomb exploded 500 meters above this spot. The black stone monolith marks the hypocenter. The fierce blast wind, heat rays reaching several thousand degrees and deadly radiation generated by the explosion crushed, burned, and killed everything in sight and reduced this entire area to a barren field of rubble. About one-third of Nagasaki City was destroyed and 150,000 people killed or injured and it was said at the time that this area would be devoid of vegetation for 75 years. Now, the hypocenter remains as an international peace park and a symbol of the aspiration for world harmony.

The site was the hypocenter of the blast that took over 90,000 lives on August 9, 1945 and the only building actually there at the time was a prison. The remains of the prison walls are the only visible sign and, other than an enormous "peace" statue and several small commemorative sculptures and markers, the only physical remains of the site. The rest is a large flat park with an attractive and impressive "winged" fountain. So, the commemorative area is quite simple and, so we understand, distinctly different to the one in Hiroshima which we will see in a few days' time. For me, the park was not as moving as I had expected for something commemorating such enormous destruction and of such importance in the history of the world.



***Nagasaki Peace
Park***

From the Peace Park it was a short drive to our hotel where we checked in around 5:30, at which point we were on our own until morning. We asked at the desk about dining options and were directed to the fifth floor of a shopping mall a ten minute walk from the hotel. Having a number of restaurants on the top floor of a mall is not uncommon in Asia, we have found, and this one had at least a dozen eating places.

We had been advised by our guide that the local specialty was Nagasaki Champon - a hot broth of vegetables, meats and shrimp - so we found a place that offered that and ordered. We got a half bottle of wine to accompany it and we both enjoyed the meal. Perhaps not an everyday desire but good nevertheless. We finished with two Chinese sweet desserts.

Wednesday March 30

It was overcast as we ate breakfast on the 15th floor of the hotel before leaving Nagasaki. We left by bus and drove about two hours east to take a ferry across an inlet. The drive took us through hilly terrain but every small valley or area of flat (or almost flat) land was filled with growing vegetables. The fields were small and terraced to take advantage of every square inch and were extremely neatly planted in straight rows. The size of the fields was such that many must have been cultivated using small tillers rather than tractors.



We arrived at the ferry terminal about 30 minutes before the scheduled departure time so we had time for a coffee before loading. The bus went on the boat so we were able to leave everything and take a walk on deck as we sailed the short (40 minutes) cruise across the inlet from the Nagasaki peninsula. We were each given a packet of bird food so the attending seagulls were well satisfied as we made our crossing.



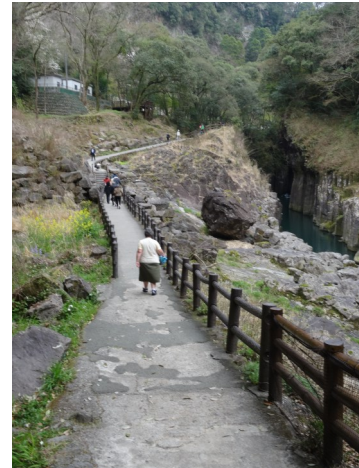
Once on the opposite shore we drove for about ninety minutes through urban streets and got to see what we assume is typical of a Japanese city sprawl. Actually, it wasn't unlike a US city sprawl with lots of car dealerships, supermarkets, DIY stores and fast food outlets. During part of this time we were shown an interesting DVD

about the Emperor and Empress and their busy life of civic duties. They appeared to be a very gracious and sociable couple and we were reminded of Queen Elizabeth as we watched them greeting international statesmen and Japanese citizens alike.

Leaving the city we started to climb on much more rural roads with steep, twisting roads and expansive views over deep gorges and valleys. Actually, the views were not as good as they might have been as by now the clouds had descended and it was raining quite heavily. Around 1:30 we reached our lunch stop which was also the starting point for our first activity of the day. We had another Japanese lunch in traditional low table/cushion seating style and once again came away satisfied with the unusual assortment of dishes.

After lunch we drove a short while, still in the same small town of Takachiho to the head of a gorge. We walked

down probably $\frac{2}{3}$ mile to the river and small lake at the foot of the gorge, where the feature was a relatively small but attractive waterfall. There were perhaps a dozen small boats that went to the foot of the falls; hardly Niagara's Maid of the Mist but presumably a pleasant ride. The return to the bus was much easier as we were provided with a minibus for the steep uphill climb.



Next we went to a shrine which apparently is famous in Japanese mythology. At some point, the Sun Goddess Amaterasu was held captive (by her brother) in a cave (which was pointed out to us but at some distance across a ravine so a vivid imagination was required) so the earth was dark.



The locals held a convention to discuss ways of getting her to come out (and stop the rampant "crimes" of the darkness) and settled on having a cock crow as that usually heralded dawn and her presence. This worked and we still have sun.

We were greeted at the shrine by a Shinto priest (who spoke no English but our guide translated) but it wasn't clear just how much this story was

part of Shinto religion or merely a nice tale - or even simply a tourist attraction!

From the shrine, those of us who were inclined walked about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile down to another river bed where there was a large cave opening in the cliff side.

This had been the con-



vention hall of the sun goddess story. Actually it was much more impressive than her cave and had in it a small shrine and hundreds of small “statues” created from pebbles. Again, we have no account as to whether or how these might fit into the whole story - but it was a pleasant walk anyway. We were fortunate that the rains of the morning had dissipated and we were able to do all our walking under cloudy but dry skies.



“Let’s eat!”

After checking in to our hotel - in which we had a traditional room (mat floor and thin mattresses for a bed) we had another filling traditional dinner and then were driven just a few minutes to watch a Yokagura dance troupe perform the Sun Goddess story.



Our guide had warned us that the one hour show might be a little “slow” for us (and even said we could leave if we wanted before its conclusion) and his analysis was spot on. Basically a total of four dancers did very methodical and slow movements about the stage for the whole show, interrupted only by what appeared to be a door prize drawing and a sing along. The fact that everything was in Japanese and we once again had to sit on a mat floor didn’t add anything to our overall understanding or comfort. However, we did learn from a handout written in English that their interpretation of how the goddess was tempted from the cave was that a group of people told jokes and laughed out loud such that she peeked out to see what all the fuss was about. You be the judge!



We were driven back to the hotel and retired about 9:30 to our on- floor beds.

Traditional Japanese Bedroom

(and bedding)

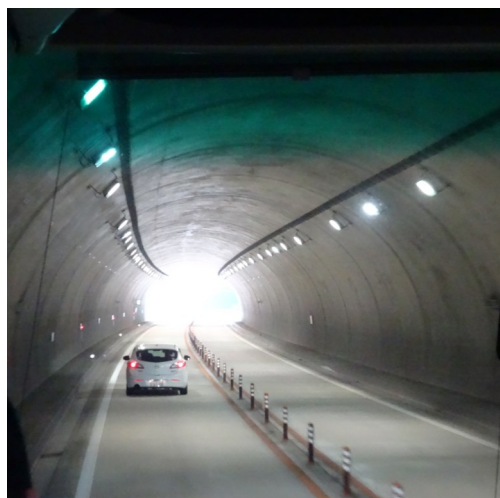


Thursday March 31

We had slept quite well considering the unusual bed and we were up about six, in plenty of time to have breakfast and finish packing before our 7:45 bus departure. We drove about two hours through some spectacular mountain scenery (not high enough to have snow caps) with expansive views of valleys below the road.



However, we estimated that at least 30% of the drive along this fast two lane highway was through tunnels. These ranged in length from a few hundred meters to over 3 Km and often there were several in a series separated by just a few meters of open stretch. Certainly Japan has built an expansive and well-engineered road system if this is typical of the country. Some of the



bridge viaducts were hundreds of feet above the valley floor and were beautiful structures in their own right.



Our first stop for the day was at the Mt Takasaki Monkey Park. This is a national park dedicated to the preservation of the Japanese monkey and is a big tourist attraction. Apparently the monkeys (about 1400 at last count) have been here for centuries



and are wild but in the past 50 years or so they have been fed by park rangers to avoid conflict with local residents, and farmers in particular.

Feeding time is the time when everyone tries to be there as each monkey colony in turn comes down from the mountain and gathers in a large compound. Here tourists watch as hundreds of monkeys eat and run around as well as climb the trees in the area. Almost on cue it seems the "show" is over for this group as they start disbanding - presumably to be followed in fairly rapid succession by other colonies, each with their "boss".



Next we went to a thermal area where we saw a small geyser (it has a short period between eruptions so is quite predictable, making it good for tourism). The geyser would reach a height of 30 meters we were told but a wall and "cap" have been built to contain it so it is probably no more than 20 feet of boiling water spout at this time. We also visited a steaming pool which has an iron oxide base and so appears almost blood red.



Interestingly, both features (Monkey Mountain and the Geyser Park) are privately owned and sit essentially at the side of city streets so for those who have seen the much more spectacular and natural areas of Yellowstone or New Zealand, this was rather tame. More intriguing were the many steam vents seen in the city streets themselves as well as chimneys emitting steam from the thermal baths which are a feature of this area. For us, however, the highlight of the morning was the drive itself.

After another traditional lunch we made our final stop at a small town which had been occupied by the Samurai Lords. Most of the homes have been reconstructed but we visited one that reputedly has been in existence for 250 years. We received a brief description of the house and its layout as we toured inside but learned little about the Samurai themselves. What we had learned from our guide was that Samurai "rule" was for about 700 years (out of 2600 years of Japanese history) and that even during that period the Emperor was still at least nominally in charge. The way he reported it gave me the impression that the Samurai period, while important and well known for its warrior force, was something that the Japanese were not as proud of as we would have expected. That impression may be wrong or it may only be the one our guide wanted to convey, so I did a little (Wikipedia) research which resulted in the description on the following page.



Kitsuki Samurai District



*Inside
and
outside a
Samurai
Lord's
home*

Samurai were the military-nobility and officer-caste of medieval and early-modern Japan.

In Japanese, they are usually referred to as bushi . According to translator William Scott Wilson: "In Chinese, the character 侍 was originally a verb meaning "to wait upon" or "accompany persons" in the upper ranks of society, and this is also true of the original term in Japanese, saburau. In both countries the terms were nominalized to mean "those who serve in close attendance to the nobility", the pronunciation in Japanese changing to saburai. By the end of the 12th century, samurai became almost entirely synonymous with bushi, and the word was closely associated with the middle and upper echelons of the warrior class. The samurai were trained as officers in military tactics and grand strategy, and they followed a set of rules that later came to be known as the bushidō. While the samurai numbered less than 10% of then Japan's population, their teachings can still be found today in both everyday life and in modern Japanese martial arts.

In the late 8th and early 9th centuries, Emperor Kammu introduced the title of Shogun, and began to rely on the powerful regional clans. Skilled in mounted combat and archery, these clan warriors became the Emperor's preferred tool for putting down rebellions. Though this is the first known use of the "Shogun" title, it was a temporary title, and was not imbued with political power until the 13th century. Initially (in the 7th to 9th century) the Imperial Court officials considered them merely a military section under the control of the Imperial Court.

Originally the Emperor and non-warrior nobility employed these warrior nobles. In time, the latter amassed enough manpower, resources and political backing in the form of alliances with one another, to establish the first samurai-dominated government. As the power of these regional clans grew, their chief was typically a distant relative of the Emperor and a lesser member of one of the stronger clans. Though originally sent to provincial areas for a fixed four-year term as a magistrate, the toryo declined to return to the capital when their terms ended, and their sons inherited their positions and continued to lead the clans in putting down rebellions throughout Japan. Because of their rising military and economic power, the warriors ultimately became a new force in the politics of the court. Ultimately the Shogunates – regions of Samurai “rule” – became the de facto ruling classes.

Hopefully, this puts Samurai and Shogun in the correct perspective and is an accurate capsule summary of six centuries of Japanese history.

At 3::30 we boarded the Sonic Express train to Kokoru. This was not one of the famed bullet trains (one of which we would take next to Hiroshima) but was a sleek, modern high speed train, probably reaching speeds approaching those of the TGV in France or the 125 in England. This ride lasted just about an hour, as did the Shinkansen bullet train that followed and we reached Hiroshima about 6pm. The train exterior was impressive and the interior was comfortable but it didn't have the "feel" of a luxury train as I had expected. However, it certainly covered the ground in a hurry.



Shinkansen Bullet Train

Above: my picture

Right: Courtesy Wikipedia

From the station we took the shuttle bus to our hotel here for the night. We had been informed that the hotel restaurants were expensive with the exception of one that sold only Hiroshima pancakes (savory) and for that meal we were advised to get takeaway. Consequently, once we arrived at Hiroshima station there was significant interest in a place where a box lunch could be purchased. We chose to give this a miss and try for what was billed as a Western restaurant in the hotel.

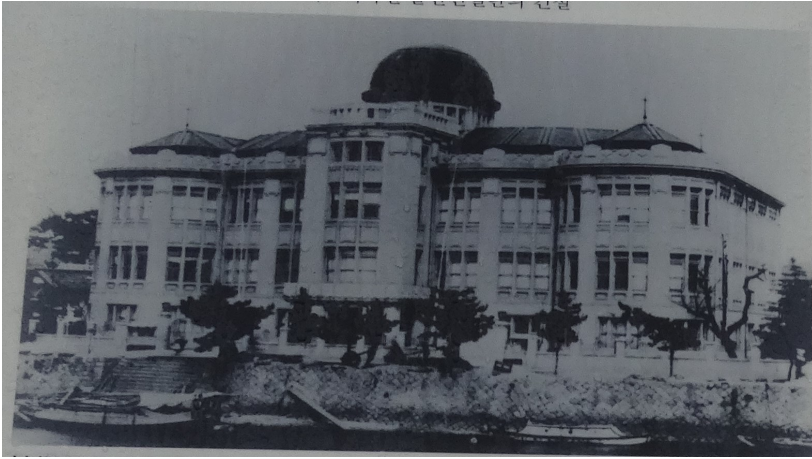
We checked in and immediately went to look at the menu for the Boston Steak and Seafood restaurant on the 22nd floor. It wasn't the conventional American steakhouse but we found a prix fixe menu that looked good so we made a reservation for the earliest time available of 8:30. We thoroughly enjoyed the meal (a little costly but well prepared and presented) and it made a very pleasant change from the ones we had enjoyed for the previous several meals.

Friday April 1

It was a rainy morning as we drove the short distance from the hotel to visit the Hiroshima Peace Park and the A-bomb Museum. The first thing we saw was the ruin of the Prefecture Industrial Promotion Hall that was essentially directly below the hypocenter of the blast on August 6 1945. As at Nagasaki, the atomic bomb detonated 600 meters above the ground as it had been determined that this would do the most damage as the rapid fission created a huge blast and a large radiation spread. Unlike Nagasaki, however, the blast here did not cause complete destruction on the ground immediately beneath and the hall still stands with only its roof and windows missing. It now stands as a memorial to the event and is undergoing strengthening to ensure that it continues as a stark reminder of the terrible day.



Other than this one physical reminder still standing, however, the devastation was immense and the Peace Park is retained as a vast open area reflecting just a small portion of the area impacted. The park is far more impressive and moving than the similar one in Nagasaki and the Hall, an eternal flame and a simple but suitable shrine are lined up and lead to the A-bomb Museum.



The Prefecture Industrial Promotion Hall

- **1930s**
- **August 6, 1945**
- **Today**



The Children's Memorial



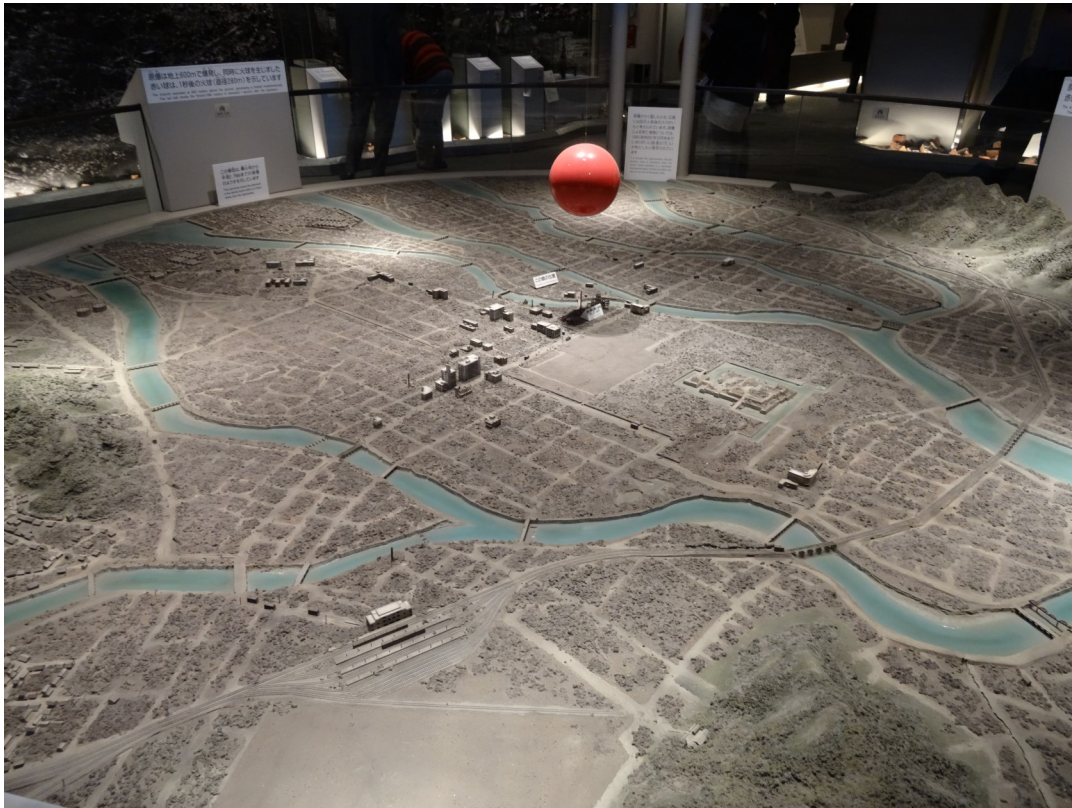
The A-bomb Museum




The Riverside Peace Park today



We had about 1 1/2 hours in the museum which is extremely well done and effectively presents the event in scientific, historical and - most of all - human perspective. There is an excellent description of the blast and its physical impact, a "mathematical" review of the extent of damage and a heartbreaking story of the human suffering. Items of clothing found on victims, photographs and medical descriptions of the emotional and physical conditions of the survivors.





The City of Hiroshima
PEACE DECLARATION
August 6, 2015

In our town, we had the warmth of family life, the deep human bonds of community, festivals heralding each season, traditional culture and buildings passed down through history, as well as riversides where children played. At 8:15 a.m., August 6, 1945, all of that was destroyed by a single atomic bomb. Below the mushroom cloud, a charred mother and child embraced, countless corpses floated in rivers, and buildings burned to the ground. Tens of thousands were burned in those flames. By year's end, 140,000 irreplaceable lives had been taken, that number including Koreans, Chinese, Southeast Asians, and American prisoners of war.

Those who managed to survive, their lives grotesquely distorted, were left to suffer serious physical and emotional aftereffects compounded by discrimination and prejudice. Children stole or fought routinely to survive. A young boy rendered an A-bomb orphan still lives alone; a wife was divorced when her exposure was discovered. The suffering continues.

"*Madotake!*" This is the heartbroken cry of *hibakusha* who want Hiroshima—their hometown, their families, their own minds and bodies—put back the way it was.

One hundred years after opening as the Hiroshima Prefectural Commercial Exhibition Hall and 70 years after the atomic bombing, the A-bomb Dome still watches over Hiroshima. In front of this witness to history, I want us all, once again, to face squarely what the A-bomb did and embrace fully the spirit of the *hibakusha*.

Meanwhile, our world still bristles with more than 15,000 nuclear weapons, and policymakers in the nuclear-armed states remain trapped in provincial thinking, repeating by word and deed their nuclear intimidation. We now know about the many incidents and accidents that have taken us to the brink of nuclear war or nuclear explosions. Today, we worry as well about nuclear terrorism.

As long as nuclear weapons exist, anyone could become a *hibakusha* at any time. If that happens, the damage will reach indiscriminately beyond national borders. People of the world, please listen carefully to the words of the *hibakusha* and, profoundly accepting the spirit of Hiroshima, contemplate the nuclear problem as your own.

A woman who was 16 at the time appeals, "Expanding ever wider, the circle of harmony that includes your family, friends, and neighbors links directly to world peace. Empathy, kindness, solidarity—these are not just intellectual concepts; we have to feel them in our bones." A man who was 12 emphasizes, "War means tragedy for adults and children alike. Empathy, caring, loving others and oneself—this is where peace comes from."

These heartrending messages, forged in a cauldron of suffering and sorrow, transcend hatred and rejection. Their spirit is generosity and love for humanity; their focus is the future of humankind.

Human beings transcend differences of nationality, race, religion, and language to live out our one-time-only lives on the planet we share. To coexist we must abolish the absolute evil and ultimate inhumanity that is nuclear weapons. Now is the time to start taking action. Young people are already starting petition drives, posting messages, organizing marches and launching a variety of efforts. Let's all work together to build an enormous ground swell.

In this milestone 70th year, the average *hibakusha* is now over 80 years old. The city of Hiroshima will work even harder to preserve the facts of the bombing, disseminate them to the world, and convey them to coming generations. At the same time, as president of Mayors for Peace, now with more than 6,700 member cities, Hiroshima will act with determination, doing everything in its power to accelerate the international trend toward negotiations for a nuclear weapons convention and abolition of nuclear weapons by 2020.

Is it not the policymakers' proper role to pursue happiness for their own people based on generosity and love of humanity? Policymakers meeting tirelessly to talk—this is the first step toward nuclear weapons abolition. The next step is to create, through the trust thus won, broadly versatile security systems that do not depend on military might. Working with patience and perseverance to achieve those systems will be vital, and will require that we promote throughout the world the path to true peace revealed by the pacifism of the Japanese Constitution.

The summit meeting to be held in Japan's Ise-Shima next year and the foreign ministers' meeting to be held in Hiroshima prior to that summit are perfect opportunities to deliver a message about the abolition of nuclear weapons. President Obama and other policymakers, please come to the A-bomb site, hear the *hibakusha* with your own ears, and encounter the reality of the atomic bombings. Surely, you will be impelled to start discussing a legal framework, including a nuclear weapons convention.

We call on the Japanese government, in its role as bridge between the nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon states, to guide all states toward these discussions, and we offer Hiroshima as the venue for dialogue and outreach. In addition, we ask that greater compassion for our elderly *hibakusha* and the many others who now suffer the effects of radiation be expressed through stronger support measures. In particular, we demand expansion of the "black rain areas."

Offering our heartfelt prayers for the peaceful repose of the A-bomb victims, we express as well our gratitude to the *hibakusha* and all our predecessors who worked so hard throughout their lives to rebuild Hiroshima and abolish nuclear weapons. Finally, we appeal to the people of the world: renew your determination. Let us work together with all our might for the abolition of nuclear weapons and the realization of lasting world peace.

MATSUI Kazumi
Mayor
The City of Hiroshima

The exhibits and the associated plaques place no blame and even the bombing of Pearl Harbor is acknowledged in a simple statement, without further comment. (This is in stark contrast to the inflammatory remarks in a similar museum in Saigon). However, the mayor of the city and the museum itself have taken up the cause for world nuclear disarmament and petitions are collected here by the thousands.

The Prefecture Hall (specifically the Genbaku Dome still standing) was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1966, despite opposition from two countries, and its importance is summarized in the citation for its inclusion:

The most important meaning of the surviving structure of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial is in what it symbolizes, rather than just its aesthetic and architectural values. This silent structure is the skeletal form of the surviving remains of the Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotional Hall (constructed in 1914). It symbolizes the tremendous destructive power, which humankind can invent on the one hand; on the other hand, it also reminds us of the hope for world permanent peace.