tokyo
weekender
SEPTEMBER 2013
Japan's number one English language magazine



KEI NISHIKORI
Tennis star "needs to toughen up" for Rakuten Open defence

NAGASAKI
National treasures and some volcanic exploration

TABLEAUX
Tokyo dining institution treats itself to a makeover


FROM ZACK SNYDER, DIRECTOR OF WATCHMEN & 300
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DIANE LANE
LAURENCE FISHBURNE
AND RUSSELL CROWE
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FROM THE EDITOR

Put a 'pawn star' on the cover and they'll pick it up' was our assumption this month, but we also hope you'll flick to page 10 to read about the reality TV stars we've been glued to over the past few months. It's hard to avoid Rick and Corey Harrison on the History channel if you have cable TV but meeting them in the flesh in Tokyo this month was, at first, a rather surprising experience (in part thanks to the efficacy of gastric band surgery) and we hope you'll enjoy reading the resulting father-and-son cover story.

Before that, ahead of the Japan Open, we spoke to Japan's top tennis player, Kei Nishikori, who tells us on page 8 that he needs to toughen up if he's going to get ahead; we attempted to figure out what's behind claims made on the labels of Japanese sports drinks and supplements; and we asked why the nation's next generation is increasingly inward looking.

Then, to travel. The island of Hashima, a few kilometers off Nagasaki, is better known by its silhouette-inspired nickname, '*Gunkanjima*'. It has a fascinating history, and after visiting this month as part of a wider exploration of the prefecture, we are able to tell part of its story on page 18. Thirst for the coal that threaded the earth beneath the surrounding ocean meant the island became the most densely populated part of Japan for a time, but changes in the 70s led to a sudden exodus, and the beginning of a new chapter. After a few decades in which public access was blocked, tour companies started to take the public there a couple of years ago. Google Gunkanjima and you'll pull up links to hundreds of photo-led blog posts (and *Skyfall* fansites), but we decided to go a little further and seek out one of the people behind the lens. I spoke to a photographer who spends his time exploring abandoned and half-ruined buildings across Japan to ask him his thoughts about the island, which he calls a "grand *haikyo*".

And with that, I pass the baton. I hope our new editor can find, along with the team here, yet more opportunities to move the magazine, and our new website, forward into something that does justice not only to the *Weekender's* history but to you, our readers. Thank you.

Matthew



Fried Sushi *by Liam Akin. To see more of Liam's work check out www.friedsushi.net*

In our August issue we failed to give credit to The Peninsula Tokyo when using one of their images on page 12. Our apologies to all concerned.

tokyo weekender

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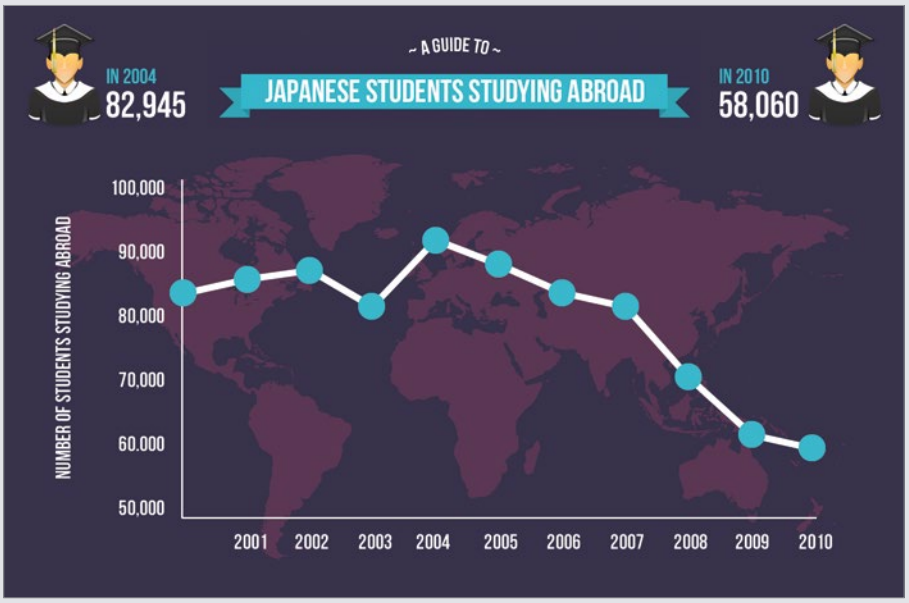
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STAY AT HOME STUDENTS
ARE THE INSTITUTIONS TO BLAME?

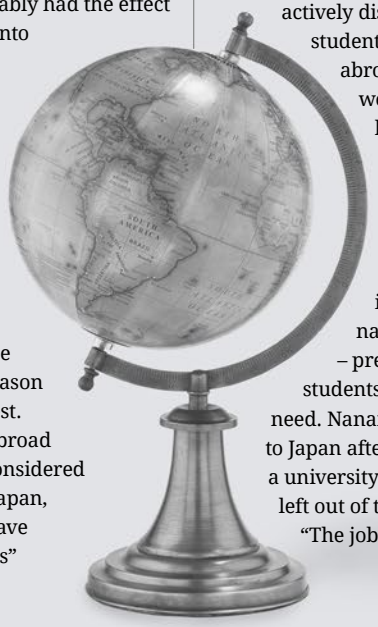
Japan's next generation is saying no to study opportunities abroad, with the latest government figures telling us that after six continuous years of decline, the number of Japanese international students is at a 15-year low. As China, Korea and India continue to lead global figures in cosmopolitan education, the situation in Japan raises concerns over a revival of its age-old reputation as an inward-facing nation.



SO, WHAT IS AT THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM?

There is a correlation, admittedly one that doesn't prove causation, between the first year the so-called "yutori generation" reached university (2005) and the numbers of Japanese international students starting to decline. The policy of Yutori Education, or "pressure-free education" was introduced in the 90s (and discontinued since), cutting school hours by 10% and the curriculum by 30% in order – it was hoped – to produce more well-rounded children who would be unsullied by academic rigour and competition. It even changed the value of pi in primary school textbooks to "about three"! Some commentators have blamed it for a drop in academic standards, as well as for its having produced unambitious and unmotivated students who, among other things, are less willing to test themselves in foreign environments.

Recent trends in employment could also be a factor. With companies turning increasingly away from more expensive, highly-protected, life-time employment (*seishain*) and towards cheaper, less-protected, contractual employment (*keiyakushain*), the stakes have been raised for Japanese students entering domestic job markets in the hope of securing sought after but scarcely available lifetime work. This has arguably had the effect of turning studying abroad into something of an unwelcome distraction, especially when there is a lack of career support available to Japanese international students, and when "studying in an overseas university offers no benefit to job-hunting in Japan", as a survey by Genron NPO, a policy think tank, found to be the second most common reason (46.2%) for the lack of interest.



It is true that studying abroad has not traditionally been considered an employable attribute in Japan, since Japanese companies have long preferred "blank canvas" new recruits who are easily moldable and trainable into the desired company image. Unlike the "ready-made labour force" that Americans, for example, present themselves as, Japanese students form, to borrow from author and anthropologist Chie Nakane, a "potential labour" force that relies on companies for tutelage but whose lack of experience is by no means a disadvantage. The rich experience of studying abroad appears to offer little practical gain in Japan and thus justifying its price tag becomes a struggle.

Daiki Kumano, a business student at Rikkyo University, thinks conversely that there is plenty to be gained from studying abroad and enough appetite in the job market for students with such an experience. He says, though, that the "traditional" character of his university actively discourages wander-lusting students like himself from studying abroad. "Senior professors said we should prioritize job-hunting ... and take part in an internship program instead," Daiki says. He has instead, though, opted to take his chances in Seattle.

The path to work in Japan is indeed very narrow and one-dimensional – precisely why study abroad students cannot get the support they need. Nanami Fukuda, who came back to Japan after studying for four years at a university in England, says she "felt left out of the system".

"The job-hunting madness hit me when I came back," she says. "It was like a culture shock. I was completely removed from the job-hunting process that everybody goes through at Japanese universities, and had to find a job on my own. And the longer I spent looking for a job, the more it looked to interviewers like I was doing nothing."

Other paths to work may conceivably be forged when employers look to initiatives such the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and step up efforts to recruit young Japanese with international skills. Then, labour markets will liberalise and become a more fluid, and job seekers, in the long run, will be forced to pitch themselves more as self-reliant 'ready-made labour' and less as moldable 'potential labour'.

Efforts to globalize, such as those undertaken recently by Rakuten and Uniqlo (speaking English in the boardroom, for example), will seem rather cosmetic unless educational institutions overturn the kind of structural bias and marginalization that Daiki, Nanami and others like them have faced.

Aside from the obvious need for more access to information, more scholarships and more careers support for students, universities might also consider more forcefully bringing their academic calendars in line with most other countries and changing enrolment to autumn, as Tokyo University has half-achieved. Above all, Japanese universities could really use a more robust liberal tradition – one that can break the inertia of the last several years and promote the rewards of study abroad. A country is only as good as its young, and if that generation is inward looking, then so too must be the institutions that helped to shape it.

by Henry Watts

Star on the Rise

By Matthew Hernon

Many of the world's top tennis players are set to invade Japan this September to take part in the Rakuten Japan Open, yet the focus of the home crowd is once again likely to be on one man. Kei Nishikori is one of a growing number of emerging talents in the country who enjoys rock star status.

Despite a disappointing show at the US Open, expectations will be high as the boy from Shimane attempts to retain the crown he won at the Ariake Colosseum last year. Joining an illustrious list of previous winners that includes the likes of Rod Laver, John McEnroe, Stefan Edberg, Pete Sampras and Roger Federer, Nishikori became the first ever Japanese player to lift the trophy in 2012.

Repeating that feat is not going to be easy. 2011 winner and current Wimbledon champion, Andy Murray, will be in attendance, as will other top ten ranked players such as Jo-Wilfried Tsonga and Milos Raonic. Nishikori, currently ranked 12 in the world, is more concerned about his own game.

"I am not really worried about anyone in particular," he tells Weekender. "It is more important to concentrate on what I can do, not the opposition. Of course I believe I can win it. Last year's victory was truly special, my greatest memory in tennis to date, and I will do everything in my power to try and experience that feeling again."

A good showing in Tokyo would go some way to making up for his first round straight-sets defeat to rank outsider Dan Evans at the US Open. His ultimate goal, though, is to become a more consistent player at the Majors. He has shown promise – in 2012 he became the first Japanese player to reach the last eight at the Australian Open and this year he became the first for 75 years to make the Fourth Round of the French, where he was beaten by Rafael Nadal.

The Spaniard, who claimed an incredible eighth Roland Garros in nine years, was complimentary of Nishikori's game, stating in the press conference after the match that the Japanese player was "a candidate to be top ten without any doubt," though he still seems to be a long way from seriously challenging for a Grand Slam title. Whilst he has become known for his speed and nimble footwork, his lack of penetrating power when playing groundstrokes means he often comes up short when taking on the big boys.

"I have confidence in my ability," Nishikori says. "I do believe I can become a better player, but just saying it isn't enough, I need to work hard and show it with performances on the court. In order to get to that elite level I really need to improve both my physical and mental toughness."

At just 23 Nishikori has time on his side. It can be easy to forget how far he has come in such a short space of time. He arrived at the renowned Bollettieri Academy in the US as a shy 13-year-old who couldn't speak any English. Fast forward ten years and we are talking about the best player in Asia, number 12 in the world, and someone who has beaten Novak Djokovic as well as his hero Roger Federer.

He is now a major star in his own right, with sponsors lining up to sign him: he currently has deals with Uniqlo, Wilson, Tag Heuer and Adidas to name but a few. According to Forbes he has pocketed $10.5 million in the past year (from June 2012 to June 2013) with around $9 million of that coming from off-court earnings, an astonishing amount for a player outside the top ten.

It is hard to imagine what that figure would be like if he were to win or even seriously challenge for a Grand Slam. It remains to be seen whether that day will ever come, in the meantime he could do with a few more ATP victories to boost both his confidence and ranking, starting with the Rakuten Japan Open at the end of September.



For more info and tickets see *en.rakutenopen.com*

SHOULD WE SWALLOW THE SPORTS DRINK PROPAGANDA?

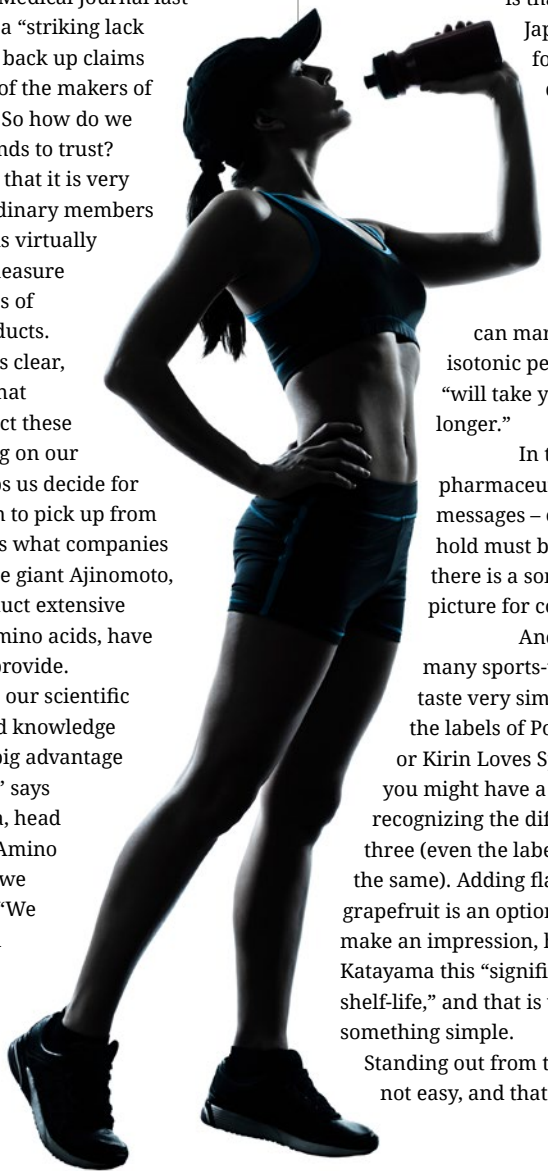
Go in to any convenience store or supermarket in Japan and you are likely to find a wide selection of brightly packaged nutritional drinks and supplements that are supposed to help you train longer and recover quicker. These items, which previously targeted niche markets such as gyms and health shops, now appeal to a much wider audience, including both very serious and more casual sports enthusiasts.

Yet as competition between products grows, so does the skepticism over their effectiveness. According to a joint investigation in Europe by the BBC's flagship investigative journalism show, Panorama, and the British Medical Journal last year, there was a "striking lack of evidence," to back up claims made by many of the makers of these products. So how do we know what brands to trust?

The truth is that it is very difficult. For ordinary members of the public it is virtually impossible to measure the effectiveness of nutritional products. What we need is clear, scientific data that shows the impact these items are having on our bodies and helps us decide for ourselves which to pick up from the shelf. That is what companies such as Japanese giant Ajinomoto, the first to conduct extensive research into amino acids, have been trying to provide.

"I think it is our scientific background and knowledge that gives us a big advantage over our rivals," says Miwa Katayama, head of Ajinomoto's Amino Division, when we meet in Tokyo. "We have more than 1,000 scientists constantly developing and helping to improve our products. Two of our most well known items, Amino VITAL PRO 3600, which mixes 12 amino acids together, and Amino VITAL PRO 4000, which blends nine, both required years of study and testing before they could be sold. I don't think other companies are going to those lengths."

The aforementioned items are said to give athletes sustained muscle energy while also accelerating recovery. Sounds like a great slogan to put on their labels, the problem is that here in Japan the law prohibits food companies from doing so, or actively promoting purported health benefits of their products. It is in stark contrast to places like the US and the UK, where a brand like Lucozade can market itself as an isotonic performance fuel that "will take you faster, stronger for longer."



In this country, for non-pharmaceutical companies, the messages – or claims – products hold must be subtle, meaning there is a somewhat clouded picture for consumers.

Another issue is that many sports-type drinks look and taste very similar. If you removed the labels of Pocari Sweat, Aquarius or Kirin Loves Sports, for example, you might have a pretty tough time recognizing the difference between the three (even the labels look pretty much the same). Adding flavours like orange or grapefruit is an option for brands trying to make an impression, however according to Katayama this "significantly shortens their shelf-life," and that is why so many opt for something simple.

Standing out from the crowd is therefore not easy, and that is why celebrity endorsements have become so important. It is one of the reasons Gatorade cornered the market in the US – in order to play like your NFL hero, you should drink Gatorade like him. Back here in Japan, Amino Vital has attached itself to the country's biggest sports stars, with names such as soccer star Keisuke Honda and the country's best tennis player, Kei Nishikori, associated with the brand.

In 2012 Ajinomoto struck an agreement with the Japan Olympic Committee, guaranteeing that only members of the Japanese team at the London Olympics would be permitted to use Amino VITAL PRO 4000, though Associate General Manager Hiroyuki Miyoshi points out that "athletes from other nations requested Amino VITAL PRO 3600."

> "These items are having a positive effect, however it is difficult for members of the general public who don't train so much to fully appreciate those effects"

These are clearly items trusted by sporting professionals, people who require peak performance over sustained periods. That is all well and good, but what about those of us who go for the occasional jog or just take part in some light activities at the weekend? Do we really benefit from taking these supplements? Kenji Abe, who works in the Nutrition Department at Ajinomoto, believes that we do, even if we don't notice it.

"These items are having a positive effect," he tells us. "However, it is difficult for members of the general public who don't train so much to fully appreciate those effects. Top athletes, on the other hand, work on their muscles everyday. They are more sensitive to changes that take place in their bodies and they therefore have a greater understanding of how these products work."

No doubt the debate concerning the legitimacy of sports drinks and supplements will continue to rumble on. There are companies out there providing useful scientific data, while others appear to be somewhat lacking in the area. Yet even with all of these uncertainties, consumer demand appears to be growing, even if many of us don't fully understand the impact on our bodies.





PAWN Stars hit Tokyo

By Asi Rinestine

What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas, the saying goes, but, in the entertainment field at least, plenty is going on in the city that we are indeed hearing about. There has been a surge of semi-educational "laugh & learn" style reality shows in recent times, and the star of the pack is History Channel-produced *Pawn Stars*, set within a glitzy pawn shop near the renowned Las Vegas Strip. The show, broadcast in more than 35 countries, has garnered record viewing figures for the channel and sits behind only *Jersey Shore* at the top of the reality show pile in the US.

The premise is simple, and the execution brings a diverse range of viewers in to a world many of them might have previously seen as a little murky. The shop itself (open 24 hours a day) is popular with collectors looking to buy, sell or pawn their goods and get the best deals they can. We watch as they enter into some pretty hard – and entertaining – negotiations, but the real reason to tune in is the store's owners and staff, a bunch of tough looking characters who conduct business in their own unique 'Vegas style'.

That style can be loosely defined as a 'cash is king' mentality, with desperate sellers often needing money on the spot and in a hurry ($100 bills are most appreciated of course!) with the team always on the look out for fakes and reproductions – shop staff often need to deal with raging customers who find out a family heirloom or precious engagement ring is practically worthless.

Even though they look like a biker gang, (some of them *are* devoted bikers) the team perhaps don't live up to the meathead stereotype: they are highly knowledgeable about the intricacies and fine details of most pieces, which of course makes it possible for them to spot fakes and keep a tight eye on their pricing structures. The team, supported by local experts – there are a couple of gun guys, an automobile restoration expert and various other recurring guests – share their knowledge with viewers.

Shop manager Rick Harrison and his son Corey "Big Hoss" Harrison flew in to Tokyo for a brief visit in August, to meet with fans, buy a couple of vintage bikes, and even talk to *Tokyo Weekender*.

As fans of the show for a few years now, we almost didn't recognize Corey in his recently slimmed down form, sporting a beard. He says that personal success story was down to a strict diet, combined with gastric band surgery. But the beard? "He likes it because he doesn't get recognized," says Rick, though Corey adds that, "the History Channel is putting a lot of pressure on me to get rid of it."



The Pawn Stars from left to right: *Austin 'Chumlee' Russell, Rick Harrison, Richard 'Old Man' Harrison & Corey 'Big Hoss' Harrison.*

> "THE REAL REASON TO TUNE IN IS THE STORE'S OWNERS AND STAFF, A BUNCH OF TOUGH LOOKING CHARACTERS WHO CONDUCT BUSINESS IN THEIR OWN UNIQUE 'VEGAS STYLE'"

The success of the show has generated much interest in the shop, which around 5,000 people visit every day, including many international tourists, meaning the two are hard at work, currently producing two episodes per week.

"Since the show has become such a hit, we are getting so much stuff in our shop we honestly don't know what to do with it all," Rick says. And its not that people just want to see the stars or be on TV – most of them genuinely want to sell or pawn stuff for hard cash. Pieces of jewellery are the main items being traded in at the shop, but they still get about 10 "weird" items a day (what price for some 200-year-old Japanese porn, or a bag full of human skulls, we wonder?) whilst dentists selling gold teeth have become something of a routine.

So how much of the 'reality show' is real? The shop is cleared when filming is in progress and a team of production staff scans for interesting items amongst crowds at the entrance. Then they make sure everyone is ready for a shoot and unleash the customer on the store with their item, prompting them to discuss its history or some interesting facts.

"We are being paid for doing the show, but this is still business and each deal is real," says Rick, adding that sometimes, even if producers push him to close a deal, he will refuse: "If the deal is not right, then its not right" has become something of a catchphrase.

Both father and son never saw all this success coming. After making the first episode they threw a screening party for family and friends, but Corey walked out, stating the efforts had been "a waste of fu**ing time! The show is garbage!"

But Rick says he's always been "a bit of a media whore – it's good for business," and that he was happier to give it a shot, though he wasn't expecting things to develop into such a global hit.

The two are not only making waves in the entertainment world. Rick in particular is now considered something of an expert in gold, and is often used as a source by related media seeking insights on trading strategies, as well as in the fields of history and antique dealing. This part makes sense to him, though; from a young age he developed a habit of reading history and economics books for four hours every day. How could he possibly have the time? Easy, he tells us – by avoiding what most of his peers would have been doing: "TV is like a masturbation for the brain," he says, explaining that it wasn't for him. He says he now dreams of the day he can retire from it all, buy a ranch in Texas and be able to dedicate more time to his reading.

Corey, on the other hand, grew up as something of a "bad boy" biker. On the occasions he got kicked out of school, his dad would put him to work in the pawn shop, doing chores and cleaning watches. So how does he feel about becoming the biggest buyer in the business and an international celebrity? "Everything is the same for me, only everything I have is nicer now," he says. He definitely loves skipping the lines at Las-Vegas establishments and being given free booze while owners beg him to tweet about being in their club.

The two will move on to other countries in the region to continue their Asian tour, leaving those of us fortunate enough to have cable TV here to hope the History Channel keeps bringing their "Laugh & Learn" content and teaching us Vegas style history lessons.

MORE ABOUT THE PAWN STARS

The Pawn Stars' love for Japan is in part down to their interest in both motorcycles and samurai swords.

The most expensive items in their collection are a 16th century samurai sword the team reportedly paid $90,000 for, and two vintage bikes, worth around $250,000, that they bought from actor Iwaki Koichi, who apparently wanted the money for a trip into space.

The shop has sold items as diverse as a Superbowl ring and a $125,000 cigar box once owned by John F. Kennedy.

BRITISH AIRWAYS

Promotion

5 STAR TERMINAL



Winner of the Skytrax 2012 best airport terminal award, Heathrow's Terminal 5 is a state-of-the-art building that has been designed to help make passengers' travel experience as smooth and pleasurable as possible. Served exclusively by British Airways and Iberia, it has the capacity to serve up to 30 million customers annually with flights constantly departing to some of the most exotic destinations on the planet.

Officially opened by Queen Elizabeth II in 2008, the 353,020m² terminal has continued to expand and improve its services over the past five years, enhancing its reputation in the process. With quick check-in procedures, a huge lounge and some terrific facilities including more than 100 shops and restaurants, waiting for a flight at T5 is both effortless and enjoyable.

AN ARCHITECTURAL MASTERPIECE

The largest free-standing structure in the UK – big enough to fit more than 50 football pitches across its floors – the sheer size of the space will take your breath away. Then there's the layout; Designed by the world renowned Richard Rogers Partnership (now known as Rogers Stirk Harbour & Partners), it is a magnificent gateway to Britain. It took around 19 years from conception to completion, cost 4.3 billion pounds and involved the longest public inquiry in British history, yet it was certainly worth the wait and has helped to bring Heathrow into the 21st Century as a world leader.

From the stylish wavy roof to the giant windows boasting panoramic views of the runway, there is a real bright and modern feel to the place. The glass and steel structure makes it feel even more spacious than it actually is. In addition to the four-storey main building (Concourse A), there are two satellite buildings, an 87m high control tower, 60 airport stands as well as plenty of shops, cafes and restaurants to help fill the time between flights.

FIRST CLASS FACILITIES

Having to arrive two hours before departure can often feel like a drag, though at Terminal 5 there should be more than enough to do in order to keep yourself occupied. There is a great selection of retail outlets including some of the world's most prestigious fashion brands, such as Prada, Tiffany & Co, Bulgari, Dior and Gucci plus some of the UK's biggest names, such as Harrods, Mulberry, Ted Baker and Paul Smith, whose Globe store offers exclusive Terminal 5 pieces. There are also a number of accessory, electronic, book and souvenir shops, ranging from very high-end to more reasonably priced establishments.

For those more interested in eating than shopping, there are some great dining options, most notably Gordon Ramsay's Plane Food. With its swanky décor and assortment of European dishes, it is not the kind of establishment you would normally expect to find at an airport terminal. Other popular places include Huxleys Bar and Kitchen, which provides a traditional English menu, Caviar House and Prunier, a stylish seafood bar, and Giraffe restaurant, a colourful chain that serves food from around the world.

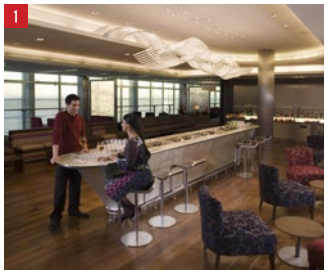
If you are travelling in First, Club World or Club Europe, or are a Gold or Silver Executive Club member, oneworld Emerald or Saphire member, you can enjoy T5's exclusive Galleries Lounges, which feature a 20-seat cinema, gourmet food, complimentary bars, power showers and spas. Whether you are arriving or departing, it is a truly wonderful way to relax.

SMOOTH OPERATIONS

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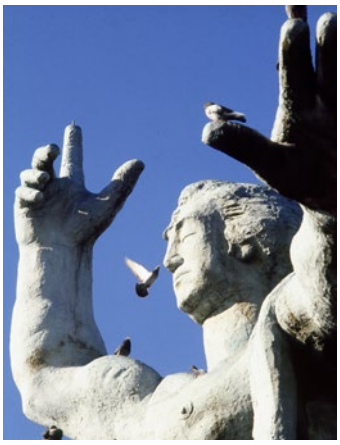
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NOSTALGIA, CHARM AND A WHOLE LOT MORE IN NAGASAKI





When asked to consider Nagasaki as a destination, it is the city itself that might first come to mind, but this is also a prefecture rich with opportunity for exploration with a diversity of tourism and leisure spots unrivalled in Japan.

Cultural and historical areas range from Christian sites to museums and to reminders of Nagasaki's past as the gateway to an otherwise closed Japan. Walking around the town visitors will find a unique atmosphere, but when getting on the bus, heading to the harbour to take a ferry to outlying islands, or renting your own vehicle for a few days, you'll find that there are so many other areas to explore in the region. Your trip could perfectly happily be anything from a simple weekend away to a much longer break that will make you fall in love with – and keep you coming back to – what is an eminently tourist-friendly part of the country.

You'll find among the hundreds of outlying islands many areas worth taking note of, including regions where Catholicism at one time found some solace from a brutal ban on the Christian faith, such as the Goto islands, and Hirado, on which you will find the Francisco Xavier Memorial Church. The *Churches and Christian Sites of Nagasaki* will hopefully be inscribed as a World Heritage site on the 150th anniversary of the discovery of Christians in the area, in 2015.

The city's harbour area, from which you might depart, has been redeveloped in recent years and a modern park next to the Nagasaki Prefectural Art Museum is a fine example of smart architecture that is in harmony with its surroundings, providing a fine contrast with some of the more historical districts of town. A canal runs between the Gallery and Museum buildings, and a roof garden offers some of the best views of the area.



Heading out of town by road through verdant mountains towards the Shimabara Peninsula you will find Japan's oldest National Park, with the Unzen Geopark and various hot spring resorts at its heart. There are golf courses, too, including Japan's oldest public course, in Unzen, and many other opportunities for leisure pursuits, including some of the most pristine and secluded beaches with the clearest waters in the country.

Geographical features might be the highlight for some travellers; mountains make for spectacular views – whether you are into hiking through forest trails or simply taking the ropeway up Mt. Inasa and enjoying the spectacle that unfolds before you. Geothermal activity makes for numerous hot springs as well as fascinating volcanic ridges and valleys to explore, and with the ocean surrounding life in the prefecture – not only physically but with its influence on local industry, lifestyle and cuisine – a rather unique atmosphere is guaranteed.

"Geographical features might be the highlight for some travellers; mountains make for spectacular views – whether you are into hiking through forest trails or simply taking the ropeway up Mt. Inasa."

Local cuisine as well as architecture is one of the most obvious signs that this is a place that has been open to the influences of other cultures for many years. Chinese flavours spread further than Chinatown, Dutch influence is seen in some popular produce and the Portuguese, too, have made their presence felt. Locals will tell you with pride that the strength of Nagasaki's culinary culture lies in its having taken those inbound influences and developed new flavours and dishes that have spread throughout the region's kitchens and restaurants.

From its beginnings as a remote fishing village, through the ages since Portuguese explorers found Nagasaki and its natural harbours and began to do trade with locals, to the almost 200 years of national isolation in which the area flourished thanks to allowing trade with Chinese ships as well as some international cultural exchange, and to the opening up in the Meiji period as a focal point for foreigners doing business in Japan, Nagasaki has a fascinating history.



Though the deaths of around 70,000 people and destruction caused by the 1945 bombing at the end of the Second World War are a shadow over the city's recent past, Nagasaki has recovered with grace and remembers that time while looking to the future with a large peace park and memorial museum.

The next few pages should give you some ideas of where to get started planning your trip to Nagasaki, truly a must for anyone living in Japan. Because of its people, its historically exotic influences, and because of, quite simply, its beauty, however long you have been in Japan you will find something you might not have known it was possible to see without leaving the country.



GOOD TIMES TO GO

The Kunchi Festival takes place between October 7-9 and is one of the largest harvest festivals in the country.

The annual lantern festival takes over Chinatown and the surrounding area from January 1-15, depending on the lunar calendar.

In April, tall ships visit Nagasaki harbor and offer both a sense of nostalgia and wonderment, enlivening the already spectacular landscape.

Peiron boat races, thought to have been started by Chinese people living in Nagasaki some 350 years ago, provide more water-based entertainment in August.

TIPS FROM A NAGASAKI NATIVE

Weekender asked Amy Gifford, a Brit who has been living and working in Nagasaki for three years, some of her top tips for things to do during a visit to the prefecture.

HIRADO

Hirado combines gorgeous beaches and forests with great history. You can visit the reconstructed Dutch trading post, originally set up in 1609, which was the centre for Japanese trade with the west, as well as the former home of the Matsuura clan, which controlled Hirado for centuries. Hirado is also home to some of the historical churches that are part of Nagasaki's UNESCO World Heritage bid (the Churches and Christian Sites of Nagasaki aim to be inducted in 2015). In early summer the forests are filled with fireflies.



THE RETRO CHARM OF NAGASAKI CITY

My favourite aspect of Nagasaki City is the charming townscape; it might sound twee but I love wandering the maze of tiny alleyways and stairways and discovering old teahouses, quaint stores selling local sweets and traditional crafts, shrines, churches, graveyards and Western-style buildings left over from the time of the foreign settlement. The local people are very friendly and welcoming, and even more so when you step off the beaten track. The pace is slow, the sea breeze is refreshing, and the views from the hills are amazing.



OKUNCHI

Okunchi is not a place but a festival. It began as a harvest festival in the late 16th century and involves three days of revelry in Nagasaki City; various neighbourhoods present dances that reflect the complex history of Nagasaki – from the Dragon Dance originally performed by Chinese residents to the Dutch Ship representing European traders, as well as traditional shrine dances. There are three main festival sites, but the performances fill the whole town as groups perform en route between the sites, from early morning to late evening. The atmosphere is fantastic!





SAIKAI

The wild western side of mainland Nagasaki, Saikai is one of Nagasaki's best-kept secrets. I enjoy hiking in the lush dense forests and then cooling off in one of the forest pools. There are also gorgeous beaches, small islands, caves, museums and fun local festivals.

IKI ISLAND

Accessible by boat from Fukuoka or by air from Nagasaki. I like to go to Iki Island in spring or summer, camp by the beach, swim among bioluminescent plankton in the ocean, go sea kayaking and explore unusual rock formations such as Monkey Rock (pictured here) and the Devil's Footprint.



UNZEN, SHIMABARA PENINSULA

On your way onto the peninsula, you can stop off for lunch in Aino (for delicious rokube noodles made from purple sweet potato), or in Obama (the town, pictured below, where you can steam vegetables and seafood in baskets over boiling hot springs on the seafront). The main attraction for me, though, is up in the mountains. Heisei Shinzan is a mountain formed by a volcanic eruption in the early 1990s. [there had been an evacuation but 43 scientists and journalists were killed in 1991]. You can take a cable car to the top of neighbouring Mt. Fugen and look at the still-smouldering peak from a platform about 1km away. There are also walking trails in the mountains, passing by natural ice caves used historically for silkworm cultivation, as well as different flowers in each season. There are many hotels with hot spring baths in the town below. On the other side of the mountain, in the city of Shimabara, you can visit the Disaster Memorial Hall, which includes houses partially buried under the pyroclastic flow of the volcano and a simulation of the eruption.



HASAMI

Hasami is a small town in the middle of the prefecture known across Japan for its fine pottery. It is one of my favourite places to go in autumn, when the town holds a pottery walk, which snakes through the rice fields and hills, taking in various pottery workshops and sake breweries. I also visit Mooks – a restaurant in an old pottery factory (most buildings here are connected with the industry) – and the onsen centre where you can not only bathe but also enjoy pizza cooked in a former pottery kiln.



Photos courtesy of Nagasaki Prefecture Convention And Tourism Association



DEJIMA

A BRIDGE TO THE PAST

Nowhere better can the history of Nagasaki be felt than at Dejima, a once-island originally built in 1634. An ongoing restoration process has been taking its buildings back in time for a few years now, and walking down its central street, ducking your head and entering old sugar storehouses, merchants' quarters and Dutch residences in 2013, the city's past as the gateway to Japan becomes easier to understand. Dioramas, photographs and life-size recreations of how rooms would have looked compete for your attention with relics and archaeological finds as well as the architecture that sets the tone, and there are even a few actors recreating roles both inhabitants and visitors would have lived out on the same spot years ago.

The island was initially established to isolate Portuguese traders and prevent the spread of Christianity before they were finally banished to Macau in 1639. One of the most fascinating episodes in Dejima's history would come a few years later; during Japan's 200-year period under the *sakoku* policy, which strictly restricted foreign trade until 1859, the island was the sole window for trade with the Dutch East India Company, permitted alongside Chinese merchants to do business with locals. Trade was not only in goods, but also culture, and Nagasaki's development was made all the richer for diversity of influences other areas of the country would not enjoy. Japanese intellectuals would from here study scientific, political and social trends in Europe and the rest of the world.

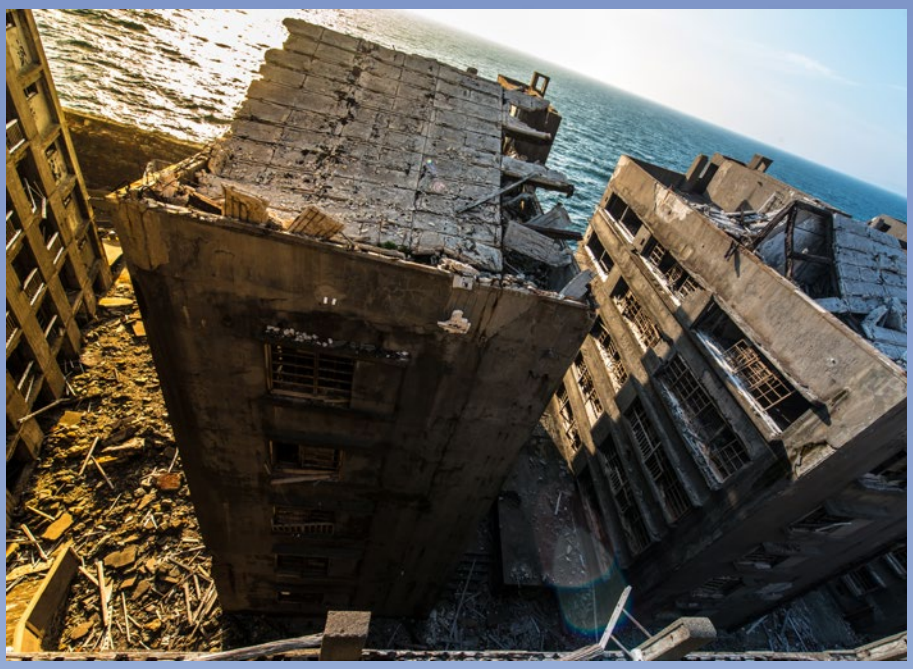
Dejima is full of interesting historical snippets (at one point this was the only place in the world where the Dutch flag would have flown, its golden age fallen in Europe, for example, and this was the first place in Japan anyone would have tasted chocolate, coffee, beer – or badminton) and is ever expanding (the restoration process is ongoing and it is hoped the original entrance bridge can be rebuilt when land on the other side of the river is acquired) making it truly a must visit for anyone with a spare half day in Nagasaki.

THE SECRETS OF BATTLESHIP ISLAND

Once home to a bustling coal-mining community that supported the modernization of Japan, the tiny island of Hashima, about 19km southwest of Nagasaki's main port, is now better known in its ghost town state – and of course by its silhouette-inspired nickname, '*Gunkanjima*', or 'Battleship Island'.

The island fascinates not simply because it resembles a warship. It is an industrial relic left behind when the viability of coal mining plummeted in the 1970s, and what brings visitors, inspires writers and photographers and gets a certain sub-culture of hobbyists so excited, is the unique atmosphere its 1974 abandonment left behind.

Before petroleum eventually all-but killed the industry, Takashima, a larger island near Hashima, had lived off coal for centuries. When Thomas Glover (whose name is never far from any discussion of local history in these parts) brought modern European mining techniques to the region during the Meiji period, tunneling rather than simple chipping away of surfaces became possible, and exploration of the veins of coal streaking beneath the area would result in riches for local companies. These riches in turn funded further exploration, and when in 1887 a shaft mine was installed on Hashima, enabling under-sea mining, the island began to be inhabited. Things took off when the Mitsubishi company bought the Hashima mine – records show they paid ¥100,000 yen in 1890 – and began a rapid process of industrialization that brought miners and their families to live on Hashima, eventually resulting in an island-city unlike anywhere else on earth.



Gunkanjima images © Jordy Meow / totorotimes.com

The first large concrete building in Japan – an unprecedented nine-storey apartment block – was built in 1916 to accommodate workers, and slag from mining operations was gradually used to expand the area for more structures to be built inside a huge sea wall that would protect against typhoons. In 1959, at its peak, the 16-acre site housed 5,259 people, an incredible 835 people per hectare – equivalent to 83,500/km^2 for the island. To put that into some kind of perspective, modern day metropolitan Tokyo has around 6,000 people per km^2.

"Things took off when the Mitsubishi company bought the Hashima mine – records show they paid ¥100,000 in 1890 – and began a rapid process of industrialization that resulted in an island-city unlike anywhere else on earth"



Gunkanjima images © Jordy Meow / totorotimes.com



Now, some 30 years since the last of those people left, visitors head to the island to try and understand the history of the place, some keen to join official tour boats that dock each day, weather permitting, some happy to circle in fishing boats and some, it is no secret, dedicated to unauthorized exploration.

Huge, imposing concrete sea walls, though now damaged, give a fortress, or even prison-like appearance to Hashima. There is virtually no vegetation on the island because of how things were constructed, and the harsh existence that would have met inhabitants of the 1.2km-round island is easy to understand.

Various hobbyists take their interest in *haikyo* – the abandoned buildings that litter Japan, including of course those on Hashima – rather seriously, travelling around the country after researching and following up on tips gained through community websites and from friends.

For Jordy Meow, a Frenchman living in Tokyo, haikyo are simply "a magical and exciting playground to learn about photography in a different dimension." The two interests lend themselves to one another, and Jordy, in collecting his atmospheric photographs on both his haikyo.org and totorotimes.com websites, has built up an impressive selection. "Gunkanjima is a grand *haikyo*," he tells us. "It has everything. The architecture is outstanding and the decay makes it a world wonder and its history makes it part of world heritage."

He says he was initially hooked on haikyo because of the "diversity of places you can visit, the challenges, the research, and the travels around Japan."

The only way to legitimately explore the island is through tourist boats that make the one-hour cruise from Nagasaki to dock and allow tourists and enthusiasts a taste of what it might have felt like to have been based in such an isolated location. "The feeling I have when I walk on this island is amazingly difficult to express," Jordy says. "You can actually easily imagine how life was, and what the people living there would have been doing during their lives there. It is overwhelming."

He explains that some who grew up on the island – there was a school, shops, and everything else one would expect a community to need, including a cinema and a pachinko parlor – don't like to hear the name Gunkanjima and "consider Hashima their *furusato*, or hometown."

"Miners had difficult lives, working long hours in an extremely dangerous environment, but it seems like some of the families – housewives and kids, anyway – would have enjoyed aspects of island life. We often hear about the very lively atmosphere of the Hashima-Ginza market, not far from Block 65 (the largest structure on the island) and you can imagine all the mothers on the balconies, checking on their kids who would have played downstairs in the enclosed courtyard."



Though aspects of life will have been tough, communities would have shown relilience to occasional batterings from the weather as well as struggling through despite their isolated place in the world.

Hashima remains cluttered with decaying concrete structures that remind of the island's industrial past and intrigue anyone who steps foot on the barren island. Taking a trip out of Nagasaki harbour, past many of the luscious green islands that scatter the sea to find out more is a must for anyone visiting the area.

Note: some of the photographs shown here were taken from areas of the island now not accessible to the public.

HOW TO GET THERE

The easiest way to organize your trip to Hashima/'Gunkanjima' is through Yamasa Kaiun Shipping Company. Their boats will take you out to sea for either a cruise around the island or a voyage that includes a walking tour after docking on a specially built pier. A walking tour costs ¥4,300 (¥2,150 for children), with discounts available to groups who book in advance. 150 min tours leave twice daily, at 9am and 1pm.

Yamasa Kaiun also offers Nagasaki Bay tours, as well as a Sunset Cruise.

For more information see:
www.gunkan-jima.net or call **095-822-5002**

Yamasa Kaiun has a desk inside the Nagasaki Terminal Building from which you can arrange your tour. (1F 17-3 Motofunamachi, Nagasaki City)



NATIONAL TREASURES

The imposing system of volcanoes that form the heart of the Shimabara Peninsula, in south-eastern Nagasaki prefecture, seem to bring the area to life – quite literally in some cases: this is some of the most fertile land in the country – but the whole surrounding region is worth serious exploration.

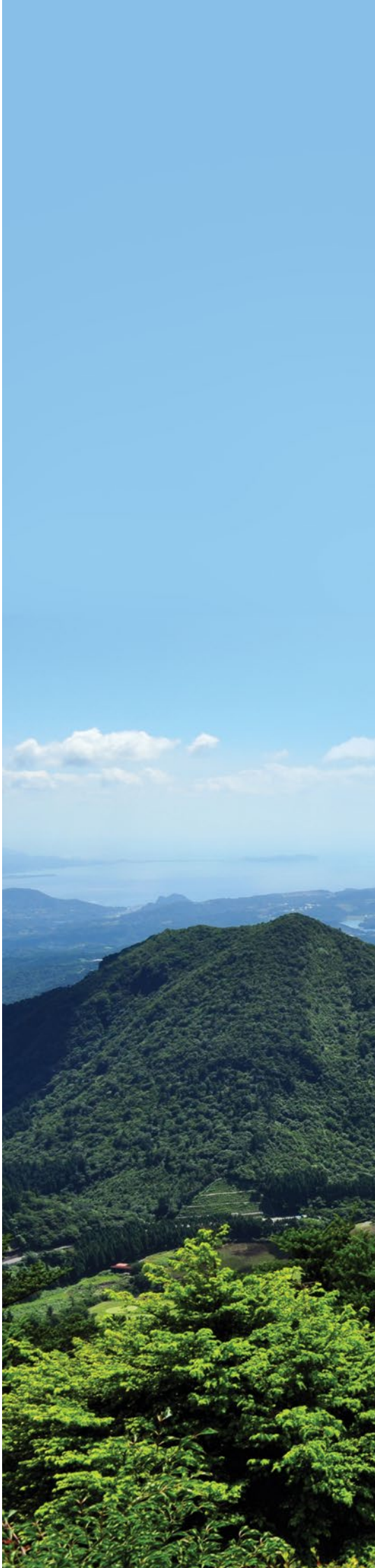
With hot spring resorts both in the mountains and by the sea, dolphin watching hot spots, ancient castles, reminders that this was the first area in Japan to welcome foreign tourists, cable cars with volcanic views and Japan's first golf course adding up to just a selection of the sights on offer, we had to take a trip to find out more – and made sure we left room for more than just a local lunch.

The whole peninsula is part of the Unzen Volcanic Area Geopark, one of five areas in the country to have become part of the United Nations' World Geopark Network. In fact this was not only the first area in the country of such geological significance to have been inducted onto *that* list, it was also Japan's first National Park, a label bestowed back in 1934. In essence the Geopark tag means that the area is a kind of living and protected 'Earth museum' that can help visitors learn about and understand the natural world around them, but also, of course, it means that there is some pretty spectacular scenery in the region that is unique in the world.

Geo Saraku is a locally concocted phrase meaning 'to walk around the geo-site' and for us this meant hopping in our rental car and choosing one of many sample itineraries recommended by staff at a local tourist information center, who have literature in English that will help you get the most out of your visit, however much time you have. The people around here seem immensely proud of their local area and there is definitely a welcoming feel to many more isolated areas that is pleasing this far from Tokyo.

Our drive first took us in and out of glorious bays to the southeast of Nagasaki City and onwards past numerous fishing villages towards Obama, a seaside town well-known as a coastal hot spring resort long before the 44th president took his seat in the US – though that hasn't stopped locals emblazoning onsen towels (a novelty souvenir that seemed a snip at ¥200) with a caricatured image of their town's namesake enjoying a steamy bath. You'll know you've arrived when you spot that steam spouting from chimneys around a small harbor, and even seeming to flow through guttering at the side of the road. If you are stopping for long, there are plenty of options for lunch here. Obama Champon noodles seem the most obvious choice (you can't miss them, but we found our bowl with a view from the second floor overlooking the harbour at Yoshicho well worth writing home about) but you might also head to the seafront market or Marine Park to select and steam or boil your own local vegetables and seafood (including the delicious-all-year-round *tairagane* crabs) in hot spring water.

Next we headed deeper into the thickly vegetated hills (dolphin watching off the southern tip of the peninsula or checking out its pristine beaches would have to wait for another day) and onwards towards the



Unzen City area. We were on the way to one of the first points foreign tourists would have regularly encountered in Japan, and many of the hotels in the cool highland resort offer a nostalgic stay, with the historic Unzen Golf Club that spans the foothills of Mt. Unzen (it opened in 1913) further hinting at that past. During the Meiji era, foreigners would visit the area from Nagasaki and when a regular ferry connected the city of Shanghai with the region from the 1920s onwards there followed a boom that culminated in the national park's formation. Strolling through Unzen, past a visitor center that helps you on your way, you'll find a densely steaming '*Jigoku*' (hell) geothermal area and some well-signposted hikes.

We climbed onwards up local roads towards the Nita Pass, a stunning road that winds up and around the volcano, looks down on the golf course and lakes below before opening up to offer a view out towards the Ariake Sea. There are many stopping off and viewing points where you can look at evidence of eruptions that have shaped the area over the years, including the Heisei Shinzan, a spectacular lava dome formed in the early 1990s. The Unzen Ropeway will take you further before you wind your way back down the island, but don't miss the view from the 1,142m Nita Pass Daini Observatory, from which you can clearly see the effects of a catastrophic 1792 collapse that left sheer cliffs and a landscape that appears to have melted and spread out into the sea below.

There is so much to see and do in the National Park and the peninsula as a whole that you could, one feels, spend at least a week exploring the region, but even as a one- or two-day trip that forms part of your exploration of Kyushu, and in particular in Nagasaki, one of Japan's most diverse prefectures, this might form the highlight of your stay.

ACCESSING SHIMABARA PENINSULA

The best way to get around Shimabara Peninsula is to hire a car. You can take the ferry from Kumamoto across the Ariake Sea or drive down from Nagasaki Airport, with the journey to Shimabara City taking between an hour and two hours depending on your destination. Local busses and trains do serve the area, though having your own set of wheels will certainly be beneficial.

You can read more about the Geopark and see other sample itineraries at *www.unzen-geopark.jp*







HISTORY & ELEGANCE

At the heart of a hot spa town inside Japan's oldest National Park, halfway up the steaming mountain that dominates the Shimabara peninsula, in Nagasaki prefecture, Unzen Kanko offers a charming inside perspective on years of history as well as a truly unique resort experience for all of its guests.

A HISTORY OF HOSPITALITY:

The hotel offers a palpable sense of the area's history as a resort long favored by both Japanese and foreign visitors alike. Its walls hold that history with an alluring level of personality and the attention to detail in the whole building's design and upkeep make for an experience to remember.

The doors to Unzen Kanko first opened on October 10, 1935, ushering in a new era of refined travel and tourism in Nagasaki prefecture, and indeed Japan. The area was, though, already familiar to foreigners, who had come during the Meiji period (1868-1912), and with both Japan's first golf course bringing renown and a regular ferry connecting a fast internationalizing Shanghai with Nagasaki, Unzen became even more popular.

From its founding, hotel literature was written in English as well as Japanese, such was the attraction amongst foreigners and throughout the hotel there are reminders of this past as an ideal getaway. Traces and artifacts from a bygone era bring a sense of continuity to the present, each of them showing off the pride with which current staff hold their traditions.

The area is a must-visit for anyone with more than a few days to spare and who wants to see more of Japan. The history of the place is fascinating, and experiencing that while staying at Unzen Kanko Hotel is a pleasure quite possibly unsurpassed anywhere the country.

ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN:

Many guests come to Unzen Kanko for its history, and the building's architecture and style are a big part of that.

Upon arrival one immediately feels that this is going to be a rather unique experience. The Swiss-chalet style building intrigues, then the elegant entrance hall and lobby provide a welcoming space that manages to both offer a sense of nostalgia and feel completely timeless. Antique furniture and wooden pillars and beams that frame the room exude class and are the perfect indicators that this is a place you will be happy to call home during your stay.

Rooms were updated during a renovation project that finished in 2008. Each retains a classical feel, with William Morris wallpaper and stylish bathrooms featuring claw-foot baths as well as furnishing that lends itself to relaxation whatever time of day or night it may be.

A bygone era brought travellers who would spend the whole summer in the hotel. As such, the whole place has been designed – and maintained – to allow the pleasure of being able to spend time simply whiling away hours and relaxing in comfort. In the billiard room, the library, or in one's room with a good book, the hotel invites guests to feel at home however they choose to enjoy their stay.

DINING AND RELAXATION:

Entering Unzen Kanko's rather grand 60-cover dining room is a pleasure in itself. It is a gloriously classical space, airy and light with wood beams jutting across the 15-foot high ceiling. The room steers clear of calling itself a restaurant or having a name, per se, with the manager at the time of its inception hoping to give guests a sense of being at home rather than at a hotel – a theme that runs through the hospitality here. Deeply polished flooring has an alluring sheen that hints to dinner parties – and dinner dances – past, and guests often find the experience one of the highlights of their stay.

Just glancing at the tablecloths and the art deco crockery that awaits diners again brings reminders of the history of the hotel. With neat touches and impeccably planned and executed updates that are in keeping with the building's









1 Chefs select the freshest ingrediants from the farm 2 Delicious buffet style breakfast 3 Traditional Japanese cuisine made from locally sourced produce.

tradition, dining here is an experience that goes further than the food.

Of course that food, though, as guests would hope, is excellent. Taking advantage of its position on the Shimabara peninsula, in Nagasaki prefecture, where ingredients are rich, diverse and easy to source locally, chefs create seasonal menus that work in harmony with the hotel's aesthetic. In keeping with a rather international atmosphere, there is fine French cooking with impeccable flourishes of style that work to get the best out of produce from the hotel's farm as well as of course the nearby ocean, with a range of courses and a la carte options available to suit all tastes.

Pastry chefs have carved a reputation that has begun to spread even wider than to their many repeat customers. Their trolley is something to be thankful for at the end of any dinner service, with a range of fruit based cakes and pies complemented by sweeter choices and some more special items: the Gorgonzola cheesecake is a must-try.

The hotel also has a Japanese restaurant, Youtei, and a classic lounge-style bar at which to while away the evening in comfort and style.

The location dictates that there are locally surfacing natural hot spring waters filling the hotel's baths. Both indoor and outdoor onsen offer a fine part of the hotel in which to relax, as do the spa and various seating areas that allow you to live life at the hotel in the slow lane and truly feel at home.

A wonderfully restored library – previous owners responded to a perceived desire for Japanese style rooms and sadly removed it before it was rebuilt in 2007 – holds around 1,500 books, including many in English, ranging from literary anthologies to local history tomes and photo-books.

Next to the library is the billiard room, with stained glass windows, that could be yet another focal point of a marvelous evening spent relaxing and unwinding at the hotel.

LOCATION:

Many of the highlights of the Unzen National Park, founded in 1934, a year before the historic Unzen Kanko Hotel, are within touching distance. Upon heading out of the hotel's driveway and following the local lanes past Unzen Jigoku – a steaming geothermal valley of 'hell' – and through sulphurous mist towards the other end of town, you'll soon pass Japan's oldest golf course (open since 1913). Then, heading steadily uphill, you will find what is surely both Japan's best value and most spectacular toll road. For just ¥100 you can enter the Nita Pass, a loop that winds around the mountain towards the scarred volcanic peak of Mayuyama, which catastrophically erupted in 1792. Spectacular views through the clouds on one side and thick forest on the other lead you towards stopping off points, a visitor center and the Unzen Ropeway, which offers, on clear days, panoramic views of the peninsula.

It's also a short drive down to Obama, a spa town on the west coast of the peninsula well-known for having the longest footbath in Japan as well as for its locals' talent for cooking anything from eggs to freshly caught crabs in the steamy waters that seem never more than a few footsteps away.

SMALL LUXURY HOTELS OF THE WORLD™

Unzen Kanko is proud to have earned the Small Luxury Hotels of the World™ approval, one of only a handful of hotels in Japan to feature in the brand's global list of the best and most interesting boutique establishments.

For more information about Unzen Kanko, please visit the official website: *www.unzenkankohotel.com*







1 Unwind in a relaxing onsen with 2 Premium double room 3 Enjoy a game of billiards in the games room.





ARRIVE IN STYLE AT NAGASAKI AIRPORT

It was the first of its kind constructed anywhere in the world and its location on the tiny island of Mishima, in Omura Bay, makes Nagasaki Airport one of the most spectacular and beautiful places to land in Japan.

Flying in to the island – formerly home to rice farmers but now expanded into a modern terminal – is perhaps the easiest way to reach in the region directly from Tokyo, Nagoya or Kansai, and you will be welcomed with trademark local warmth. There are a number of airlines offering flights into Nagasaki, including JAL, ANA, Skymark, Peach, SNA and ORC, with direct flights many destinations across Japan and Asia. In fact, if you fly in from Tokyo, you might consider a few days in Nagasaki prefecture before a trip to Seoul, Shanghai or Naha, Okinawa.

In support of local tourism as well as Nagasaki's candidature for World Heritage status in 2015 (the *Churches and Christian Sites of Nagasaki* could be inscribed on the 150th anniversary of the discovery of Christians in the area) the airport offers information for tourists and links to many of the places you will want to visit.

The airport is well served by local bus routes that snake through the prefecture taking you to your next destination (it's around 45 minutes to Nagasaki City) and there is also a ferry service that operates from the terminal to both Huis Ten Bosch and Togitsu, 50 and 25 minutes journey respectably. It is also just 4km from Omura railway station, from which you can head south to Nagasaki city (around 18km away) or the Shimabara Peninsula, or north towards Sasebo.

The airport's restaurants showcase some of the best of local cuisine throughout the day, with a recent renewal of facilities and menu concepts focusing on some of the most famous dishes of the area as well as some lesser known treats that are harder to come by in other parts of the country. Whether you fancy one more Sasebo Burger, missed your chance to try udon from Goto Island, or find *chawan mushi* more to your liking, the restaurants will meet your needs, with international options and western coffee shops also on site.

"The airport's restaurants showcase some of the best of local cuisine throughout the day, and menu concepts focus on some of the most famous dishes of the area as well as some lesser known treats."

As well as a duty free store, there is a large market-style area that hosts antenna shops selling everything from agricultural products from around Nagasaki prefecture to craft goods and various other gifts and souvenirs. There is locally produced sake, steamed pork buns, sweets and confections, with many of the stalls offering department store-style tasters and samples to help you on your way.

A business lounge and support center, free Wi-Fi spots and small internet room will make things smoother for business travellers, and facilities such as the massage room, observation deck and spacious waiting areas will allow for a little relaxation whether you are early for a flight or deciding on your next steps in Nagasaki prefecture.

For more information about Nagasaki Airport please visit:
www.nabic.co.jp/english/







1 Scenic surroundings 2 Delicious local cuisine 3 The view from above Nagasaki Airport.

Best Western
PREMIER
Hotel Nagasaki







From the moment you step inside the impressive marble-floored lobby of the Best Western Premier Nagasaki to the moment you arrive at lunch or dinner on the 15th floor and take in the spectacular view, you'll know you've made the right choice.

Each room, too, boasts a great view of the city – those facing south will look over towards the harbor and bay area towards Glover Garden on the hills opposite and those facing north will be able to spot the Peace Park and its surroundings leading up to the mountainous backdrop the city is so famous for.

There is a traditional western quality to the hospitality throughout the hotel, but not so on the fifth floor. Take a walk down its corridors and you'll feel as if you are in Kyoto; the aesthetic is modeled on the streets of Japan's ancient capital. There's a Japanese garden and pond outside – yes, we're still on the fifth floor – and also Kaname, a restaurant with adjacent sushi bar that serves local seafood and seasonal Japanese specialties.

The Japanese rooms on this floor are fit for tea ceremonies and you'd never know you were sitting in a modern building, such is the tranquil atmosphere and detail of traditional decor.

If you choose to stay in the hotel's Executive Floor, though, everything will feel up to date. The chic suites offer everything one would expect from a top class hotel. Its rooms are spacious, relaxing and perhaps most important, homely – with more than a few touches of class.

A buffet style breakfast shows off local dishes from around Nagasaki prefecture, including the outlying islands, as well as western favourites and, if you get up early enough to head to the 15th floor, a wonderful view of sunrise over the city to start your day in style. Dinner on the same floor, in the New York Dining grill restaurant and bar, could include anything from local steak to seafood and of course cocktails to round it all off perfectly.

The hotel offers a shuttle service to the Mt. Inasa ropeway, about 1km away, which gives access to unrivalled views of the city and bay. Staff can also arrange for you to visit an onsen on the same mountain. Mt. Inasa is worth a trip in the early evening; at the top of the ropeway, over 300m above the city, you'll find a park and small visitor centre but the star of the show could well be the glass-walled viewing hall and café near the summit.

The hotel is part of an exclusive group that is able to offer a discount card for sightseeing facilities in the city – ask at reception when you arrive and staff will advise you of the many offers, including half-price entry to most top tourist sights in the city.

Access:

Nagasaki seems a small city and whether you arrive by bus, train or boat you can either walk around five or ten minutes to the hotel or take a short taxi ride to the front door where staff will welcome you. The hotel is ideally placed in the heart of town. Visitors are easily able to access many top sites in the city, whether that be by streetcar – the Takaramachi stop is right outside – or on foot.

Best Western Premier Hotel Nagasaki
Address: 2-26 Takaramachi, Nagasaki
Tel: 095-821-1111 | **Email:** nagasaki@bestwestern.co.jp
Web: www.bestwestern.co.jp/english/nagasaki





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BUREAU Shinagawa. A luxurious, hotel-like serviced apartment by Space Design. Designed by renowned architect Jun Aoki and featuring bilingual concierge, complimentary buffet - style breakfast, a fitness gym, and penthouse Japanese spa. These fully furnished apartments are perfect for one month stays or over. Long term, unfurnished rental contracts now available for Weekender readers! Inquire today for more details on this special offer. **Contact:** adsd@space-d.co.jp or **Tel:** 0120-710-677



High-rise Luxury Condominium For Rent

Roppongi Tokyo Club Residence

Price: ¥100,000 - ¥300,000

First class services such as valet parking, a porter, housekeeping, and Concierge are available as well as a Gym and Sky Lounge that are free to use. A high-end, simple modern interior comes with gorgeous view of central Tokyo. Fast access to Roppongi and the Roppongi Ichome areas. Additionally, the area is home to embassies, including the US Embassy. Business areas and high-rise condominiums such as Roppongi Hills, Tokyo Midtowm and Izumi Garden are also to be found in this district. **Contact:** pm@housingajapan.com or **Tel:** 03-3588-8869



8LDK Mansion, Fuefuki-shi, Yamanashi For Sale

Private Sale

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Dreamloft is a comfortable escape from civilization. Surrounded by lush mountains, this is a home away from home to settle back and reflect in. The house was designed specifically for demanding tastes that match the world–class features of the area. With easy access to the Woodstock Country Club and the Misaka ski slopes, this 8-bedroom house ensures everyone has enough space to spread their wings. Peach orchards and forested areas encircle the property and you'll find it hard to believe you're only an hour from the Tokyo Metro area. **Tel:** 090-8050-7775.

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Takasaki, Gunma

Investment For Sale

Whole Building

Price: ¥186,000,000

11% gross cap rate with interiors and exterior all newly renovated in 2013. Located in a very quiet residential area and is popular with families. The occupancy rate is 83% with only 3 units vacant out of 18 total. Full occupancy provides gross income of ¥1,700,000 / month. Price is for both building and land. If this property isn't to your liking then we have many more across a range of budgets with similar returns so contact us today! **Contact:** info@p-v-b.com or **Tel:** 0120-21-6115



4 Bedroom apartment in Ebisu, Tokyo

For Sale

Hiroo Station

Price: ¥119,000,000

Not to be missed! Centrally located, 4 bedroom, 2 1/2 bath apartment in Ebisu, with wide balconies and great views, with a highly sought after south west exposure, in over 220 square meters of living space, 10 minutes from Hiroo Station at an extraordinarily low price. The large living dining area allows further space from which to enjoy the wide views from the penultimate floor. Also includes maid room, and 2 car parking at no extra cost. All this for the truly low price of 119 million yen. Monthly management fee of 103,600 yen. **Contact:** contact@century21japan.com or **Tel:** 03-3585-0021



Hirafu, Niseko

Resort Investment

Price: ¥80,000,000

Great views of Mount Yotei. Toya now boasts 4 bedrooms, and 3 bathrooms, a large double garage with owner's storage space and ample extra parking space outside. Including a self contained apartment with dual key locking system. This means that it can be rented as one whole unit or as 2 separate spaces, thereby maximizing rental returns. There is plenty of room for 2 or possibly 3 families and ample outdoor space for kids to play in. The tranquility and natural beauty of Country Resort has resulted in it becoming a very popular spot for travelers to stay all year round. **Contact:** info@ljhookerniseko.com or **Tel:** 01-3655-8880

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FIELDS OF GREEN

Saitama is not usually the first place people think of when planning a day trip away from Tokyo. Portrayed as nothing more than an extension of the capital, it is often seen as an urban jungle that is awkward to get to and that doesn't offer very much when you get there.

The reality, however, is somewhat different. There are a number of intriguing areas in the prefecture that are well worth visiting. One such place is Kawaguchi. Located on Arakawa River, it is a rather green area with more trees, plants and wildlife than you might expect. Also not quite as far from central Tokyo as many people assume, it is a good place to visit during any season. There is even more reason to go and find out all of this for yourself coming soon – in the middle of October the area will host three days of festival fun that should appeal to locals and expats alike, while taking advantage of all that greenery.

"Between October 12 and 14 we will hold several green festivals in Angyo, in Kawaguchi City," explains local mayor, Koshiro Okamura. "There's going to be a big bonsai event in Julian Hall, which is like a really big greenhouse." The Green Center, a huge botanical garden, will also be a focal point for events. "In fact, throughout the city," Mayor Okamura explains, "there will be open gardens – some serving pizza and tea."

"With live bands, dancing, stalls selling food and beer, tea ceremonies, train rides for kids, competitions, and various other activities, it should be a great occasion for people of all ages," Mayor Okamura adds. And getting there is easy – just take the Namboku Line from central Tokyo, which is connected to Saitama Railway, and you can be in Angyo within 50 minutes. Once there you can either rent a bicycle or take the free shuttle bus, which leaves every 30 mins, to get to the locations.











1 Crowds enjoy the open air market 2 Lots of greenery to choose from 3 Example of beautiful bonsai 4 Kids enjoy a bonsai lesson.

BONSAI

One of the main attractions of the three-day event is the Angyo Autumn Bonsai Exhibition and Greenery Festival, an increasingly popular bi-annual event that will showcase 23 different kinds of bonsai on the second floor of Kawaguchi Ryokka Center (also known as Julian Hall). Whether you are a bonsai expert or just someone with a passing interest, this is a fantastic opportunity to get closer to the craft, and to the people at the heart of keeping it alive.

There is also a chance to learn more about bonsai, and to meet those people, with lectures being held throughout the festival period. As well as finding out about the formation of the bonsai tree, you will gain a greater understanding of the processes of cutting, wiring, pruning, clamping and other techniques that are essential in its growth and long-term maintenance. While listening to the teachers, you can get some hands-on experience cultivating your own tree, with assistants close by to help out. This has proved particularly popular with families over the past few years.

For those interested in purchasing some items, there will be around 30-40 dealers selling not only bonsai trees but also a wide range of products, including plants and flowers. Whatever the size, style or colour of your garden, you should be able to find something that tickles your fancy at the center and an added bonus is that there will be a number of experts on site who'll be more than happy to advise newcomers.

GREEN SURROUNDINGS

Kawaguchi Green Center, the other main venue of the festival, an idyllic botanical garden with a colorful selection of flowers, a rock garden, an iris garden, fountains, a large greenhouse, a bird center and a charming Japanese teahouse. It is a lovely setting for couples interested in taking a morning or afternoon stroll, in addition to being a great place for families.

There are a number of activities for kids, including a large scale play area with a jungle gym as well as a mini Shinkansen and steam locomotive train ride. If that isn't enough, Anpanman and many other characters will also be making an appearance during the festival.

It is not jut an event for youngsters, though; there are plenty of things planned that will keep the adults entertained, including a tea ceremony that guests can take part in and a number of live performances, most notably a koto show in the teahouse.

Celebrating the city's 80th birthday, there will be a number of other activities, such as a hanging basket competition, greenery lectures, blueberry tree giveaways and a cherry tree planting ceremony with Kawaguchi's mayor, Koshiro Okamura. It should be a lot of fun, with a large number of local citizens volunteering to help make the three days extra special.

Refreshment stalls will be scattered around at both the Kawaguchi Ryokka Center and the Kawaguchi Green Center, serving all kinds of food and drink. The Julian ice cream (flavoured with local sakura) and JA (Japan Agricultural) vegetables come particularly recommended. The two locations also have restaurants.

TEA AT TANAKA'S HOUSE

Throughout the three days Kawaguchi residents will be doing all they can to make visitors as welcome as possible. Students from Angyo Higashi Junior High School, for example, will be holding a tea ceremony at Koujuen that is free to join, while Mr. Tanaka will be serving snacks and refreshments at his house, which has a delightful open garden that guests can drop in on at any time during the day.

Angyo Autumn Bonsai Exhibition & Greenery Festival and the Kawaguchi Green Festival

Dates: *October 12-14*

Getting to Angyo, Kawaguchi

Take the Saitama Railway Line - which connects directly to the Namboku Line – to Tozuka-Angyo. It takes around 45 minutes from Azabu Juban.

For more info please visit:

www.s-rail.co.jp/english







1 Mayor Okamura 2 Kids enjoy mini steam locomotive train ride 3 Hawaiian dance performance at the Green Festival.

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KYOTO A CITY FOR ALL SEASONS

Japan's majestic ancient capital and its surrounds are soon to get even more beautiful, with autumn and the koyo *– changing leaves – season a perfect time to visit*

Kyoto is undoubtedly the best place in Japan to experience the transition of seasons with the tree leaves turning deep shades of red, orange and yellow in the coming months. The splendid temples and shrines scattered throughout the city somehow pair up so naturally with the natural, seasonal hues, and Kyoto just looks completely magical in autumn – even more so than the rest of the year.

Koyo excites some to the same degree as the appearance of ephemeral cherry blossom buds in the spring, and the event is celebrated with viewing spots stretching all the way up to the mountains that enclose the traditional city. Whether you choose to hop on a bicycle and ride your way across Kyoto, or hike the surrounding mountains, the beauty of the city never stops wherever you happen to be. Narrow alleys, mountain paths, bustling downtown streets, and hidden shrines on side streets are all adorned with different kinds of charms and elegance, perfectly conveying the spirit of the old capital.

Kyoto is a place where modern architecture somehow found a way to blend in with the traditional, where visitors mingle with locals, and where temples hidden in lush forests can make you feel like you are in a completely different world. The hidden beauty of Kyoto never stops to amaze, and even when you think you have seen all the nooks and crannies of the place, you still stumble upon some exquisite sights.



KYOTO ROYAL HOTEL & SPA







Located on Kawaramachi Street, in the heart of Kyoto's main entertainment district, Kyoto Royal Hotel & Spa is one of the most convenient hotels in the city for both sightseers and business people alike. Hundreds of shops are just a short walk away, while some of the most popular tourist destinations, such as Kinkakuji temple, Ginkakuji temple, Nijo castle and Kiyomizu temple are also within easy reach. With an international restaurant, lounge bar, spa and wellness centre on site, it really is an ideal place to stay during your visit to Japan's old capital.

RELAXING ROOMS

Bright, modern and spacious, every room has been designed to ensure a high level of comfort for all guests who stay at Kyoto Royal Hotel & Spa. There are 443 rooms (86 singles, 228 twins, 100 doubles, 26 suites and 3 triples) all of which have an LCD TV with BBC TV, free Wi-Fi and LAN internet access, air-conditioning, a Washlet toilet and various other amenities that you would expect to find at a top quality hotel.

There are nine different types of room, varying in size and style.

A THERAPEUTIC SPA

On the same floor as the Kotaran Suite is the Kotoran Spa, where guests can enjoy a number of services including facial treatments, setai and full body massage, body treatments and foot reflexology. All treatments are based on Kyoto's distinctive natural resources such as shiso leaf, Uji's green tea, yuzu, pine needles and sandalwood.

The layout of the spa pays homage to the historic city of Kyoto with rice paper, Japanese stucco paint and water features helping to give the place a feeling of tranquility. Here you can also see *Shimmering Waves*, a *washi* tapestry by Eriko Horiki. Other facilities include a yoga studio, a nail salon and a basement arcade, while there is also a fortune-teller in the hotel.

DINING AND DRINKING

Serving a variety of seasonal delicacies, Prandia restaurant is open all day for breakfast, lunch and dinner. For a very reasonable ¥2,500 (¥2,700 with a chocolate fountain) you can enjoy a dinner buffet with around 30 varieties of food including roast beef and seasonal vegetables. For an extra ¥480 you can opt for an all you can drink alcohol menu.

For those wanting to enjoy a beer or two in a more relaxed environment, Haven Library lounge and bar is definitely worth visiting. Serving a wide selection of beverages, the authentic English style bar is popular with both hotel guests and locals. Happy Hour is from 17.00 to 19.00 on weekdays, 16.00 to 19.00 on weekends, with all drinks, except for bottles, at half price.

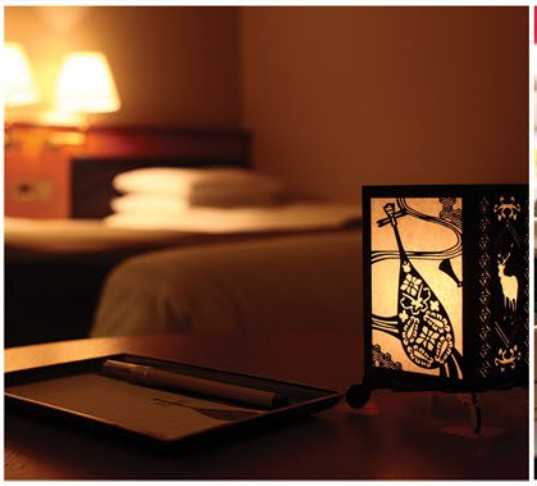
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hotel nikko nara







At Hotel Nikko Nara, you can stay and enjoy the ambience of more than 1,300 years of history and tradition, and indulge your senses after a day of sightseeing.

Whether you are coming by way of Osaka, Kyoto, or from farther away, Hotel Nikko Nara puts the charm of traditional Nara just around the corner.

The hotel's convenient location lets you begin your visit with a smooth start: the hotel is located just outside of the west exit of Nara Station. There are also more than two hundred spaces available for travelers who come by car.

There are a wide variety of rooms for any need, including well-appointed standard rooms – from singles to quads – as well as sumptuously spacious suites and deluxe twin rooms.

The sights of Nara are known around the world, but the friendly concierges at the reception desk are happy to point visitors toward hidden gems and seasonal highlights around town. If there's something you can't find, the Silkia Nara shopping area on the first and second floors of the Hotel Nikko Nara building offers much choice, and you can find jewelry stores, clothing boutiques, hair salons and beauty treatment spaces.

After a full day of sightseeing, shopping, or hiking, you have probably worked up an appetite, and the hotel certainly does not disappoint when it comes to dining options. There are five restaurants to satisfy any palate: Restaurant Serena serves up a buffet of Western and Japanese food, while Restaurant Shukō offers Chinese course meals. Teppan Grill Icho is the place for meat-eaters, cooking rich cuts of wagyu beef to perfection, and Fountain, the lobby lounge, serves up café favorites and drinks. However, given that Kyoto and Nara are famous for kaiseki meals, where seasonal ingredients meet in perfect combination, you shouldn't miss the luxury and refinement of chef Takashi Tsujii's Restaurant Yoshino. All of the restaurants serve dinner from 5:30 pm until 9 pm. Until the end of September, the restaurants Serena and Yoshino are serving dishes from special autumnal menus.

Finally, if you're in the mood to belt out some tunes after dinner, there is a karaoke lounge on the 6th floor that is available by reservation until 9:30 pm. All of Hotel Nikko Nara's restaurants are open for lunch, and Restaurant Serena is a great place to begin your day with a plentiful breakfast buffet.

Currently, the hotel is offering a special package for the popular fall foliage season. This package is available from October 1 to December 10, and includes a morning breakfast at Restaurant Serena and a day transportation pass.

Address:

8-1 Sanjo-Hommachi, Nara-Shi, Nara 630-8122

Web: www.jalhotels.com/domestic/kansai/nara | **Tel:** 0742-35-8831



The Westin Miyako
KYOTO

Perched on the edge of the Higashiyama mountain range that surrounds the city, the Westin Miyako Kyoto offers the perfect location from which to enjoy your stay in Japan's ancient capital.

Throughout its 120-year history, the hotel has in its many forms earned a superior reputation for excellence in hospitality, with a style and aesthetic that is in tune with the splendor of the city. An elegant teahouse that was the seed of the current development remains on the site, with the prestigious Aoi-den and Kasui-en Gardens (designated Kyoto City Cultural Assets) further adding to the historical significance of the complex. Western sophistication goes hand in hand with the highest standard of traditional Japanese hospitality throughout, and the hotel oozes prestige.

Both traditional Japanese style rooms and high class Western-style suites have hosted everyone from foreign dignitaries, executives, families and celebrities over the years, with a range of facilities making each guest feel at home as the next during their stay.

Rooms are spacious and each tailored to your needs and desires, with spa-type bathrooms and Westin's specially made, industry-leading Heavenly Beds guaranteeing comfort and relaxation whichever you decide is best for you.

Modern touches such as Westin's Service Express system, which makes it possible to order all hotel services at the press of a button, including 24-hour room service and in-room dining, bring the place right up to date and allow for a care-free, luxury experience any trip to Kyoto deserves.

Dining at the Westin Miyako Kyoto is everything you would expect from one of Japan's premier hotels. With creative contemporary Japanese cuisine, teppanyaki, Chinese and Western-fusion dishes offered at the numerous lunch and dinner venues, in addition to more relaxed cafes and bars, you will find everything you desire in easy reach.





Address:

Keage, Sanjo, Higashiyama-ku, Kyoto 605-0052, Japan

Web: www.miyakohotels.ne.jp/westinkyoto/english | **Tel:** 075-771-7111 | **Fax:** 075-751-2490



The cast of Greenday's fantastic *American Idiot* Broadway musical, on tour in Japan with Kyodo Tokyo.

PEOPLE, PARTIES, PLACES

TOKYO'S LONGEST RUNNING SOCIETY PAGE, WITH **BILL HERSEY**

I find it difficult to think summer has about had it, what with the heat, but we're already into September and before we know it fall and cooler weather will be here. That's the way it should be, but with changing weather patterns, who knows! If you've lived here any length of time you know it can stay hot through September, and there's still possibilities of dehydration, food poisoning, etc. All's I can say is take care of yourselves, and stay well.

Even with so many Tokyoites heading out for summer holidays (just talked to Palestine Ambassador Waleed Siam, who's in Cairo with his family and British Airways' Vishal Sinha, who's in Italy with his) Tokyo stays super busy with all kinds of interesting people visiting, lots of traditional festivals and fireworks, all kinds of blockbuster movie promotions, a full sports calendar and endless cultural events and music festivals. That's why I love our city.

Pop star Cyndi Lauper, who was just here for Summer Sonic, loves Japan as well. Years ago I met her in the lobby of the then-popular-with-celebs (Julio Iglesias, the Bay City Rollers, Michael Jackson, his chimp, Bubbles, etc.) Capitol Tokyo Hotel, which by the way repainted Bubbles' room because, apparently, "he didn't like the color".

When we met, Cyndi was wearing a tacky black wig and huge sunglasses, but she was with her promoter, a friend, so I knew who she was right away. This was when she was considered a strong competitor to Madonna, who, with her strong personality, business sense, talent – not to mention willingness to pose in the nude – came out on top. Well, things change, and Cyndi seems to be getting as much good publicity as Madonna now. She was one of the big stars at Summer Sonic, won a Tony Award for writing the songs and music for the Broadway show Kinky Boots and has written a best selling book about her life. Anyway, I love the lady and am happy she's doing so well.

Over the years I met both Cyndi and Madonna several times. Frankly Cyndi was more fun and easier to be friends with. She usually called when she was in town, was always nice and often came up with some crazy requests. One of the most memorable was when she asked me to round up a dozen "Drag Queens" – "Any color, any age, any size, any nationality" – to back her up when she sang her hit "Girls Just Want To Have Fun" for one of Japan's big New Year TV shows. Thank God for good friends like top foreign entertainer in Japan, Steven Haynes, who rounded up "Les Girls" for Cyndi. With a colorful, fun, sometimes-bitchy group of transvestites and Cyndi doing crazy things both on and off camera, she and her group were the hit of the show.

Another time when Cyndi was here doing concerts, she fell off the stage and broke something. That didn't stop the real showbiz trouper. She did the last three shows in a wheelchair, and they were good!
I remember one night very well; Cyndi fell asleep on my shoulder in the van ride from the concert venue to her hotel – she looked beautiful.

Back to the old Capitol, my really good friend, Tabasco's man-in-Japan Marc Gleason, told me about a marvelous experience he had there. He was having lunch in the hotel's Origami coffee shop and, of course, using a lot of Tabasco when a beautiful lady a few tables away said, "Excuse me – could I borrow your Tabasco?" He immediately recognized the lady, the great Whitney Houston, and she, of course, got her sauce.

Like everyone I know, I was really happy about the birth of Will and Kate's beautiful son George on July 27th in London. Looking back I realize how many great things have happened to Great Britain and how lucky I was to share many of these with former British ambassador David Warren and his wife Pam. These included William and Kate's wedding; Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee celebrations; the super ("best ever") Olympics; getting together with designer Vivienne Westwood after many years; and watching the main stars of Warner Bros.' *Harry Potter* series grow up when I had the opportunity to get to know them during their many promo visits here. These activities included helping set up a Harry Potter party at the British Embassy, and another time getting Daniel (Radcliffe) and Emma (Watson) together with many of Japan's top pop stars. David Warren, who was the UK's ambassador at that time, as well as his wife Pam, really



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Super Celebration Grant Hyatt's 10th

1. Goi Budde, Chef Helmut Baehner, Chef Josef Buade 2. Mr. and Mrs. Hiroo Mori (Mori Bldgs) with Grand Hyatt GM Christophe Lorvo and his wife Alicia 3. Swiss International Airlines GM, Japan and Mrs. Noboru Okabe, Spanish amb. and Señor Miguel Angel Navarro 4. British C&C Japan exec director Lori Henderson and Ian Francis Novick 5. Brazilian amb. Marcos Abbott Galvao, his wife Ana (center) and Alicia Lorvo 6. Escada execs Fumio Ubukata and Serok Lee with Christophe Lorvo 7. Park Hyatt GM Philippe Roux-Dessarps, his wife Sachiko, Juhee Sinha and Bill 8. Alicia with Mr. and Mrs. Hironobu Shibuya 9. Djibouti amb. Ahmed Araita Ali and his wife Yasmine 10. Photographer Vanessa Franklin with art consultant Caroline Trauch 11. Christophe with outgoing US amb. John V. Roos ajd his wife Susan 12. Miele president and Mrs. Hideki Matsubara with Oakwood's Martin Fluck 13. Hungarian amb. Istvia Szerdahelyr, his wife Rieko, Brazilian amb. Marcos Galvao, Mexican amb. Claude Heller Roussant and Irish amb. John Neary and his wife Kathleen

Jordanian National Day, Okura

14. The hostess, Shifa Haddad (right) and Susan Roos, wife of the outgoing U.S. ambassador 15. Algerian amb. Sid Ali Ketrandji, Shifa Amal Ketrandji, her daughter Sana, and Jordanian amb. Demiye Haddad.


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Jordanian National Day, Okura (cont.)
1. H.E. Archbishop Joseph Chennoth, Zimbabwe amb. Stuart H. Comberbach, his super wife Bickie, another super lady, Ogata-san (of the UN/JICA, etc.) and Djibouti's Ahmed Araita Ali 2. Jamila al Otaibi of Kuwait, Randa el Dib and Samira Adelaziz from Sudan 3. Shifa Haddad, Jamila Bilal of Quatar and Abeer al Muslahi of Oman 4. Lebanese amb el Dib and his wife Randa (left) and the host, Jordanian amb. Haddad

Grace's Beautiful Memorial Concert for Her Daughter
5. Grace with Tokyo Woman's Club friends, President's Brigitte Duchemin, Sekine and Jill Sinclair Ito 6. Rotary International's top exec Sadami Ogai and Grace 7. Rumen and Veselina Kovachev from the Bulgarian Embassy 8. Grace, Egyptian doctor Nadia el Borai and Peninsula GM Malcolm Thompson 9. Japan's top foreign entertainer Steven Haynes with Grace 10. The always-fashionable Lina Chikada.

At Roppongi Hills' Harry Potter Exhibition Premiere
11. Maho Hayashi, Roberta Ireton and the Mori Arts Museum's Yoshiko Mori 12. Ethnic Dining's Vivek Kothari with British Airways' Vishal Sinha and his wife Juhee 13. Polish amb. Cyryl Kozaczewski, his lovely daughters Iga and Marta 14. Jay Bailey (National Australia Bank) and his pretty lady Meg Katsukura 15. Artist Areej Al-Muslahi, from Oman, and her friend Jasmine Davis.

helped with all this. You've probably heard Daniel Radcliffe has been cast as the journalist in a film version of Jake Adelstein's book, "Tokyo Vice" (Tentative release 2015).

Before I move from people to parties I'd like to mention one more star I met here in *old Edo*. I got a call from a friend saying Tommy Lee Jones was on his way from Narita to his hotel, and inviting me to be there to meet him. I got to the hotel about 15 minutes before the man arrived, and really fouled up when I said "Nice meeting you Mr. Lee."

He turned to me and really let me know his name was Jones – and not to confuse him with another friend of mine, Tommy Lee of Mötley Crüe. Oh well, we all make mistakes. He, as you can imagine, was not in a good mood, and spent the next 15 minutes bitching about the long drive from Narita and not being allowed to smoke since he left L.A. Happy to see him look happier in the photos, where he's got McArthur's corncob pipe sticking out of his face in posters, etc. for the film, *The Emperor*, which he was here promoting for Shochiku. In addition to having his pipe, he's making big bucks here with his commercials, and just finished another with Japan's top pop group SMAP. Hear a lot about him not being easy to get along with, but we all know he's a hell'uva good actor.

Grand Hyatt's Spectacular 10th Anniversary Event

The 10th anniversary party for the Grand Hyatt Tokyo here was, as everyone knew it would be, very special in every way. Before guests entered they were entertained at the stone garden entrance by several boldly body painted fire dancers, who put on a dynamic show. After this people entered the hotel through the red skirt of a blonde who literally towered about 25 feet over everyone there.

The dress code was formal, and the main reception area was, as you can see by the photos, full of super chic people.

The evening was unbelievable gourmet food from six Hyatt restaurants. Guests moved from room to room, and everyone enjoyed the Italian, French, Chinese, Japanese, Keyakizaki, fish and endless delicious desserts.

The hotel's GM, Christophe Lorvo, made a short, meaningful speech before cutting the 10 layer (10 years) cake and inviting everyone to the ballroom where they could mix, relax and enjoy the many wines and Champagnes. The Hyatt had flown in a British band called the Bootleg Beatles, and their renditions of all the Beatles favorites had everyone dancing on into the morning.

Jordan National Day at Okura

To celebrate Abdullah II ibn al-Hussein's accession to the throne and the 67th year since the independence of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, ambassador and Mrs. Demiye Haddad hosted a glittering reception in the Hotel Okura's Heian room. Guests included Japanese Government officials, diplomats, as well as both Japanese and foreign business leaders and their spouses.

The bountiful buffet featured Jordanian, Japanese and Western favorites, there was an interesting exhibition of Jordanian paintings and handicraft, as well as Jordanian song and dance.

I've had the privilege of meeting and highly respect the King and several other members of the Royal Family. I also drove from Amman to Petra to Wadi Rum, where they filmed *Lawrence of Arabia*, and the beautiful beach resort of Aqaba holds great memories.

Grace's Special Memorial Concert

Grace Saito held her regular charity concert for the eradication for Polio at the Sogetsu hall on Aoyama Dori recently. Grace, as many of you know, is a real philanthropist, and has always been involved in projects to help others. Much of her work benefits the different projects of the Rotary Club of Japan. This concert was really very special, as it was in memory of Grace's daughter, Mari, who passed away several months ago. Mari was an accomplished pianist herself, like Grace loved classical musical and was also a true philanthropist. At the concert before this one Grace had arranged for her daughter to be there and see and hear her favorite pianist Hiroshi Arimori perform. Believe me, that was an emotional evening everyone there will always remember. Arimori-san also took time out of his busy schedule to perform at the memorial concert for his dear friend. It was a beautiful tribute in every way. God bless you Mari, we all miss you.

The Harry Potter Exhibition

I wasn't really sure what I was expecting but was really surprised at and enjoyed the Harry Potter Exhibition special preview and reception at the Mori Arts Center Gallery and Roppongi Hills Club.

It was room after room of fashion, books, good H.P. people, and bad H.P. people. There was the train to Hogwarts and so much else, so beautifully exhibited that it brought back many great memories of the books and Warner Bros. films. Judging by the number of people I've seen carrying big Harry Potter bags in the Hills area, it's really popular. The show runs through 9/16 so you still have chance to catch it.

Busy People

It was really great seeing beautiful and dynamic Australian model Miranda Kerr, who took time out of her almost non-stop working schedule on her recent visit to Tokyo. I first met Miranda about 10 years ago when she was just getting started in modeling and we hung out at the Lexington Queen club – now New Lex Tokyo. She looks great and is a top world model now who's one of the stars of the spectacular Victoria's Secret fashion shows. She's done well with her personal life as well and is married to actor Orlando Bloom (*Lord of The Rings*, *Pirates of The Caribbean*, etc.). Like celebs Herbie Hancock and legendary singer Tina Turner, Miranda and Orlando are members of the Soka Gakkai religion. She was here this time as image girl for the renowned Samantha Thavasa.

The New York based cast and crew of Greenday's award-winning Broadway musical, *American Idiots* also made a lot of new friends and fans during their two weeks of Kyodo Tokyo performances at the International Forum. I got to know the members of Green Day during their early career, and have always liked their music. They're too busy to come here now, but the cast was packed with great singers, great dancers and the full houses of mostly young Japanese, like me, really enjoyed the show. Kyodo, by the way, will bring Paul McCartney for shows later in the year.

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More Azabu Staff having fun Aloha style in the summer… (L-R Daisuke, Hiroyuki and Fukuji)

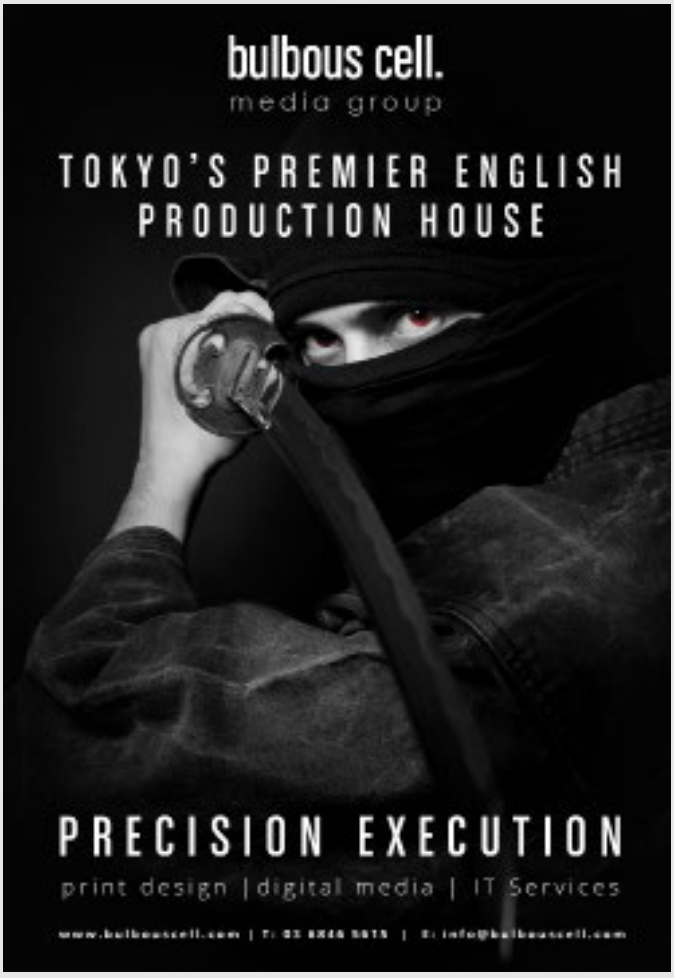


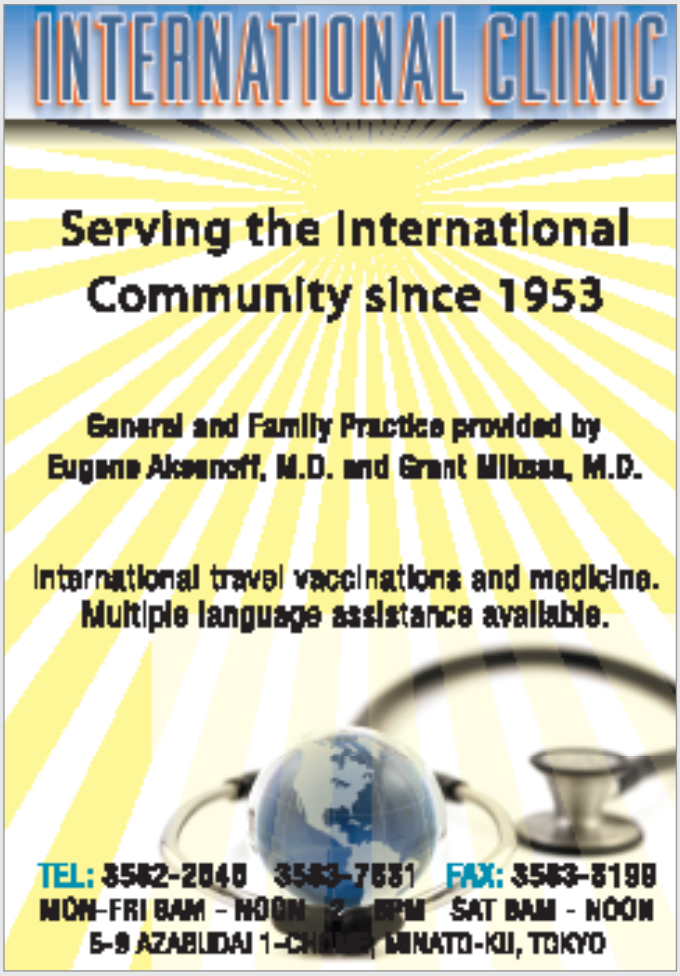
Tomoya Nakmura did well with the Coca Cola chugalug contest at National Azabu

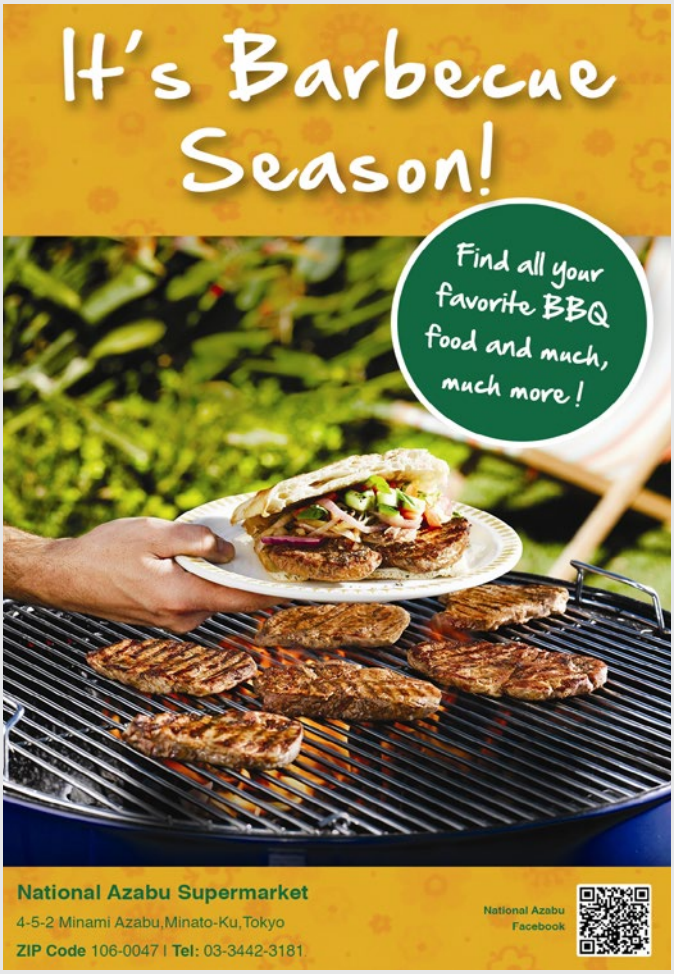


Bill Hersey with Australian supermodel Miranda Kerr at the New Lex Tokyo


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MOVIES

COMING TO A CINEMA NEAR YOU IN SEPTEMBER



THE WOLVERINE

Arguably the most popular of the X-Men, Wolverine in recent years benefitted from a strong screen presence in the form of Hugh Jackman up until his first solo outing, the somewhat disappointing *X-men Origins: Wolverine*. This latest effort, *The Wolverine*, hasn't had the easiest time in development (the original director Darren Aronofsky dropped out after the 2011 Tohoku earthquake, causing delays) but Wolverine's finally back – claws sharpened and ready. Based on a popular 1982 storyline, the film sees the feral Wolverine come right here to Japan to face off against old friends and enemies and inevitably battle a few samurai and ninja along the way. The film has an abundance of Japanese talent in the cast, headed by love interest Mariko, played by popular model Tao Okamoto (who *Tokyo Weekender* had on the cover and interviewed about the film back in May), and deadly assassin Yukio (fellow model and actress Rira Fukushima). James Mangold – the prolific filmmaker behind such hits as *Knight and Day*, *3:10 to Yuma* and *Walk the Line* – was the man to take over in the director's chair.



UPSIDE DOWN

Exploring similar themes to another release this month, *Elysium*, though in a slightly different context, *Upside Down* sees the rich and poor separated onto two opposite planets with gravities that pull in opposite directions. Living on the lower, poor world is Adam, who as a youth falls in love with Eden despite their living a world apart. Their love is doomed to fail, but years later, when Adam catches a glimpse of Eden on television, he promises to do the impossible and enter the affluent upper world to find his love. This romantic science fiction was written and directed by Argentinian Juan Salanos. *Upside Down* offers a softer, romantic alternative to the explosive action of *Elysium*.

STRUTTER

Strutter made an appearance the Tokyo International Film Festival nearly a year ago, and if you didn't catch it back then it's well worth a look now. The film completes a trilogy from writer-directors Alison Anders and Kurt Voss that started in 1987 with *Border Radio*. This is a film of two halves; in the first we meet musician Brett as he slides into despair when his girlfriend leaves him and his band disintegrates. The second becomes something of a road movie, as he travels across California with his former love rival, local hero Damon, and free spirited sometime-stepfather Frank. The film is a very hip tour of the bars, record shops and desert areas of California; shot in stark monochrome it's a very cool journey.





BYZANTIUM

Byzantium is the latest from Academy Award winner Neil Jordan (*The Crying Game*, *The End of the Affair*). The film is set in a run down coastal town, where two mysterious women take shelter in an old guesthouse. The women turn out to be 200-year-old vampire-like creatures who come to reveal their complicated past. The film stars excellent up and coming actress Saoirse Ronan, who first impressed in 2009's *The Lovely Bones* and former Bond girl Gemma Arteton (*Quantum of Solace*). The director is not a complete stranger when it comes to the bloodsucking undead: he was the man behind *Interview With the Vampire: the Vampire Chronicles*.

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UNFORGIVEN

There's a history of Japanese and American cinema inspiring and borrowing from each other dating back to Kurosawa's John Ford homages and the subsequent remakes they inspired. This grand tradition is continuing today, as this month sees the release of the Japanese remake of Clint Eastwood's classic Western, *Unforgiven*. The original saw ageing former outlaw Clint drawn out of retirement and a peaceful farming life to take on one more job. In this new version the action is transplanted from the old West to feudal Japan where, in northern Hokkaido, Ken Watanabe's reclusive swordsman is forced by poverty to once again take to action. Eastwood has given his blessing to the project, the man having worked with Watanabe before, in Second World War drama *Letters to Iwo Jima*. Unforgiven is a remarkable film and if history is anything to go by this could become a classic in its own right.



ELYSIUM

Elysium is the long awaited second feature from South African-Canadian *District 9* director, Neill Blomkamp. In the year 2054, the overpopulated and ravaged Earth is orbited by the space station Elysium, home to the super wealthy that can afford to leave the planet behind. Matt Damon stars as Max, a man belonging to the lower classes who takes on a mission that will take him to the space station and possibly bring it down. To do this he'll be up against Jodie Foster's Elysium minister, Delacourt, and *District 9* breakthrough star Sharlto Copley, an immigrant hunting mercenary. Blomkamp scored a huge hit with his politically conscious, apartheid-referencing debut feature back in 2009 and *Elysium* promises to tread similar ground. With its themes of class and immigration, this could be the thinking-man's hit of the summer.

> SCREENINGS Selected Cinemas

The Wolverine: TOHO Cinemas (Roppongi, Odaiba)
Unforgiven TOHO Cinemas, (Shibuya, Roppongi)
Elysium: TOHO Cinemas (Roppongi, Odaiba)
Byzantium: TOHO Cinemas (Yurakucho/Hibiya, Shibuya)
Strutter: Human Trust Cinema, Shibuya
Upside Down: TOHO Cinemas (Roppongi, Odaiba)

> DVD/BLU-RAY This Month's Releases



Ghost Rider 2
Nicholas Cage is Johnny Blaze, also known as Ghost Rider – a stunt motorcyclist holed up in Eastern Europe but ready for more fantasy-thriller action.



Zero Dark Thirty
Chronicling of the hunt for Osama bin Laden and taking us up to the dramatic moment in May 2011 when the world's media stood still.



Iron Man 3
Robert Downey Jr's charm grounded this, an unbelievable concept, in a colourful reality and helped sell the story to non-comic book fans.



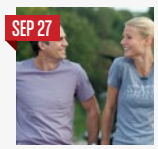
The Master
Joaquin Phoenix and Philip Seymour Hoffman star in Paul Thomas Anderson's take on the life of founder of Scientology, L. Ron Hubbard.



Lincoln
Daniel Day-Lewis brings Abraham Lincoln to life, leading an outstanding cast with a powerful, Oscar winning performance. Directed by Steven Spielberg.



G.I. Joe: Retaliation
After an early attack, it's up to survivors Roadblock, (Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson), Flint and Lady Jaye to save the day, with a little help from Bruce Willis.



Thanks for Sharing
Mark Ruffalo and Gwyneth Paltrow rom-com about a group of friends who are 12 steps away from a cure to their sex addiction.

This month's movie previews were written by **Christopher O'Keeffe**. For more movie news and reviews visit **www.tokyoweekender.com**



TABLEAUX, DAIKANYAMA

The classiest dining room and lounge in town has had a subtle makeover – retaining its crown with ease.

Whether you're trying to impress friends from out of town, wine and dine that client, or score a few extra points on a first date, this "international restaurant with a Japanese twist" is the perfect place. Located at the heart of the trendy and chic scene in Daikanyama, Tableaux offers guests a complete experience – from pre-dinner cocktails through to post-dinner nightcaps.

The word "Tableaux," defined as a picturesque grouping of persons or objects, inspired the concept of creating a different scene at every angle of the restaurant. There is no risk of being underwhelmed when gazing upon the extravagant decor of the cocktail bar's ceiling, imprinted with a moon and star and lined with crystals imported from France, or the row of chandeliers draped over the mosaic of mirrors in the main dining room.

After enjoying a cocktail from the full bar at the entrance, guests are led into the main dining room and handed a menu that chefs refresh every two months in harmony with the seasons.

Both the decor and food are European-inspired, with Italian and French touches obvious, but of course, being in Tokyo, chefs have the advantage of being able to source the highest quality organic vegetables, fish and meats from the regions of Japan. Fish makes it to the Tableaux kitchen about 18 hours after being caught in Kochi prefecture, making it some of the freshest in Tokyo. The chef also embeds Japanese elements into original dishes, for instance topping a classic American crab cake with marinated salted seaweed or preparing 55-day aged beef with a Japanese yuzu pepper sauce and a touch of spanish black salt. Once you've finished and think you've seen it all, Tableaux has more to offer guests not quite ready to call it a night.

The lounge, located next to an outdoor terrace, hosts a well-stocked liquor and cigar bar, as well as offering a wine list with hundreds of wines from around the world. A New York speakeasy vibe greets you, with lights dimming as the evening goes on and nightly live jazz performances filling the room. Curating a collection of artists from around the world makes the music alone an incentive to visit. The lounge and restaurant feel like two entirely different experiences, each as unique as the next.

Surely those extra points you hoped for when picking the restaurant will be multiplied when you and your guests exit down the Tableaux red carpet – literally – at the end of the night.

Oysters are a snip at ¥490, mains start from around ¥2,000 and there are both a prix fixe menu and a seasonal ¥10,000 Chef's Selection, eight-course menu.

> "Tableaux offers guests a complete experience – from pre-dinner cocktails through to post-dinner nightcaps"

For more information about Tableaux please visit the official website:
Web: www.tableaux.jp

Address: *B1F, Sunroser Daikanyama, 11-6, Sarugaku-cho, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo*

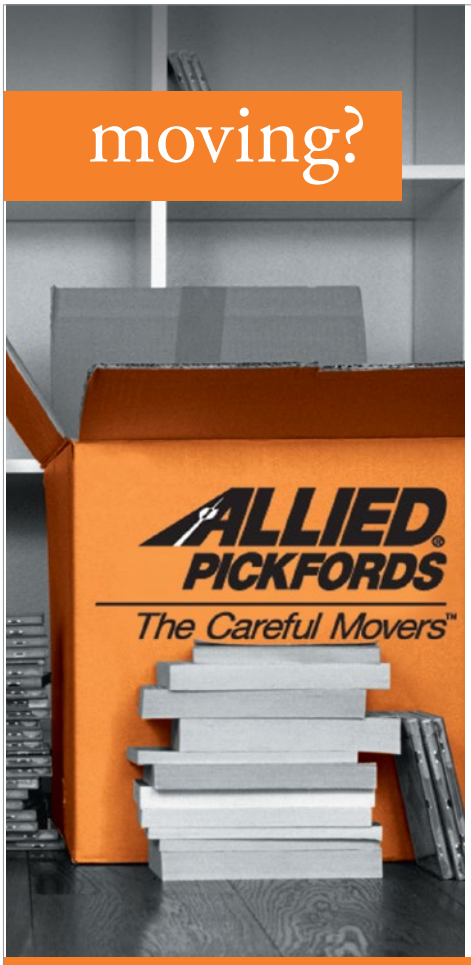
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AGENDA: THE WEEKENDER ROUNDUP OF WHAT'S HAPPENING IN SEPTEMBER

1 SEP 21

21 DBS Presents

Genuine drum'n'bass legend Goldie and Dego (from 4hero) run things from the front, you do the dancing...

Where: Unit, Daikanyama

How much: ¥3,300 (adv)

More info: www.unit-tokyo.com

2 SEP 24

24 Disclosure/Aluna George

These two British duos (the latter are pictured) stomp into Ebisu for what will be any electro fan's party of the month for sure.

Where: Liquidroom

How much: ¥5,000

More info: www.liquidroom.net

3 SEP 26

26 SNFU

Chance to catch Canada's hardest rocking band, led by legendary lead singer Ken Chinn (aka Mr Chi Pig).

Where: Club Quattro, Shibuya

How much: ¥3,500

More info: www.club-quattro.com

4 SEP 21

21 USN and Subject Matter Pop Up Gallery and Store

Celebrate the opening of this cool new pop-up gallery meets store with an eye-catching exhibit entitled "Four Legs Good, Two Legs Bad"

How much: Free | **Where:** Jingumae 1-1-3

More info: www.ultrasupernew.com

5 SEP 6-16

25 Belgian Beer Weekend

You'll be even more confused about this 'weekend' lasting 11 days after a few choice brews. Entry buys you a glass and some beer/food tokens.

Where: Roppongi Hills Arena

How much: ¥3,000 (adv)

More info: www.belgianbeerweekend.jp

6 SEP 14

14 Wire13

Takkyu Ishino's techno all-nighter featuring old favorites Sven Vath, Josh Wink and DJ Hell in the massive Yokohama Arena.

Time: 18:00-6:00 | **How much:** ¥4,000 (adv.)/¥11,550 (adv.)

Where: Yokohama Arena

More info: www.wireweb.jp/13

7 SEP 28

28 Summer Closing Party

Aussie duo The Presets, with help from Ryukyudisko and Dexpistols, ensure September goes out with more than a fizzle.

How much: TBA

Where: ageHa

More info: www.ageha.com

8 SEP 8-9

08 Bonsai and Greenery Fair

Join fellow green fingered hobbyists, collectors and members of the public looking for unique gifts at this annual event in Azabu Juban.

Where: Patio Juban **How much:** Free

More info: www.tokyoweekender.com

SEPTEMBER


9


10


11


12

9 **SEP 13-14**

13 Pitbull

Love him or hate him, Armando Christian Pérez and his latin and hip hop moves are back in our capital, for not one but two nights.

Time: 18:00 (doors) | **How much:** ¥9,000 (adv.)
Where: Tokyo International Forum
More info: www.creativeman.co.jp

10 **SEP 14-15**

14 Vietnam Festival

Come for the pho, fried spring rolls, banh mi and other delicacies, but stay for traditional garments, handmade crafts and dance performances.

Where: Yoyogi Park
How Much: Free
More info: www.vietnamfes.jp

11 **SEP 7**

07 Velours Night Out

After-party to Vogue's Fashion's Night Out, with Vivienne Tam's latest collection and a new men's line by Italian brand Ducati.

Time: 21:00 (doors) | **How much:** ¥2,500
Where: Velours, Minami Aoyama
More info: www.streetleveltokyo.com

12 **SEP 6-8**

06 Tokyo Jazz Festival

From between free open-air concerts, iconic crooners (see above!), big bands, quartets and soloists, everyone can find their beat here.

How much: Various, some free | **Where:** Tokyo International Forum, Cotton Club
More info: www.tokyo-jazz.com

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The adventures of Max Danger, Ex-Pat

EASY STREET

Hey, there's nothing difficult about living as foreigners in Japan. Most things are very easy; very easy, indeed.

It is almost embarrassing describing the mysteries of the Orient to the folks back home—the ease with which we accomplish our simple goals can make the Cost of Living Allowance and related inducements to move abroad obsolete and unnecessary. In fact, it may be wise to destroy this essay after reading it lest it falls into the hands of someone concerned about our welfare in the trenches. ("I thought you told me there were mysteries in the Orient...") It's all quite simple here really.

In the spirit of positive thinking, Max Danger has compiled the following summary of things that are in the "falling off a log" category. You can almost do these things in your sleep.

A. Renewing a Driver's License—No sweatsville. Licenses expire on birthdays, cleverly disguised in Japanese characters and the number of years in the reign of the current Emperor, sometime around three years from the date of application. If one's birthday is Jan. 1 and one applies for a license on Jan. 1, one merely makes a mental note to renew the license on Jan. 1 three years hence. If one's birthday is in mid-June, and one applies for a license on Jan. 1, one must merely remember a date either two-and-a-half or three-and-a-half years — depending on the whim of a bureaucrat — in the future. Simple.

If a license is approaching expiry, one must also remember that it cannot be renewed more than 30 days **prior to** expiry. That's easy — one merely adjusts international travel plans, hotel reservations and head office conferences to suit the license guardians. In addition, the actual renewal, depending on one's memory of events during the previous three years, can either be at certain police stations if there are no driving violations in the records (or, in some prefectures and Tokyo city wards, no parking violations in the records), or at the Driving Bureau itself — conveniently located, if one is a stevedore, down where the ships unload their goods into warehouses.

And if, God forbid, one should forget to renew the license, the issuance of a new one is not all that complicated — provided one accepts the Japanese premise that anyone without a license has never seen an automobile before. Less than a million people (well, not much more than a million people) line up each Saturday for road tests among the warehouses. And the written test only involves memorizing several hundred *kanji*. Duck soup. All in all, keeping track of a driver's license shouldn't take more, on the average, than three or four working days per year.

B. Visas and Passports — Same story as the driver's license — absolutely no hassle. The only difference, and it's a minor difference really, is that there are more dates to remember. In Max's case, with a wife and three children, there are only 15 dates (well, 20 if you count the Alien Registration Cards) to keep in mind. Passport expiration dates are basic to the documents; visas, which bear no relationship to the passport dates, are separate; re-entry permits, of course, have nothing to do with visas; and the A.R. Cards are in a world of their own (in offices of their own).

It is a song and dance to only spend a day or two at the Marunouchi Immigration Office on the unidentical twin subjects of visas and re-entry permits for each of the family members since the ambience is so pleasant — thousands of wide-eyed, big-hipped, magic-chested "entertainers" from Southeast Asia with their curly-haired Japanese pimps all clamoring in tropical heat for the attention of the five clerks assigned to the processing detail. Simplicity itself.

Max recently **did** hit a teeny-tiny stumbling block at the A.R. Card stage of things when, as he admitted in the three apology letters it was suggested he write, he carelessly and through his own negligence burned his fingers on a *teppanyaki* grill, yet failed to report the alteration of his fingerprints on a timely basis (14 days) to the Ward Office. The four days of bureaucratic hysteria **that** caused should not, by rights, be added to the mere 10 to 12 working days (on the average) devoted to the other entry and residency procedures. Water off a duck's back.

C. Purchasing Anything Not on Display — Walkman? Go in there and point. Television set? Same thing. Oriental vases to make Oriental lamps for new Oriental apartment? Oriental Bazaar. Ballet slippers for pre-teen daughter? A whole lot easier than drowning in the desert.

"Ballet slippers, *nan desu ka?*"
"*Hai*, ballet slippers."
"Ballet slippers?"
"Yes, for my daughter."
"Ballet slippers?"
"Ballet slippers."
"Spell please."

It only took a month. And the daughter was still more or less interested in ballet when the slippers arrived. The police, by the way, could not have been nicer — once the misunderstanding between "ballet" and "bullet" was cleared up. Simple as pie.

D. Financial Transactions—Perhaps the easiest thing of all, pushing money around electronically is a cinch in Japan. Max decided to open a personal account in a neighborhood bank — an account separate from the downtown company account and from the family joint checking account. It makes sense to have a repository for the extra "mad" money.

Forms were completed, statements of assets were provided, and more forms were completed. To be on the safe side, signatures were requested to be verified by the American Embassy. More forms then followed. A scant six weeks later, a man from the neighborhood bank showed up in Max's office with a check made out to Max for ¥1 million. When it was explained, through interpreters, that a **deposit,** not a **loan,** was the interest of the day, it was concluded that only brand new forms and signature verifications would suffice. Where else in this complicated world might one reach this stage in only a month and a half?

The story must end here. The man from the garage has arrived with, it is assumed, a simple explanation as to why it took nine days to change the oil and grease the company car. No problem.

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