

Reflections on Hiroshima

The phrase “atomic bomb” brings to mind the tragedies of Nagasaki, Hiroshima, and the connection that every American inherently has to those events. As an American who has resided and studied in Japan for two years and has had the chance to go to both Nagasaki and Hiroshima, I feel that it is our duty as Americans to visit both the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park.

Hiroshima’s Peace Park is more widely known than Nagasaki’s Atomic Bomb Museum and visitors from around the world come to see sites such as the Atomic Bomb Dome and the Children’s Peace Memorial. The Peace Park, with its vast space and spread out memorials, serves as a

representation of the emptiness the bombs left in their wake.

The compact Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum contains exhibitions that provide a thorough history of Hiroshima, atomic weaponry, the tragedy, and Japan’s commitment to eliminating nuclear weapons. The museum is a reminder of the transformative effect the United States’ decision to bomb the two cities had on Japan.

On the other hand, Nagasaki’s larger museum focuses more so on the tragedy itself than the information. After crossing the threshold into the museum, you are met with a desolate dark space. The exhibits are spread out with individual spotlights, serving to highlight their importance. In this seemingly never-ending maze, time feels as though it has stopped and there is no world outside the walls. It

is in this space that you can begin to understand the experience of the bomb victims, and the effect it had upon the people of the surrounding area.

Hiroshima’s Peace Memorial Park is located in the middle of the bustling city, providing a glimpse of the bomb’s impact on the city as a whole. The Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum touches on the death, sickness, and pain of the impacted innocent. Although I will never be able to fully understand the pain and tragedy of these two bombings, visiting both museums has provided me with a glimpse of the situation. Without visiting both cities, it is impossible to begin to understand the scope of the bombings and the lasting impact these events had on the country of Japan.

-Phillip Bachman

Stopping to Ask for... an Interview?

It all started with a question: Even considering the renown of Himeji Castle, why does it seem like there are always *so many* people sightseeing in Himeji? In order to investigate this question I went to the Himeji Kanko Navi Port (Tourist Information Center), where a staff member (Ms. Mami Kiuchi) kindly allowed me to interview her.

I first asked Ms. Kiuchi “how important is tourism to the economy in Himeji?” Ms. Kiuchi replied that the profits generated by tourists’ purchases are very important to Himeji’s shops and restaurants. When I next asked her about the typical duration of a tourist’s stay in Himeji, she explained that “because the bullet train stops at Himeji, people who are going on to Hiroshima or Kyoto will often spend a day in Himeji.” Many of these sightseers are Chinese, while other frequently represented groups include people coming from Europe and Japanese

who hail from other prefectures. Ms. Kiuchi also said that many of Himeji’s visitors young adults or senior citizens. In order to better meet the needs of tourists who might need help, staff members who speak Chinese or English can almost always be found at the Himeji Tourist Information Center.

For what kinds of reasons do these travelers stop to inquire at the Himeji Tourist Information Center? Ms. Kiuchi’s answer to this question surprised me quite a bit. According to Ms. Kiuchi, although Himeji Castle is clearly visible from the Himeji Tourist Information Center, every day people who do not know how to reach the castle come to the Center and ask for directions. When I asked her why—excluding Himeji Castle, of course—people are interested in visiting Himeji, she answered, “it’s because Mt. Shosha is also very famous.” The Shoshazan Engyo-ji Temple, built in the year 966, is associated with the Tendai sect of Buddhism.

In addition, various sciences in the Hollywood file *The Last Samurai* were filmed at this temple.

Finally, when I then asked her for “Himeji recommendations,” Ms. Kiuchi suggested one of Himeji’s specialties: Oden, a kind of hodgepodge stew that features boiled eggs, fish cakes, daikon radish, and so on. I had no idea that the subject of tourism in Himeji would be so interesting. I learned so much talking with Ms. Kiuchi!

-Helen Hope Rolfe

Castle Cleanup

On July 13th, I volunteered along with other students from the CLS Program to help clean the grounds of Himeji Castle. I’ve always been intrigued by the castle because everyday I see it on the way to class. Himeji Castle is such a beautiful and majestic-looking building rich with history that I couldn’t help but be intrigued by it.

In America, I often do volunteer work, so I was really looking forward to doing some volunteer work in Japan. I really enjoyed having the opportunity to help clean the castle and talk with members of the Himeji community. As a matter of fact, going around collecting trash felt somewhat like a treasure hunt. In many ways, the treasure hunting aspect in addition to the actual items-- bottle caps, cans, wrappers, etc.--reminded me of the Nintendo game “Pikmin.”

Unfortunately, it rained the whole time, drenching everyone. It was raining so hard that even the cats living around the castle took shelter under trees. I definitely felt a little sorry for the cats that desperately sought out shelter from the rain.

After the cleaning, everyone ate breakfast together and played some games. I particularly enjoyed a game translated as “Best Friend.” The way the game works is that everyone stands up, while one person is asked various questions about what that person prefers. The others who share the same sentiment remain standing, while those who do not must sit down. This continues until one person remains standing. Overall, I had a great time, and despite getting wet it turned out to be a truly memorable experience.

-Erich Schuler

Christianity in Himeji

When I first came to Japan, I knew living here was going to be difficult. It was the first time I had left America to come to a foreign country and there was so much I did not know about Japan. I did not even know whether Japan resembled America in any way.

Being able to belong to a community is quite important to me. When I lived in Boston, my community was my local church. Since I am studying abroad in Japan for a while, I wanted to find a church and my own community to which I can belong. However, the population of Christians in Japan is only

about one percent, so I felt like my wish of joining a community in Japan would be difficult to achieve. But when I was just about to give up, I heard a group of people singing familiar Christian songs as I was walking through Himeji Station one day. I stopped and asked about their church – a church called Onnuri Church located on the outskirts of Himeji. I wanted to learn more about Christianity in Japan so I went to their church the following Sunday. Because I assumed that Himeji was a small city, I had originally thought there would not be a church in the area. However, I finally found one, although it was a little far from the center of town. The church was small and it consisted of

mostly elderly people, but there were some young members as well. Because the sermon was given in Japanese, I was assisted by Natsuki, a young girl who spoke English and was currently attending a Japanese international school. After the sermon, Natsuki’s mother gave me an explanation of the church’s mission in Himeji and how she was able to come to Christ.

The questions are as follows:

How did you find out about this church?

Answer: I was born in Korea but moved to Himeji when I married my Japanese

husband. However, when I first came to Japan, I was always lonely. I did not have many friends and I could not speak Japanese so I would cry almost every day. Up until then, I felt like nobody loved me, but then one day, by chance, I stumbled across this church. After coming to this church for some time, I came to believe that God loved me, and although it took some time, I found happiness.

Japan's population is only about one percent Christian. How were you able to bring people to the church?

Answer: It is very hard, but every day at the station we would go sing Christian songs and invite people who stop by to listen.

Since the members of the church are mostly foreigners, they all shared a similar

experience as I did when I first came to Japan. Therefore, we were all able to become friends rather quickly. Everyone was very kind and welcomed me quite warmly. At that moment, I was able to feel the strength of the ties of the Christian community in Japan.

-Elizabeth Murillo

Kendo

On July 18, 2014 I attended a special lecture on Kendo. I have always been especially interested in Kendo since middle school. It was ultimately partially due to this persistent yet relatively unexplored fascination that I took up the sport of fencing in the French style. Although I never received exposure to Kendo

through television or other media in America, I always loved anime and fostered a great appreciation for Japanese culture. I discovered Kendo through the consumption of Japanese media from other sources, such as the internet and literature.

I was surprised that I was able to understand all of Mr. Horiguchi sensei's special lecture, and also very excited about finally having the

opportunity to try Kendo. The members of the Kendo Club who helped teach us were all kind and very skilled Kendo practitioners. Unfortunately I was not very good at Kendo, but I still had a lot of fun. I was so very happy to have finally learned Kendo. It truly was a once in a lifetime experience that I will never forget.

-Hana Bushyhead

Great Journey: Shimanami Kaido

I recently bought a long-distance touring bike and thought I would test it out on the famous Shimanami Kaido Island Highway that stretches from Onomichi City in Hiroshima Prefecture to Imabari City in Ehime Prefecture. The trek began with night cycling at eight o'clock on a Friday evening from Onomichi City to In Island where I spent the night outdoors in the In Bridge Memorial Park. Early the next morning, I woke up to the sunrise.

The journey was about 74 kilometers in total. On the way back I rode the ferry from Imabari City, from which I saw the sunset over the Rai Island Bridge. After arriving back at In Island, I managed to catch the last bus to Onomichi City. Just before reaching Onomichi Station, I saw the finale of the firework festival from the bus window. It was my timely

reward for the day of hard work that began on that spot exactly 24 hours earlier.



A Lesson to Remember:

I met a pair of friends as I filled my tires on Ikikuchi Island. Shunji Funekoshi (28 years old from Hiroshima) and Daisuke Tanaka (28 years old from Okayama) were also trekking Shimanami Kaido Island Highway for the first time and invited me to cycle with them. It was much more enjoyable

travelling with company rather than just travelling by myself. This was a trip where I felt the essence of travel through fateful encounters.

Island Flavors

In Island: Onomichi Ramen

Ikikuchi Island: Fried Udon

Hakata Island: Fresh Fish Donburi

Oshima: Orange Juice and Raw

Oyster

The trip was just like the orange juice I drank on Oshima: think with memories and filled with 100% satisfaction.

-Garrett Norris



Kurotori Final Installment!

A frog with a crown stood before Kurotori Hanei and the White Heron. “I am Meadow. Who are these fools who enter my Marsh Kingdom?” he asked in a deep voice.

Kurotori and the White Heron were silent for a spell. The frog did not say anything either. Looking at the frog, Kurotori wondered, “Is he waiting, or is he sleeping?” He soon began giggling. “White Heron, you fool! Do you really think this Meadow character has an army? A little bit ago I was angry, but not anymore. This is just silly! What kind of a joke is this?”

“It is not a joke, sire,” the White Heron responded.

Meadow simply said, “Ribbit, ribbit!” and countless frogs began popping out of the marsh one by one.

Pop! Pop! Pop! Pop!

Kurotori saw this and was amazed. The White Heron cackled, “See! I told you! He has an army, this Lord Meadow!”

“You’re right,” Kurotori muttered apologetically. “I’m sorry, White Heron. I’m sorry I doubted you.”

“That’s alright! No need to apologize.”

“Yes, there is a need to apologize. I am sorry. And thank you. You left your country to help me. That sort of ally is irreplaceable. I’m sorry,” Kurotori said.

“It’s an honor, sire!”

“Go home, dear White Heron. Go protect your own kingdom. Thank you again.”

“Really? I meant to stick with you till the end.”

Kurotori’s voice warmed. “I know. But you’ve already done more than enough. On account of your friendship, our grandchildren’s grandchildren will be allies, just like us.”

The White Heron cried. “I’m moved, sire. I wish you the best of luck conquering your enemy, Kozue.” And with a cordial bow, he took off to the East.

Smiling, Kurotori turned to Meadow. “Shall we go?” he asked.

“Go?” Meadow said.

“Yes, to take back my kingdom!”

With that, Meadow opened his mouth wide and swallowed Kurotori whole.

The End

-Cory Mackenzie

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