

Part #1 Mt. Fuji and Kobe, Japan

Celebrity Japan Cruise -- April 5 – 21, 2025

Saturday, April 5, 2025

Supposed to be the day BEFORE we left. Ended up being the DAY we left!

Saturday at noon, we found out due to expected bad weather, American Airlines cancelled our flight out of NO for Sunday am. They had re-booked us for Monday flights. However, if we waited until Monday to leave, we would miss the cruise ship by arriving too late on Tuesday. Lonny booked us a Southwest Air flight Saturday pm to Dallas Love. In a frantic, we finalized packing as quickly as we could to get to the airport Saturday night. Buying a ticket so late, we were the last ones to board plane. We were also the last ones to get off plane. Because I was so thrown off by the change in plans, my cell phone fell out of my pocket while trying to get off the plane. I was halfway to baggage claim before realizing my phone was missing. We ran back to plane, but the jetway door was closed and everyone had left already left the gate. Fortunately, there was another flight landing at the gate next to us. This was the last plane to arrive at Dallas Love Airport Saturday night. We found a maintenance man to reboard the plane to look for my phone. We couldn't tell him what the row where we were seated, because Southwest has open seating but knew it was near the rear of the plane. He finally found it after we used Find My app to signal a beep to my Phone. When we finally got to baggage claim, there were no more bags on the carousel. We found our bags at the lost and found office. We took an UBER from Dallas Love Airport to Sheraton DFW airport, arriving well after midnight.

Sat, Apr 5 • Confirmation # **26XLUM**

Boarding passes

Flight details Flight # WN4257

Boarding time	Departure gate	Boarding position
8:50pm	B6	C 10

[Upgrade to A1 - A15](#)

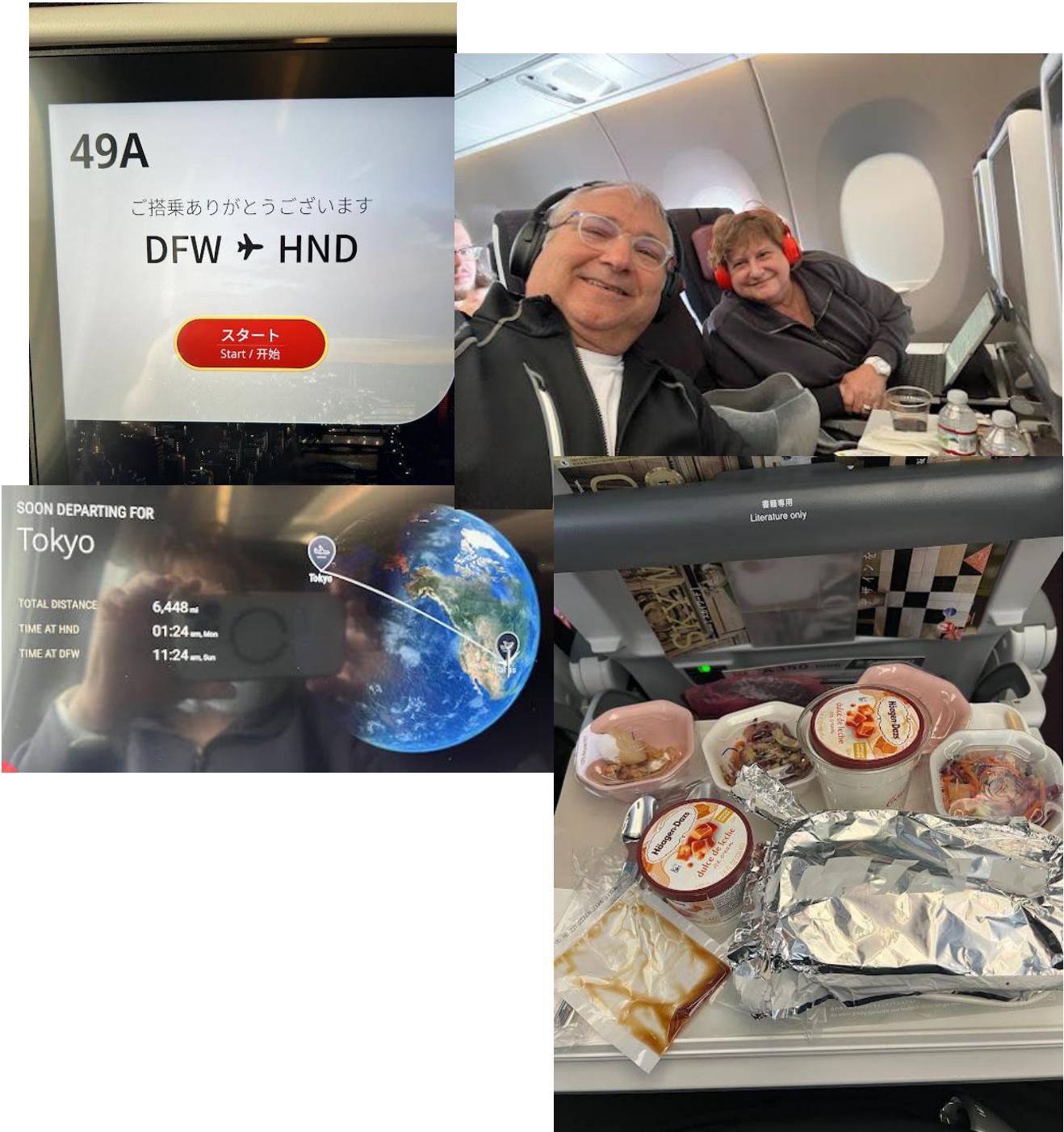
Departs
New Orleans **9:20pm**
New Orleans, LA - MSY

Arrives
Dallas **10:55pm**
Dallas (Love Field), TX - DAL

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Sunday April 6, 2025 -- Board Japan Airline Flight to Tokyo

Took shuttle early Sunday am to DFW airport. I was still shaken up from change of plans and actually left one of my two bags in hotel lobby before boarding shuttle. Fortunately, the hotel called my cell while waiting in shuttle bus. Went back inside hotel lobby and got my bag. When we arrived at DFW, there was so much confusion over what flights we were taking. We waited in line for over an hour at American counter for them to tell us we needed to go to Japan Airline counter. Then, they tell us we had to get on the telephone with American to release flight American booked us on. Call took over another hour. We finally got on Japan airlines direct flight to Haneda Airport in Tokyo which was a 13 1/2 hour flight!! First time ever flying on Japan Airlines. Tried to nap. Not very successful.



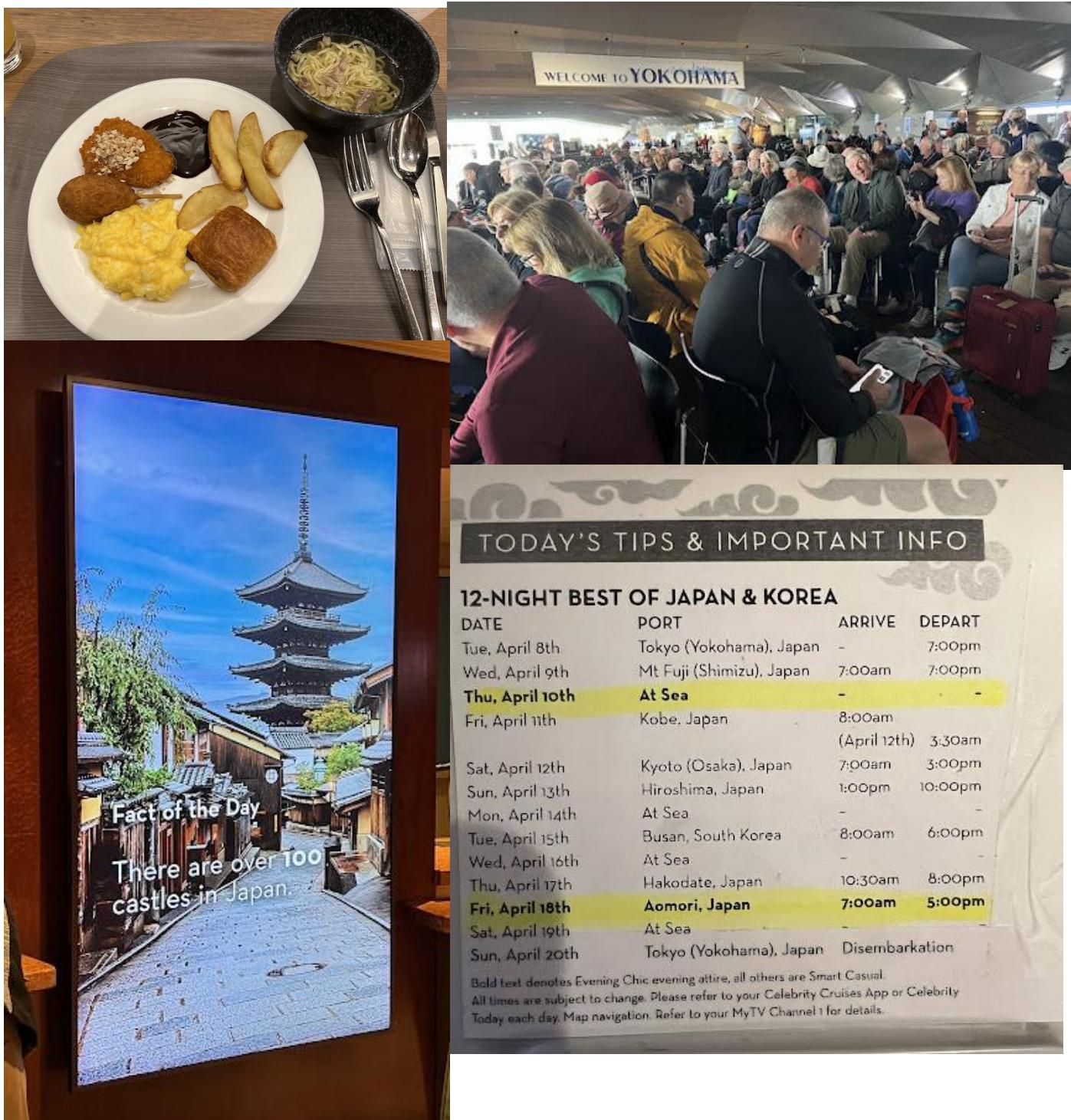
Monday April 7, 2025 -- Tokyo

Landing in Tokyo was a nightmare! There were millions of other passengers trying to enter Japan customs at the same time. Even though there were almost 50 customs agents. Still had COVID signs up for temperature checks before entering Japan. Went through 487 turns on “Disney-like” crowd control laps. Told Lonny we didn’t have to go to Tokyo Disney now! Met a group of Walmart Buyers on their way to Shanghai, China. We stayed at Hotel Villa Fontaine which was connected to Haneda Airport Terminal 3. The hotel had four different elevators. We had to be sure we were taking the correct one to get to our room. Check out the TV Remote. We had a quick shower and went to dinner. It was a buffet with “Uguisu Sweet Bean Jerry” (Sp? Jelly). Walked around shops near hotel. We fell asleep at 6:30 pm and woke up at midnight for one hour. Checked in at home. Went back to sleep until 4 am.



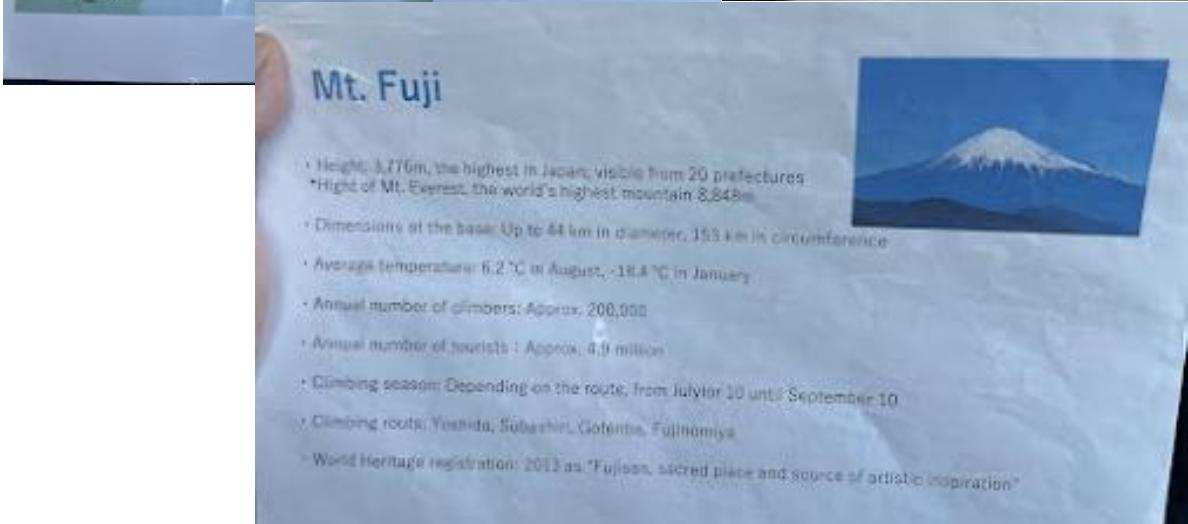
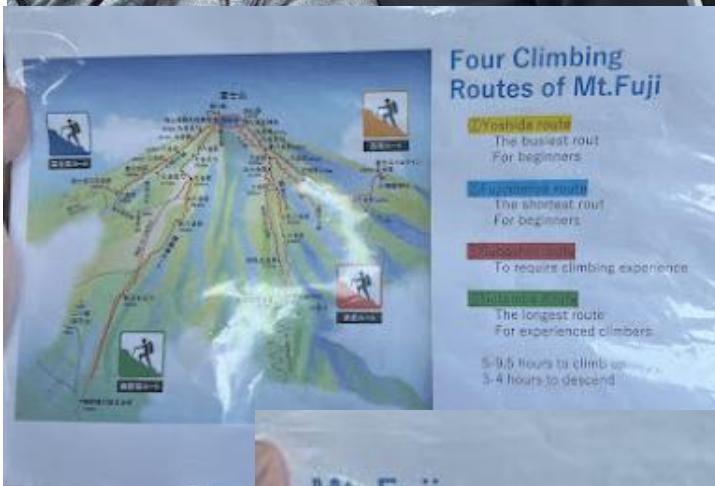
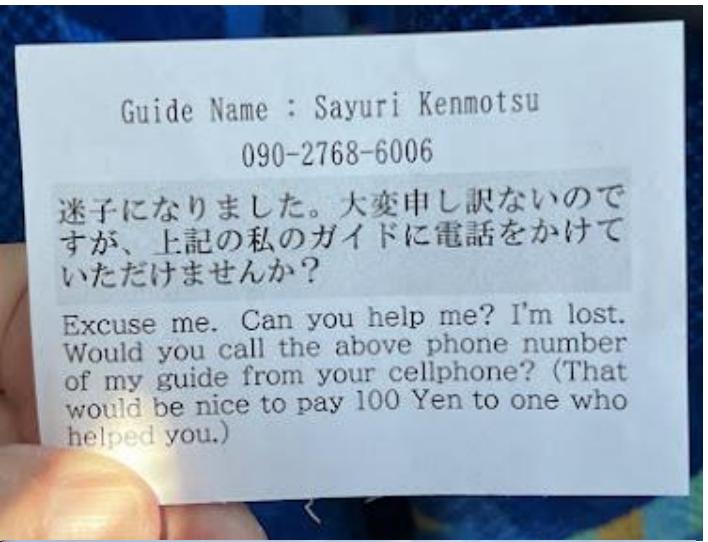
Tuesday April 8, 2025 – Board Celebrity Ship

Got dressed and went to breakfast. I had beef ramen and a corn dog for breakfast. Went to airport to take our shuttle transfer to Yokohama cruise terminal. They didn't have our transfer info. We had to take a taxi to cruise terminal. Cost \$40 extra. We had already paid \$100 for trip there and back from cruise terminal. Got there for 8:15. We were not scheduled to board until 12:30pm. Finally got to board at 11:00 am as Premier Access Members. Went to room #2175. We had a special invitation for lunch in Metropolitan Dining Room. Lonny had the Beef Checks. I had Panko crusted Branzino Sea Bass. We had dinner at 5:30 pm. I had NY Strip. Lonny had Lamb wrapped in phyllo. Unfortunately, we sat next to couple of drunks from Australia. However, they became our friends later in the week.

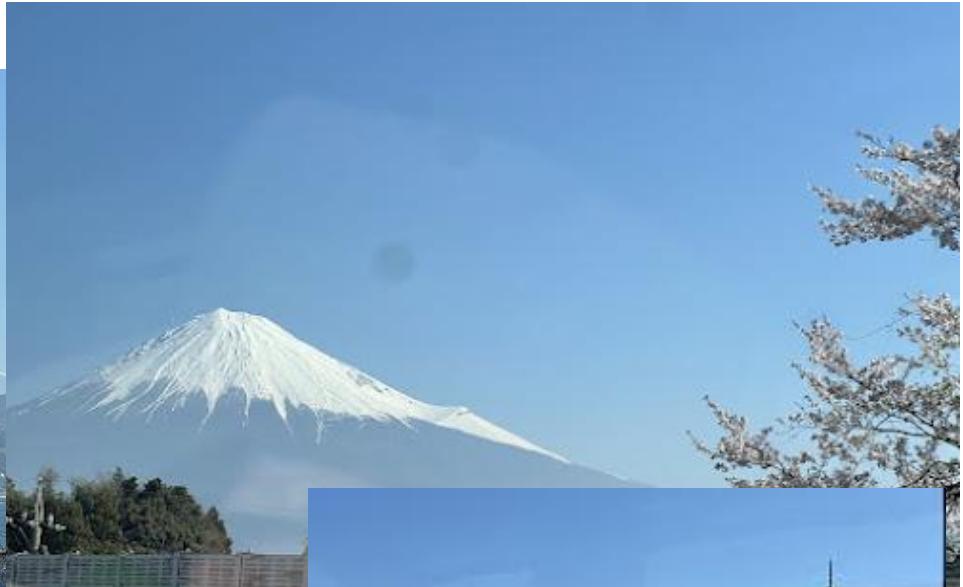


Wednesday April 9 – Mt Fuji

Had Breakfast at Oceanview Cafe. Our Mt Fuji Excursion left at 7:45 am for Hongu Sengen Taisha Shrine and Mt. Fuji World Heritage Center. Our day was a very rare, clear blue-sky day. A visit just two days before we arrived, visitors could not see the mountain because it was covered in clouds. Our tour bus guide gave us her cell phone in case we had gotten lost. The Shinto goddess of Mt. Fuji is known as Sengen or Kono-hana. She is also the Goddess of Volcanoes and cherry blossoms and resides within Mt Fuji. It is believed she will keep Mt. Fuji from erupting, and she is represented by the Sakura Flower. There are four major routes to the summit of Mt. Fuji. It takes about 4 to 6 hours to climb to summit and 2-3 hours to climb down.



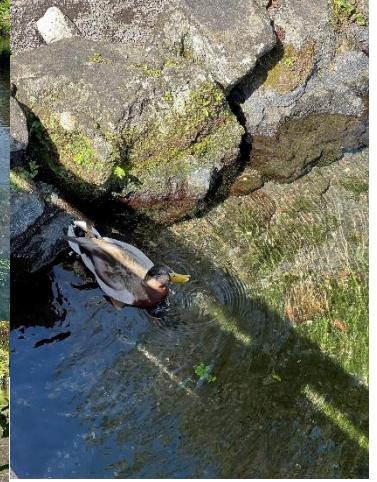
Mt Fuji is a symbol of Japan and a popular destination for hikers. We were not there long enough to climb. Japanese society considers Mt. Fuji a sacred mountain with great spiritual and cultural significance. Mount Fuji is a 12,389 feet tall volcano cone and its last major eruption was in 1707. The catastrophic ash outfall is considered a Badge of Honor to Japanese. It is covered in snow for about five months of the year. A bottle of water costs 100 yen at ground level, 200 yen at 5th station, and 500 yen at summit. First glimpses of Mt. Fuji on bus ride up.

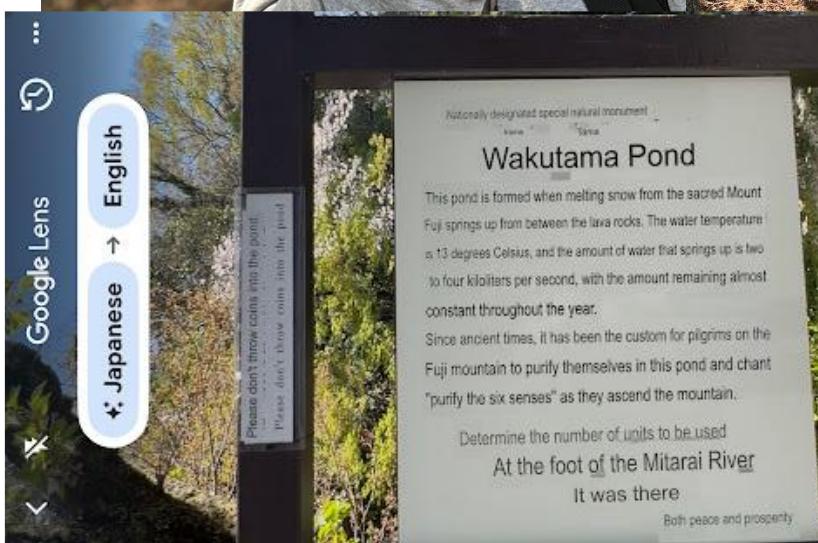


Both Shinto Shrines (about 100,000) and Buddhist Temples (about 77,000) are common throughout Japan. Originally built over 1,000 years ago for protection from volcanic eruptions, the Hongu Sengen Taisha is the oldest and the head Shinto Shrine. It stands at the southwestern base of Mt. Fuji. Earthquakes devastated much of the Shrine over the years. The structures that remain were built in the 1600s by Shogun Tokugawa. The Torii gates mark the boundary between the sacred and the secular world. The ground is home to about 500 cherry trees which usually bloom from late March to early April.



The Wakutamaike Spring Pond is renowned for its crystal clear water that gushes from subterranean sources under Mt. Fuji. The pristine springs are home to various bird species, including Mallard Ducks. Historically, the water was used by pilgrims and climbers of Mt. Fuji for purification rituals before embarking on their climbs.





Japan is famous for its extensive network of Vending Machines, with one of the highest densities in the world. There are over 5.5 million vending machines in the country, meaning one for every 23 people. You can find vending machines dispensing a wide variety of items, including snacks, noodles, rice and even unique items like engagement rings. Worshippers write prayers on paper and leave them hanging up in front of the shrine. They believe Kami (spirits or gods) are to receive them. We had soft serve ice cream. Lonny had matcha and I had vanilla.



Mt. Fuji World Heritage Center opened in 2017 and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Center's top floor has a viewing observation deck with spectacular views of Mt. Fuji. There are a variety of exhibitions of Mt. Fuji Volcano's seismology, history and cultural significance. The building has an inverted conical form that reflects in the pond outside to reveal the shape of the iconic mountain. The upside-down wood project uses roughly 8,000 pieces of Fuji Cypress timber. Inside, visitors walk through a 200-meter-long sloped walkway that corkscrews up and around the floors of the building. There is also a movie theater showing footage of the mountain in different seasons.



Ascending Fuji

Aiming for the summit of Mount Fuji has its roots in a traditional style of 'worship-ascent', a custom which has been passed down from generation to generation. In this zone, you can experience climbing Mt. Fuji from the ocean—something which is only possible in Shizuoka Prefecture—by ascending a 193m-long spiral ramp while watching time-lapse videos of the landscape of Fuji.

攀登参拜之山

登顶富士山起源于日本传统的登山参拜习俗，现在仍在被人们继承。在这个展区可边观看微速摄影的影像，边攀登全长193米的螺旋上升坡道，从而感受静冈县特色的从海边登富士山模拟体验。

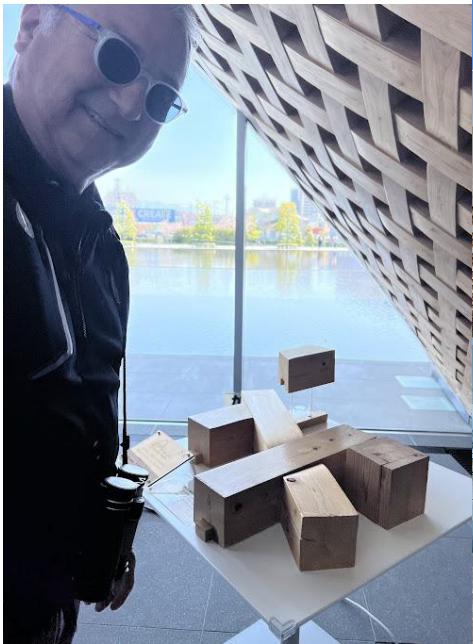


Movie Theater Schedule

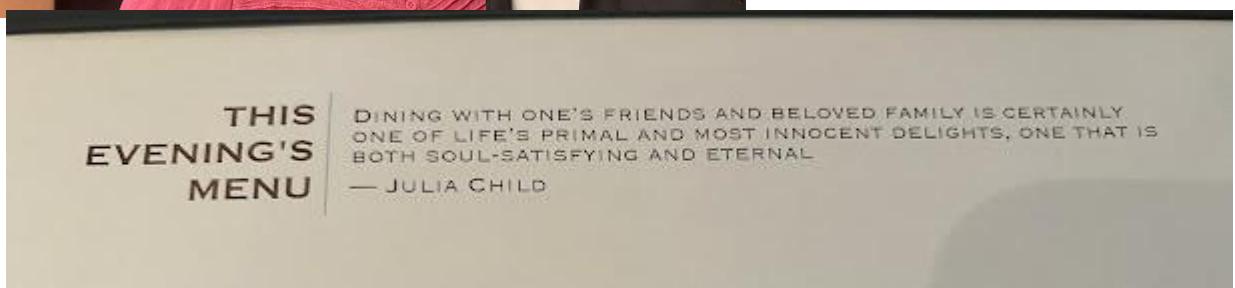
Movie starts at every 15 minutes

00min : "The Four Seasons from Above the Clouds"
 15min : "Scenery from the universe"
 30min : "The Sacred Mountain in Religion and Art"
 45min : "Scenery from the universe"





Had salad for lunch at Oceanview. Nap in the afternoon. At dinner I had Caesar salad and Crispy Chicken Roulade. Lonny had beef bourguignon. Saw Strings Alive show.



Thursday, April 10, 2025 – Day at Sea

Breakfast at Oceanview. Did Stone Massage and had my hair styled. Lonny had a Deep Tissue Massage. We had burgers on the deck but ate in Oceanview Cafe for lunch. We had dinner at Metropolitan Dining Room. I had Caesar salad and Steak Diane. Lonny had Pork Special. Saw Boogie Wonderland Show.



Friday, April 11, 2025 – Kobe, Japan

Breakfast on Oceanview deck. Was surprised the color of the yolk of the eggs in Japan. They were very orange in color as opposed to eggs in US which are more yellow. The color of the yolk is directly related to the diet of the chickens, which are fed foods rich in pigments like marigold petals, beta-carotene or paprika. In contrast, eggs from the US, typically have a less pigmented chicken diet.



Welcome to Kobe Japan!

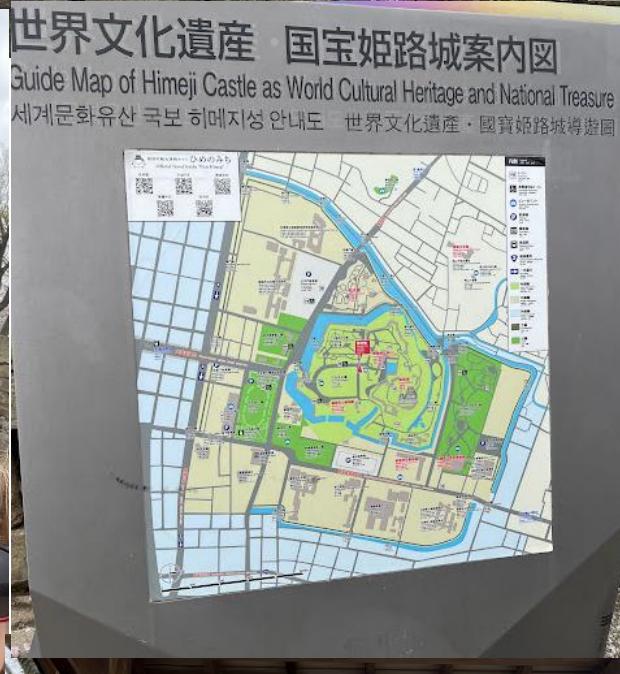


Our Excursion in Kobe left at 8:40 am to visit Himeji Castle and Garden. With a population of around 1.5 million, Kobe is Japan's seventh-largest city and third-largest port city after Tokyo and Yokohama. We stopped at an interesting bathroom along the way.



Himeji Castle, also known as White Heron Castle, due to its elegant, white appearance and resemblance to a bird taking flight. It is Japan's most spectacular and largest castle for its imposing size and beauty and its well preserved, complex castle grounds. Unlike many other Japanese castles, it was never destroyed by war, earthquake or fire and survives to this day as one of the country's twelve original castles. During World War II, although most of the surrounding area was burned to the ground, the castle survived intact. The first construction began in the 1400s and was gradually enlarged over the centuries by the various clans who ruled over the region. The castle complex as it survives today was completed in 1609 as the best-preserved feudal castle.





There are over 1,000 Cherry Blossom trees, many ancient aged, on the grounds of Himeji Castle. The castle's grounds are transformed into a stunning display, creating a beautiful contrast with the white castle walls. Typically, the Peak Cherry Blossom Season is from late March to Early April, offering a short but vibrant window to experience the full bloom. Most fortunately, we were visiting during the peak Cherry Blossom Season.



Himeji Castle is made up of over eighty buildings connected by a series of gates and confusing, winding paths like a labyrinth. The purpose was to slow down and expose attacking forces. In many cases the castle walkways even turn back on themselves, greatly inhibiting navigation. At the heart of the complex is the main keep, a six-story wooden structure, Japan's most visited castle with over 2.8 million visitors per year. The Castle has been featured extensively in films and TV series including, James Bond's "You Only Live Twice" and TV miniseries, "Shogun". There are also many legends and folklore stories associated with the Castle. Before entering Himeji Castle, as a common custom of Japan, we were required to remove our shoes on the first floor.



Exhibits inside Himeji Castle



Exhibits inside Himeji Castle



平成の大天守保存修理 Heisei-era Restoration

50年に一度の修理
Reversing Half a Century of Wear and Tear

姫路城大天守保存修理工事の概要 Timeline of the Heisei Restoration

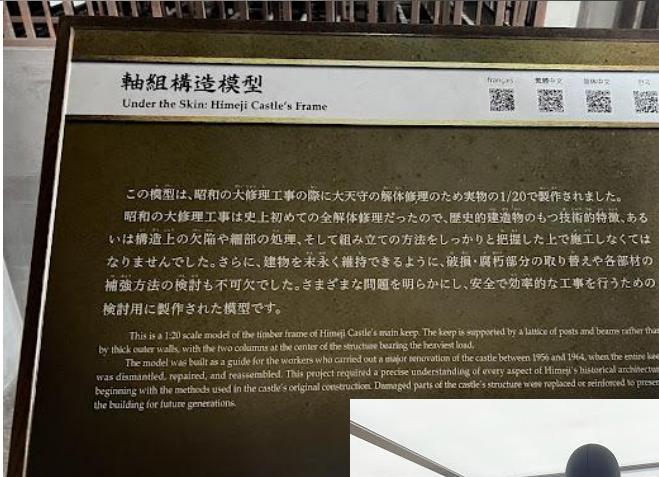
姫路城大天守保存修理工事の概要 Timeline of the Heisei Restoration

昭和39年(1964)に完了した昭和の大修理から半世紀が過ぎ、屋根や壁面の被損劣化が進行していました。そのため、平成21年(2009)から5ヵ年計画で本格的な保存修理工事を開始しました。修理工事中は素屋根船に見学エアリアルを設けてことで、文化財の修理への関心や理解を深めていただけよう配り組みました。

「平成の大修理は、大天守の瓦の葺き直しや壁の補強を中心とした修理工事です。外壁や屋根、天守閣などどの部分の修理を中心とした工事は、およそ50年ぶりの修理と位置づけられています。

In the 50 years following the Showa-era Restoration in 1964, the castle's roof and walls had been damaged by weathering. Therefore, the Heisei Restoration began in 2009 for a 5-year period. During the work, visitors could view the castle from a ship-like platform on the water, which was specially built for the restoration. This was done to increase the public's understanding of the restoration work.

素屋根	資材搬入
ボンネット式高架車で 壁面の修理を実施 高さ約7.0m、幅約4.5m、 高さ約3.0m、幅約3.0m Material Delivery	壁面から船艤丸へ搬入搬入 高さ約3.8m 長さ約6.6m



軸組構造模型 Under the Skin: Himeji Castle's Frame

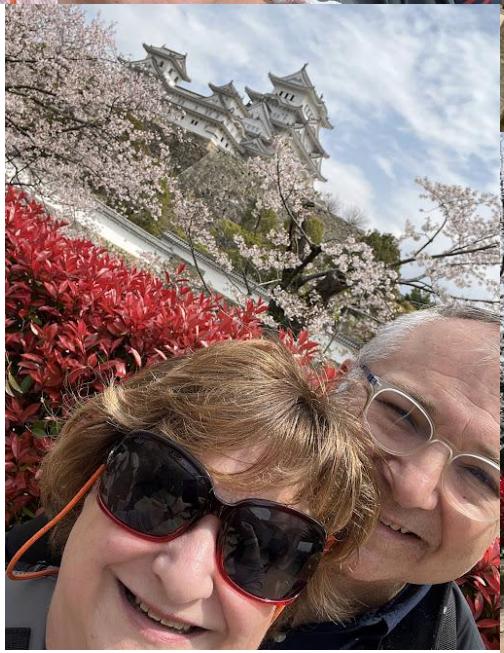
この模型は、昭和の大修理工事の際に大天守の解体修理のため実物の1/20で製作されました。昭和の大修理工事は史上初めての全解体修理だったので、歴史的建造物のもう技術的特徴、あるいは構造上の欠陥や細部の処理、そして組み立ての方法をしっかりと把握した上で施工しなくてはなりませんでした。さらに、建物を末永く維持できるように、破損・腐朽部分の取り替えや各部材の補強方法の検討も不可欠でした。さまざまな問題を明らかにし、安全で効率的な工事を行うための検討用に製作された模型です。

This is a 1/20 scale model of the timber frame of Himeji Castle's main keep. The keep is supported by a lattice of posts and beams rather than by thick outer walls, with the two columns at the center of the structure bearing the heaviest load.

The model was built as a guide for the workers who carried out a major renovation of the castle between 1956 and 1964, when the entire keep was dismantled, repaired, and reassembled. This project required a precise understanding of every aspect of Himeji's historical architecture, beginning with the methods used in the castle's original construction. Damaged parts of the castle's structure were replaced or reinforced to preserve the building for future generations.



軸組構造模型 Under the Skin: Himeji Castle's Frame



Kobe is the place of origin of the world-famous Kobe Beef. Most breeds of Japanese Wagyu beef are associated with the area in which the cattle are raised. Therefore, the Kobe Beef is the breed of Wagyu from Kobe, Japan. There is a popular rumor that Kobe Cattle are fed beer and massaged with sake – this is not true! The reason Kobe Beef tastes so good is because it must pass a series of strict requirements to be bestowed with the Kobe Beef trademarked label. I had to have a Kobe Burger in Kobe, Japan. Lonny had Kobe Beef Rice Bowl. At Dinner I had Waldorf Chicken Salad and Chicken Special over rice and veggies. Lonny had Crispy Pork Schnitzel.

