

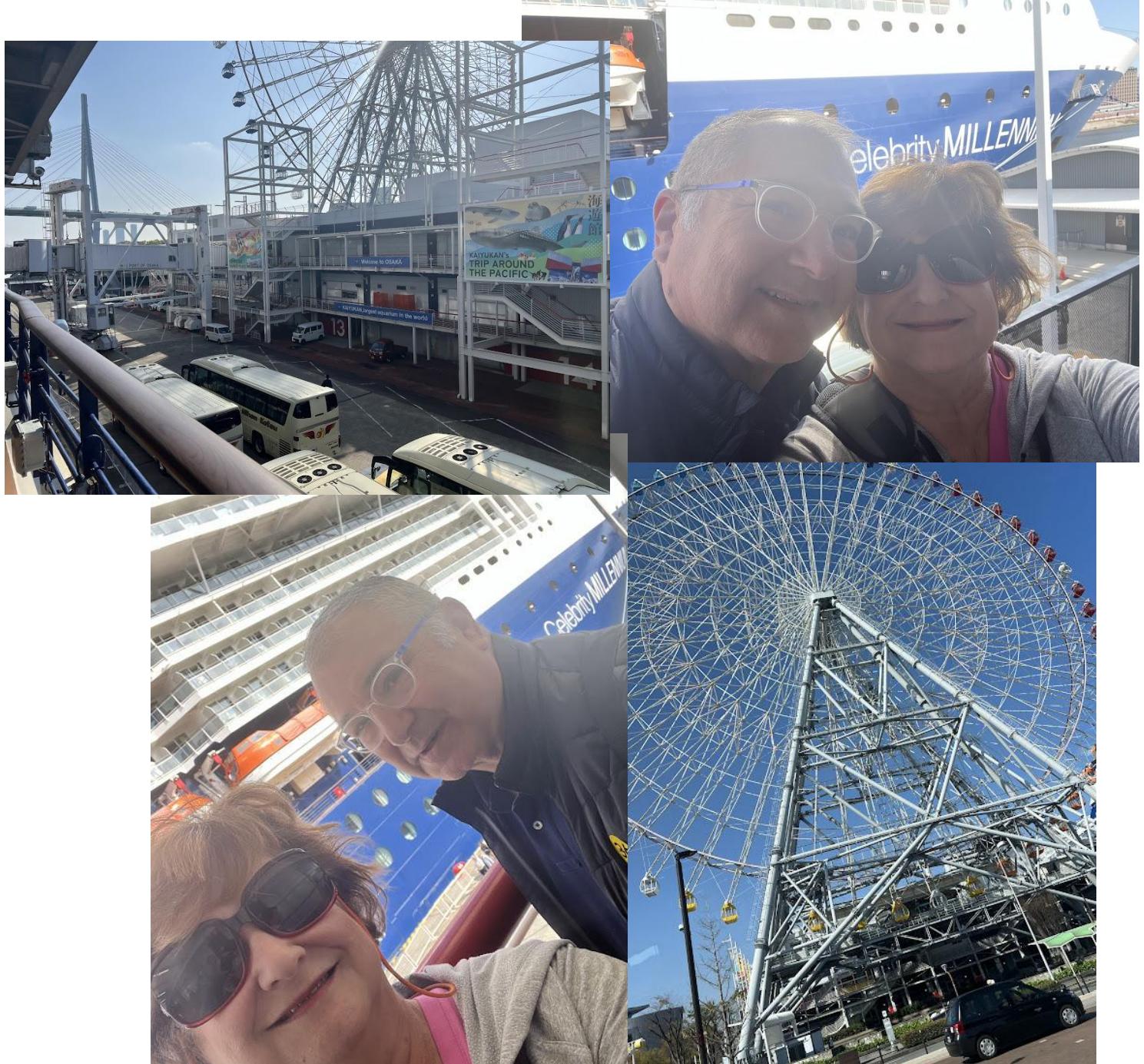
Part #2 – Osaka, Hiroshima and Busan, South Korea

Celebrity Japan Cruise -- April 5 – 21, 2025

Saturday, April 12, 2025 -- Osaka, Japan

Welcome to Osaka, Japan!

The cruise port of Osaka, Japan is one of the leading ports in the Asian world. Located near the port is the ultimate indoor Lego Experience with a Giant Outdoor Ferris Wheel and one of the largest aquariums in the world, the Osaka Aquarium.



Osaka Castle

After breakfast on the Oceanview deck, our excursion left at 8:30 am for Osaka Castle and Dotonbori District. The Osaka Castle is one of Japan's most famous landmarks and played a major role in the unification of Japan during the sixteenth century. As with almost all Japanese castles, the most prominent structure was used as a storehouse in times of peace and as a fortified tower in times of war. Osaka Castle was a 20 min walk from bus to castle and 20 min back to bus. Waited in line for the elevator at castle for 20 min. We did not have enough time to see everything at castle. We were late to return to bus by about 10 min.



In 1583, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the second “Great Unifier” of Japan began construction on the site. The basic plan was modeled after the headquarters of Oda Nobunaga, the first “Great Unifier” of Japan. He wanted to build a castle that mirrored Nobunaga’s but surpassed it in every way. In 1665, lightning struck and burnt down the castle. In 1843, after decades of neglect, the castle got much-needed repairs when they collected money from the people of the region to build. During World War II, the arsenal became one of the largest military armories, employing 60,000 workers. Unfortunately, American bombing raids targeting the arsenal damaged the reconstructed main keep and destroyed 90% of the arsenal and killed 382 people working there.



The imposing, massive stones that form part of the original fortifications of Osaka Castle are meticulously arranged to demonstrate the incredible craftsmanship and engineering skills of the era. The building in front of the castle, built in 1931, served as the former headquarters of the 4th Division of the Imperial Japanese Army. In 1997, the restoration of Osaka Castle was completed. The main keep of the castle is now a concrete reproduction of the original and the interior operates as a modern, functioning museum.



The lively entertainment area of the **Dotonbori District** reminded us of Bourbon Street in New Orleans. Osaka's most famous tourist destination and renowned for its gaudy neon lights, extravagant signage, and the enormous variety of restaurants and bars was like the Bourbon Street of Food, a gastronomic wonderland. The history of the area goes back to 1612 when a merchant named Yasui Doton invested all his personal capital in an ambitious local development project. The Giant Crab Sign is a popular meeting spot for tourists like us.



The street was packed with tons of people, and we only had one hour. We quickly grabbed a Teriyaki burger and a Garlic Chicken burger for US\$9 at Restaurant Zeppin. We shopped for gifts at the shops on the street for the girls. We never saw the famous Glico Running Man billboard. We had to race to be at our meeting place for our bus. Unfortunately, our bus was 30 min late. We could have stayed there longer. At dinner at the Metropolitan Dining Room, I had the BBQ Pork spring roll and shrimp linguine with lobster sauce. Lonny had tomato and mozzarella salad, and veal wrapped in phyllo. We were lucky to have a Catholic Priest on board for Holy Week who could perform all the Masses. We introduced ourselves to Retired Priest Father John Murphy from Long Island, New York and assisted him. Lonny was lector and I was Eucharistic Minister for every mass the entire week. We had Palm Sunday Mass with Father John Hughes from Long Island, New York.



Sunday April 13, 2025 -- Hiroshima

We had breakfast and lunch on the deck of Oceanside Cafe. Our arrival was delayed until 3:30 pm due to inclement weather. Our Excursion was also delayed and did not leave until 4:15 pm. When we got to "A Bomb Dome", we had only one hour to visit at the Peace Memorial Park. Our tour guide kept saying we were going to "A Bomb Dome". We finally figured out what she was saying. "A Bomb Dome" was short for "Atomic Bomb Dome". The ruins of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima are located exactly where the atomic bomb was dropped on August 6, 1945 at 8:15 am. The bombing at Hiroshima was the first to be used in was and was nine days before Japan surrendered, ending World War II.



The Peace Memorial serves as a memory for the over 140,000 people who were killed in the bombing. It is a permanent reminder of the destructive effects of nuclear warfare. The bomb possessed a force equivalent to 15,000 tons of TNT and effectively obliterated the city. Everyone inside the building was killed instantly. Due to its stone and steel structure, the building was one of the few structures left standing near the bomb's center. The skeletal remains of the **"A Bomb Dome"** of the building were preserved. President Barack Obama became the first sitting US President to visit the Memorial in 2016. In an act of reciprocity, the Japanese Prime Minister visited the USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor in Honolulu the same year.



The **Poem Monument of the Atomic Bombing** features a poem by Sankichi Toge, a survivor of the atomic bombing, inscribed on its surface. He was nearly two miles from the center of the bombing. The inscription says, "Give back my father, give back my mother; Give grandpa back, grandma back; Give my sons and daughters back. Give me back myself, Give back the human race. As long as this life lasts, this life, Give back peace That will never end." The azalea flowers were still in bloom. However, the cherry blossom trees had passed their peak in the last few days due to rainfall. We were lucky to see them at peak earlier.

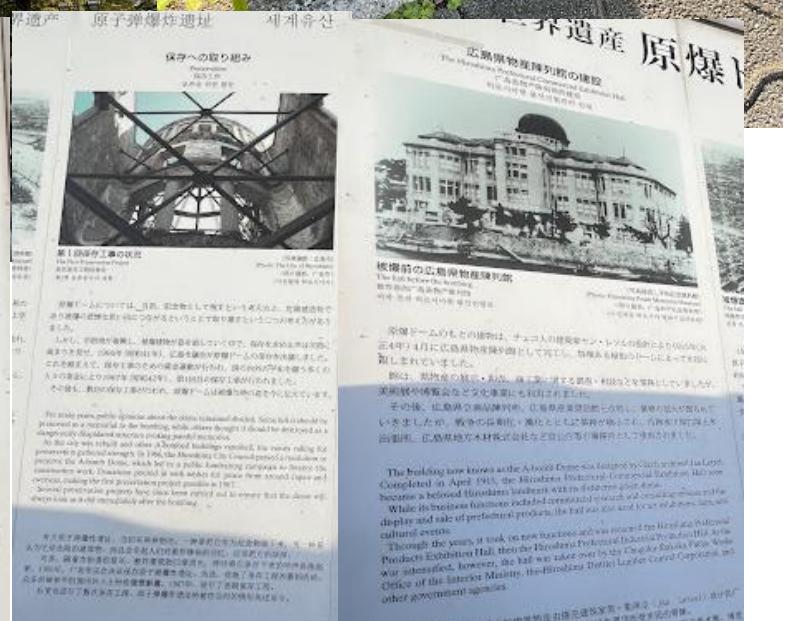


Poem Monument

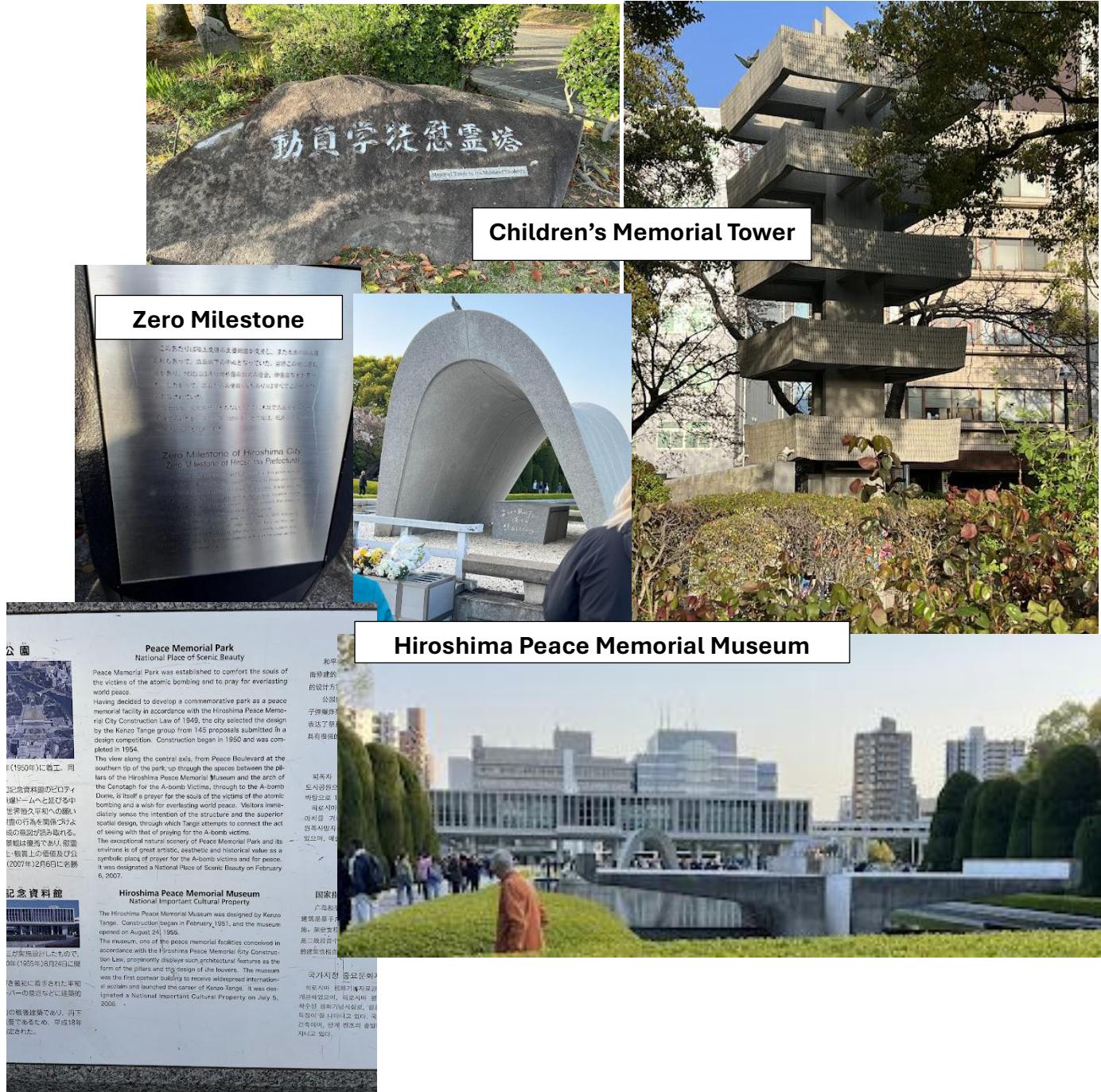


Cherry Blossom Trees

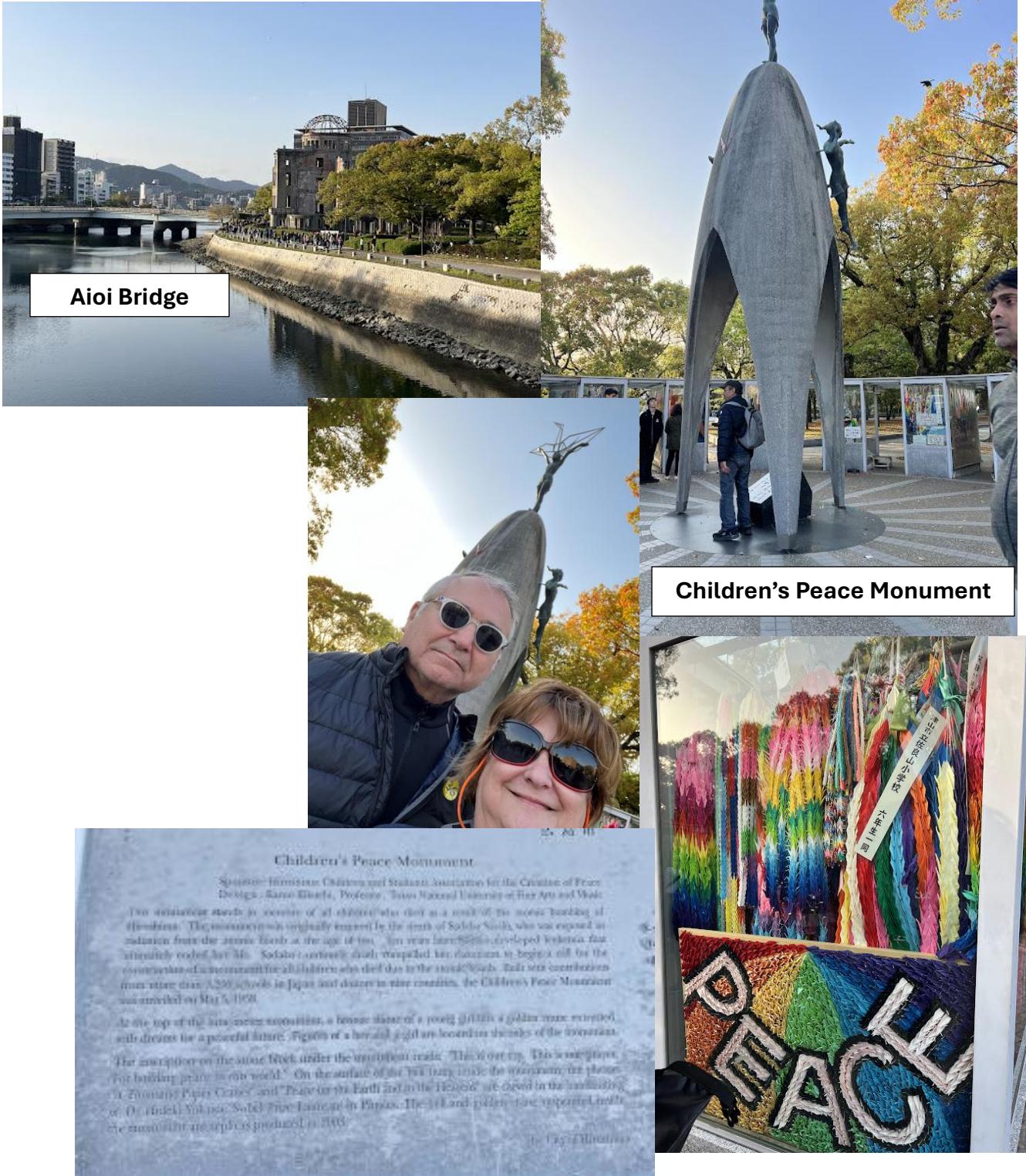
Past Peak



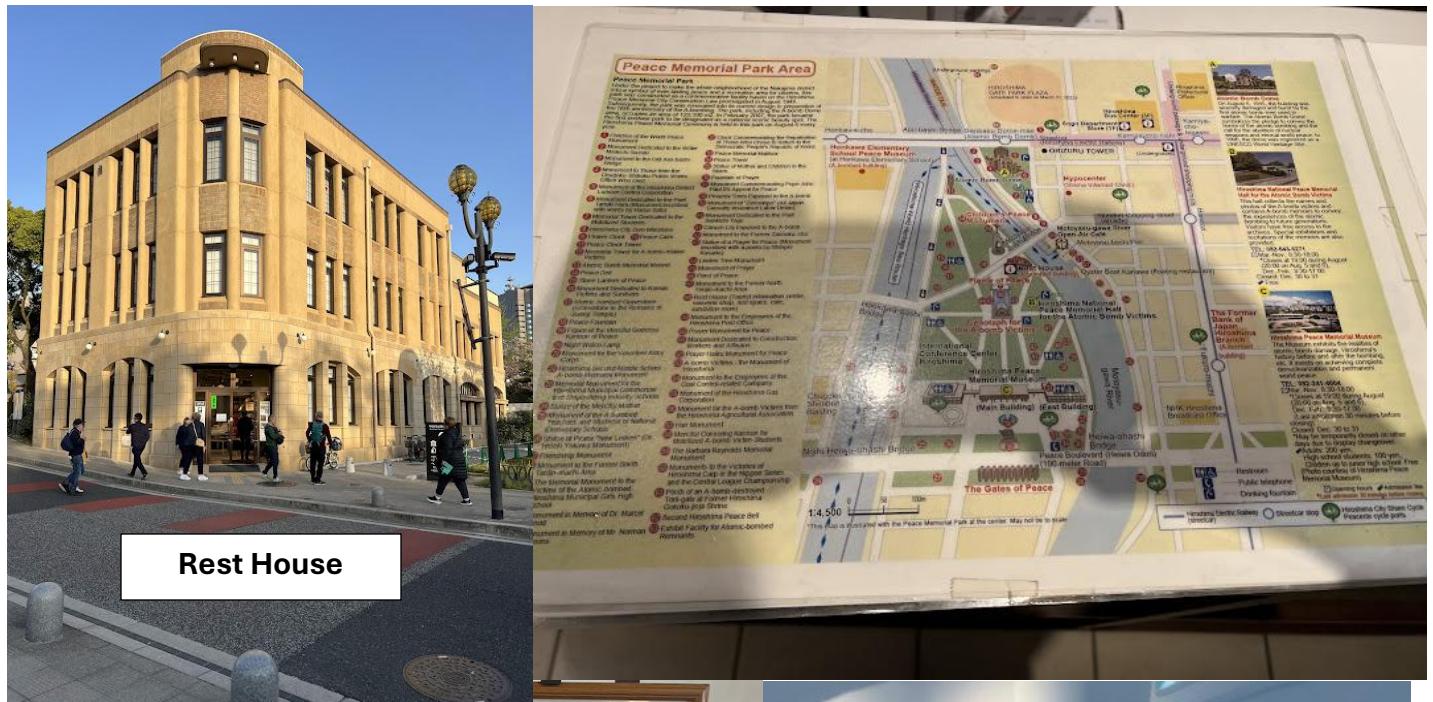
In August 1944, the national government of Japan enacted the Student Labor Service Act which called upon students at the middle school, high school, and higher education levels to serve their country by helping with war efforts such as working in munitions factories or tearing down buildings to create fire breaks (places to stop fire from spreading). On August 6, roughly 6,300 of the 8,400 students serving under the Labor Service Act fell victim to the bombing. In addition to these students, many more who were working in other business facilities around the city also perished in the bombing. The **Student Memorial Tower** was built with funds gathered by the bereaved families of these students. The **Zero Milestone of Hiroshima City** is the designated point in the city from which all distances to other locations are measured. The **Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum** conveys to the world the horrors and the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons.



The Bomb was intended for the **Aioi Bridge**. However, the bomb missed its target by 790 feet and exploded directly over a Hospital. The **Children's Peace Monument** was built to commemorate Sadako Sasaki and the tens of thousands of child victims of the Bombing. This young girl died of leukemia in 1955 from radiation poisoning from the bomb. She is immortalized at the top of the statue where she holds a crane above her head. Shortly before she passed, she had a vision to create a thousand cranes. In Japanese tradition, if one creates a thousand cranes they are granted one wish. Her wish was to have a world without nuclear weapons. At the base of the monument is a black marble slab inscribed: "This is our cry, this is our prayer: for building peace in the world."



The **Rest House** in Hiroshima Peace Park is a reinforced concrete building that survived the bombing, located approximately 550 feet from the bomb center. Eizo Nomura is the only known survivor among the 37 employees working in the building. He miraculously survived the bombing because he was in the basement of the building. The basement did not collapse and has retained its original form to this day. Although Eizo suffered from radiation sickness symptoms, he lived until age 80. **Akiko's Piano (A-bombed Piano)** is on display to convey the tragedy of the bombing. The small upright piano was made by the Baldwin Piano Company in the US and belonged to a female student who died in the bombing.

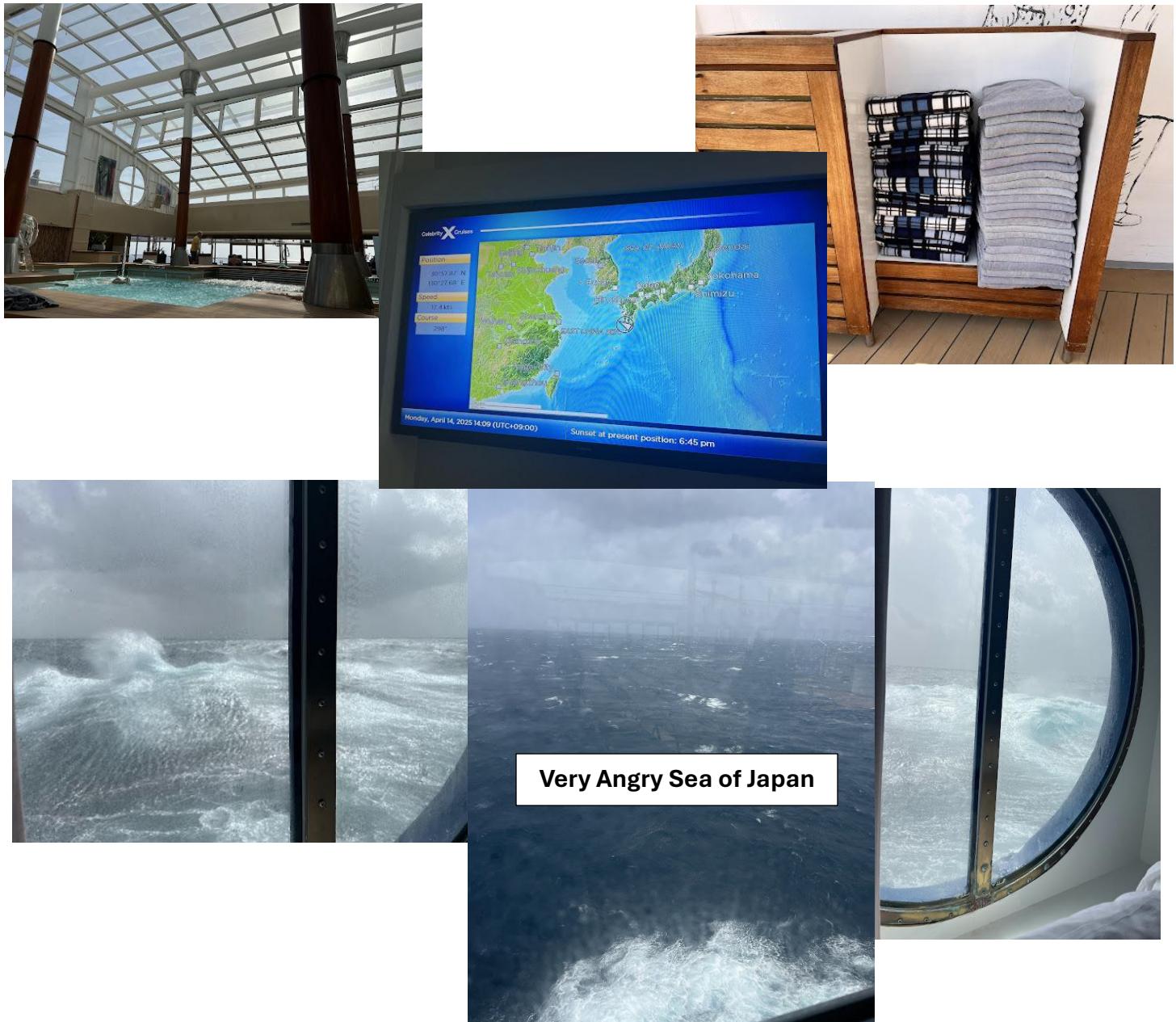


Then, we were only able to drive by **Hiroshima Castle**. We were not able to get down to visit. The castle was originally constructed in the 1590s but was largely destroyed by the atomic bombing in 1945. The original construction was primarily made of pine wood. The main keep was rebuilt in 1958, a replica of the original, made primarily of reinforced concrete. Within the castle walls is a concrete bunker from which the first radio broadcast out of Hiroshima following the bombing was made. We returned to the ship at dark at 7 pm. We had to give up our passports when we left Japan at Hiroshima Terminal. We went to dinner at the buffet at Oceanside Cafe. I had the real freshly made stir fry with beef steak and rice.



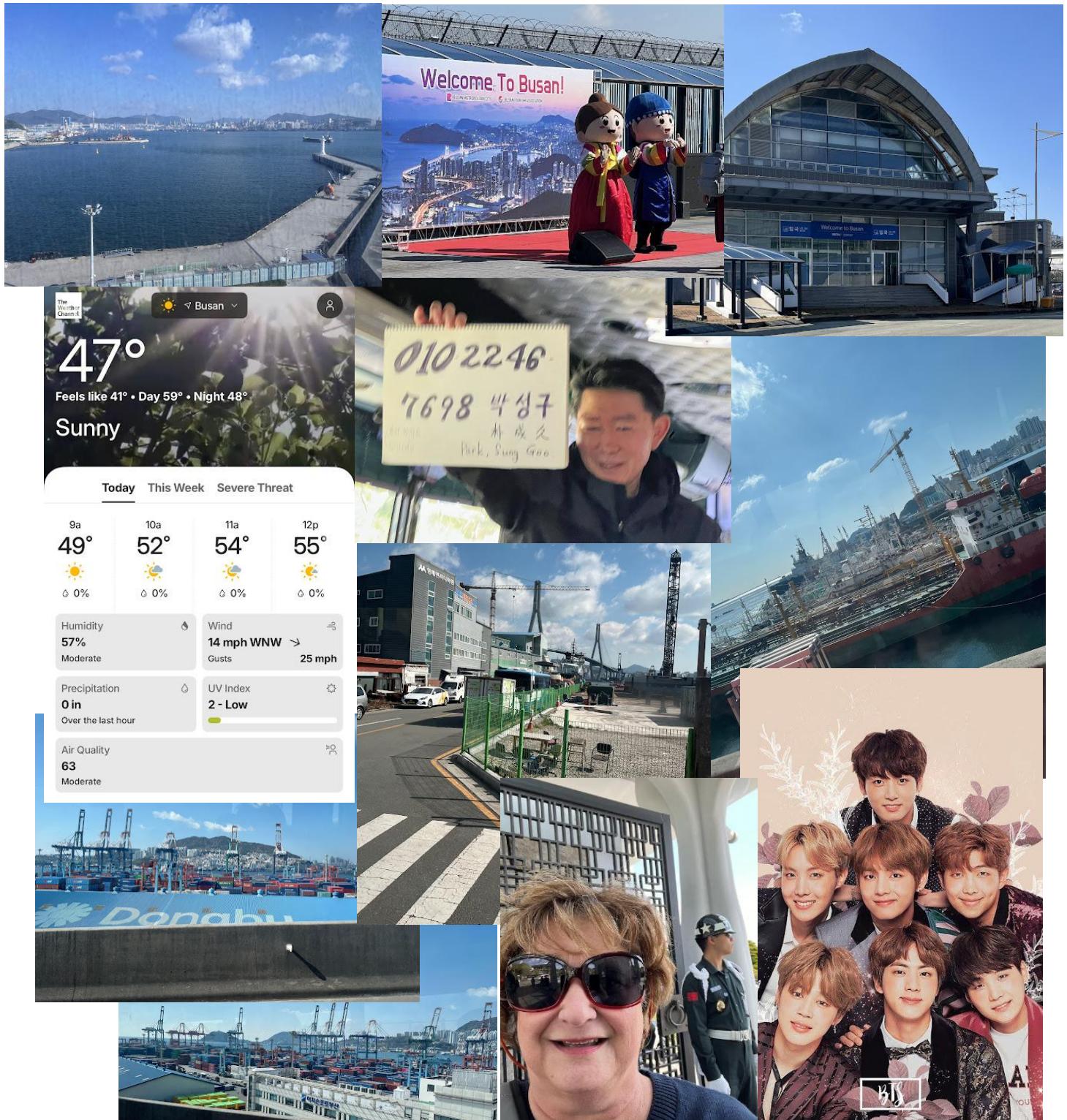
Monday, April 14, 2025 -- Day at Sea

Lonny went to the hot tub early and got two lounge chairs in the Solarium. The wind was so strong, and temps were so cold, we could not stay out on deck. The solarium was a glassed enclosure near the pool. We had burgers for lunch, and we stayed in the solarium until 2 pm. You know it's cold on deck when one-half of the towels in the towels rack are actually blankets instead. Then, we came back to the room for nap. We had to go back to pick up our passports to enter Busan, South Korea the next day. The East China Seas got very rough and rocky. Most of the passengers on our ship were seasick. We went to dinner at Metropolitan Dining Room. I had Caesar and Chateaubriand. Lonny had special appetizer salmon Tartare with lamb chops. Not many were there for dinner due to roughness of the Sea and sea sickness.



Tuesday, April 15, 2025 – Busan, South Korea

Upon our arrival in Busan, South Korea, the weather and seas were calm again, but we had somewhat chilly temps. Our Tour left the ship for 9 am. Driving towards our first stop, we saw many, many “tariffs” sitting in the busy major international port of Busan, South Korea. Busan is situated on the southeastern coast of South Korea and the Ports in Busan are a gateway connecting the Pacific Ocean and the Eurasian Continent. Also, many of the South Korean people resembled members of the popular BTS Pop Group.



Our First Stop was the **United Nations Memorial Cemetery**. It is the ONLY United Nations cemetery in the world and contains 2,300 graves from 11 countries. The Korean War began when the North Korean People's Army forces attacked the South in June 1950 in a battle for the survival of South Korea from communism. The UN Cemetery was officially established in December 1955. An Honor Guard from the Republic of Korea 53rd Division carries out a flag ceremony at 10 am daily. The US had 36,516 members killed out of 40,732 total killed in the Korean War. However, there are only 40 US members buried in this cemetery out of the 2,300 graves. The US brought their veterans home for a burial. The Daunt Waterway is in memory of the youngest serviceman buried in the Cemetery, who at age 17 was killed in action in November 1951.



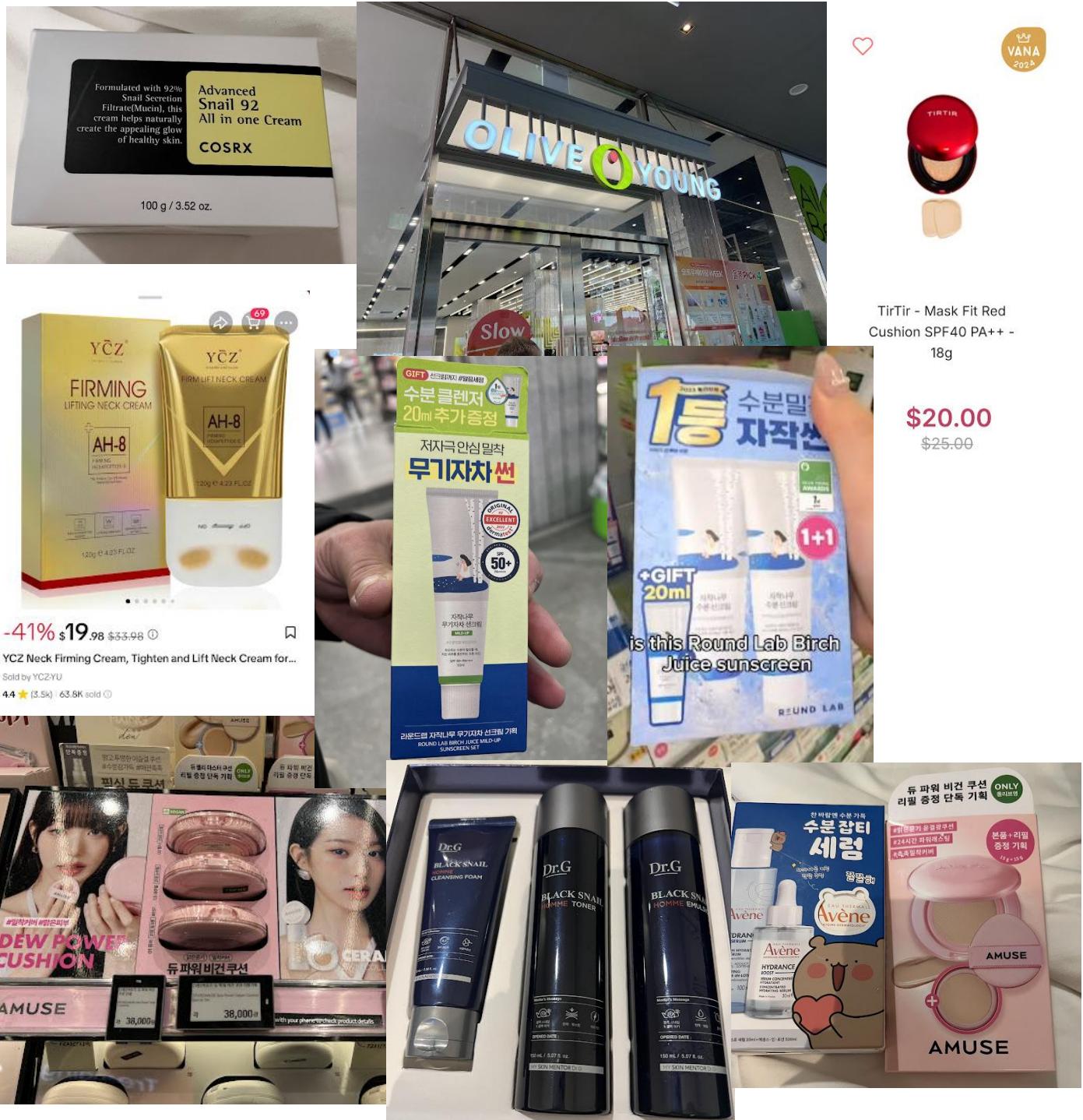
The **Wall of Remembrance**, completed in 2022, lists all those deceased members from the Korean War. The wall consists of 100 panels with the names of those who lost their lives during the Korean War – the so called “forgotten war” and are organized by rank and respective branch of service. The coalition of nations rallied to the cause for defense of South Korea. It serves as a reminder of international solidarity and sacrifice. Under Louisiana veterans, we found “Paul E. Babin”. Upon doing research, we discovered he was a Gold Star Veteran from Morgan City of St. Mary Parish, Louisiana killed in action August 15, 1950, a Corporal from the 34th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division and given a Purple Heart.



The UN Memorial Cemetery had perfectly manicured lawn and beautiful hedges and flower bushes creating a peaceful and serene environment. All contribute to the atmosphere of respect and solemn beauty honoring the Korean War Veterans buried there. Even the bathrooms were beautiful and added to the somber and sacred tribute to the heroes who made the ultimate sacrifice. We encountered lots of signage we could not read without Google Translate!



Our Number One Mission to accomplish in Busan, South Korea was to shop for Korean Beauty and Skin Care. We found South Korea's Number One Health and Beauty Store called **Olive Young Beauty**. They are known for their wide selection of **K-Beauty products**. The global rise of Korean pop culture has significantly boosted the popularity of Korean skincare. K-Beauty skincare has earned a reputation as one of the best in the world by combining gentle formulas for all skin types. Inside the store was very similar to a US Sephora or Ulta store. Of course, we used Google Translate to be sure we were purchasing the correct products. These are only a few of the items we scored in our K-Beauty haul at Korean Prices.



Then we went to the World Famous **Jagalchi Fish Market** considered to be the largest fish market in South Korea. The market is known for their female vendors selling herbal medicine and animal-based remedies. The market is huge and has just about every kind of water-based creature imaginable. The tanks are fed with running water, and all the fish are alive. We marveled at the sheer quantity of it all and were completely overwhelmed by the live tanks row after row after row. Water splashing everywhere! Check out my face to see what I thought of it all!



The **Jagalchi Fish Market** was also a place to eat, yet we declined!



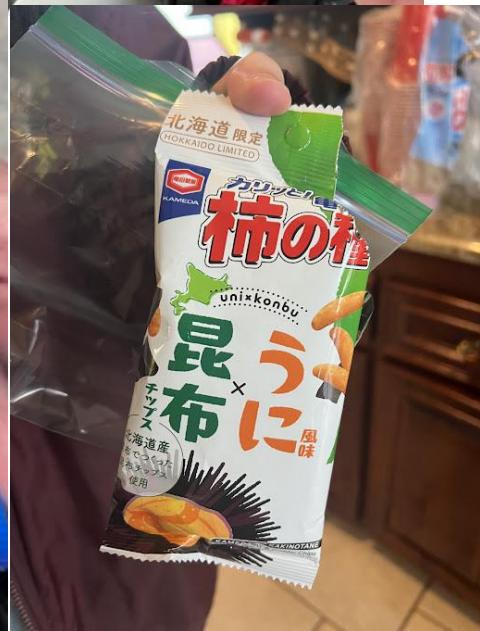
The streets outside the markets were also packed with stalls, but most of the animals in the street stalls were not alive in tanks.



We went into the Busan International Shopping District. Not sure what the regulations are in place regarding electrical installations and safety and risks. Check out how many electrical lines there are above in the busy street shopping mall area.



Port Harbor Namhang Area had a pedestrian promenade with excellent views of fishing boats and the seaport. At a Seven/Eleven (7/11) Store, we bought ham and cheese sandwiches and Pokémon chips and other snacks.



Upon returning to the ship, there was a great long line to get on to the ship. After boarding, we went up on deck to watch us leave port. We had beautiful sunset views as we left Busan, South Korea, on our way back to Japan. The Movie playing on deck was Conclave. At dinner we went to the Metropolitan Dining Room. I had flank steak and Lonny had gumbo (NOT so good!) and chicken cordon bleu.

