

Wet & Windy

The tale of a “typhoon disrupted” visit.

In all of our previous 15 visits to Japan, we had never encountered a typhoon. Looking back, this trip seemed doomed from the start.

When we arrived at Burnie Airport in Tasmania, we were told our flight to Melbourne was going to be delayed due to fog in Melbourne and we wondered if that was going to make us miss our flight to Japan. However, all was well although the flight from Kuala Lumpur to Kansai airport arrived 30 minutes late. This in turn affected our ability to reserve a number of journeys using our JR Passes due to the sudden build up of others wanting to use the service in a queue behind us.

We then tried to book more trips at the JR booking office in Kyoto station when we arrived, only to find out that a typhoon had damaged the line between Saiki and Oita on Kyushu and that caused a major problem as we intended to get the ferry from Sukumo to Saiki. There were buses but they meant that we would not be able to make connections to get to Karatsu that day. A complete change of plan was needed so we sought Harumi-san’s help in booking an extra day at Uwajima. Her help was needed as the hotel there did not understand English and my Japanese is not good enough to hold a conversation over the phone.

All sorted at last and things were looking up, except for the news that another typhoon was on its way.

We went to see friends in Nakatsugawa where a new baby had been born 5 weeks earlier. While we were there we were taken to Momoyamakuen to see some unusual rocks.



Yohei, Ann, Sophie and Sayaka



The male rock in Momoyamakuen.

From there we went to Toyosu near Tokyo to visit our Japanese “daughter” who we had hosted for a year over 25 years ago. We had a great experience at the Ozu Washi paper-making studio while we were there.



The extended Matsuo family.



At the Ozu Washi Studio.

From there we went up to Tottori where we wanted to have a look at the sand dunes. However, the typhoon was getting closer and we were lucky to get to Tottori on time. The weather was atrocious, strong wind and heavy rain, so we did not get to the sand dunes.

The next morning we arrived at the station only to be told that the train we were booked on to Hagi had been cancelled. However, there was another in four hours, maybe. It did leave, but the journey took over 6 hours to Masuda instead of the 4 hours it was supposed to take. That meant that when we arrived there were no more trains to Hagi that day. Luckily, the station master put the four passengers in a taxi to take us to Hagi at JR's expense. When we eventually got to the hotel, there were no restaurants serving so we had a long walk up to the shops to buy some sandwiches for dinner. We hate typhoons.

The weather started to improve and we enjoyed our walk round Hagi.



A street in Hagi's Old Castle Town.



Outside the Enseiji temple.

From Hagi, we went to Tsuwano. We went to a couple to shrines and temples, one of which required me to climb up 253 steps through the toris to reach it on the top of the hill.



A few of the 253 steps.



A small shrine on the way up.

From Tsuwano we went to Matsue for a pleasant couple of days at the castle and on the lake.



Along the Ohashi River.



Matsue Castle.

Then the weather started to change for the worse as we travelled to Matsuyama. The next day the rain came down in torrents and the wind blew. We got soaked as we went up to the castle but we had to do it, the weather cannot stop everything that is planned.



In the cable car up to Matsuyama Castle.



Walking up to the castle.

On the way down from the castle we came across a shop with Susie Cooper porcelain in the window. Ann used to work for Susie Cooper as a sales person nearly 60 years ago and we do not see much of her work in Tasmania, if any, so in we went for a chat with the owner.



Miserable weather over Matsuyama.



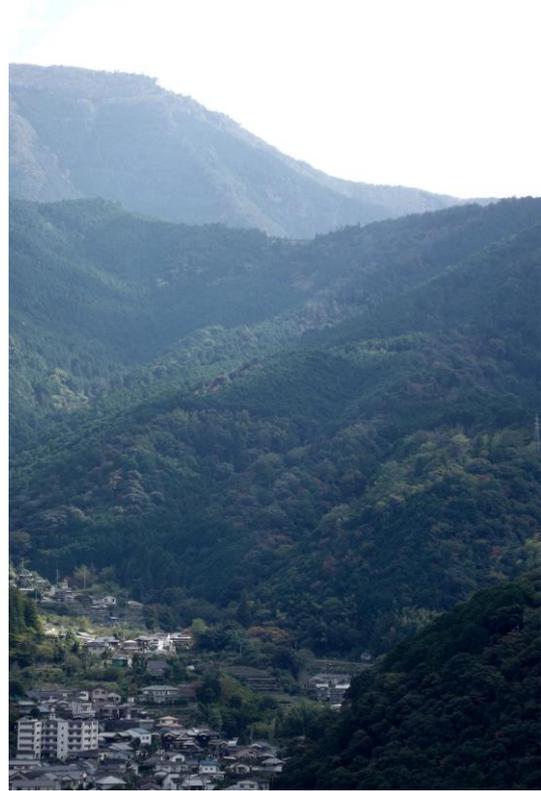
Susie Cooper China.

It took us three days to dry out our shoes from the soaking they got. Luckily the rain died down late in the afternoon and from then on it stayed fine for the rest of the trip.

We spent nearly three days at our next stop, Uwajima, and had an enjoyable time there. The first day, after arriving from Matsuyama, Uwajima was closed for a holiday after the Bull Fighting the day before so we went up to the castle which is quite nice even though it is very small.



Uwajima Castle.



Looking out from the top of the castle.

The next day we went off to Yawatahama to have a look around and try and book our tickets for the ferry to Beppu on Kyushu only to find that you can only purchase them on the day. However, the lady in the office was very helpful and we filled out the form that we would need to present to obtain the tickets. On arriving back in Uwajima we went for a walk through the Warei park and over the Suka river to visit a couple of shrines and temples, one of which the Jonenji Temple. This is one of the most beautiful temples that we have visited in Japan.



In the Jonenji Temple.



In the Jonenji Temple.

The next day we caught the bus to visit the Nanrakuen garden. This was not the time of year to view the garden at its best. We had visited the gardens four years previously but that was in April and the sakura was beautiful. This time there was no colour and there were a lot of reconstructions going on with the garden.



Part of Nanrakuen Garden.



Reconstruction work.

The next day we caught the ferry from Yawatahama to Beppu and then the train to Higashikaratsu station and Yoyokaku. The following day was the Kunchi Matsuri parade of the floats. We had seen this parade on several occasions so we decided to visit Arita. The town was quite nice even though it was a public holiday and Ann had a great time at the Porcelain Museum.



A shop in Arita.



Tombai walls made from old fire bricks.

Later, back at Yoyokaku, we had a wonderful celebration dinner and entertainment which seems to get better year by year.



After dinner entertainment.



Ann enjoying herself.

The following day, we went up to Kanazawa to collect our years supply of Shibafune (a type of ginger biscuit that we adore). From there we arrived back in Kyoto to meet, for a short time, another friend, an architect, who had spent a year with our son's family on exchange as a student. The next day we were on a plane back to Tasmania. But the disruptions had not finished. It turned out that our flight from Melbourne

back to Tasmania was going to be over two hours late due to the pilot being sick and the need to find a replacement.

Nevertheless, it was a good trip with a few new experiences.

Next year Hokkaido.