

Post



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# Rain, rain, go away - April 15, 2023

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## ***SUMMARY***

Rain. All day. Not a downpour but the steady 1/10th inch per hour that plants love. Tourists, not so much. Nevertheless, we are up and out early GSD. (Getting Stuff Done) Metro pass, Nagano train tickets, cash, PCR Covid test (Japanese government requirement for departing cruise passengers). Hike to Meiji Temple and its beautiful surrounding forest. Hike to Brasserie Viron for a very good (French) lunch. Tired of hiking in the rain, we metro back to our hotel and spend the rest of the afternoon relaxing and blogging. Still raining in the evening so we play umbrella pinball on the way to sushi dinner. Hike back in the mist. - Karen

### ***DETAIL***

We wake up to our first full day in Japan and in Tokyo and sure enough it's raining. It's our only full day in Tokyo, so we're a bit sad. We consider contacting our tour guide to see if we can postpone our tour to Monday afternoon (after we've returned from Nagano). But we think better of it. Buck up, stiff upper lip, and all that. Soon the WhatsApp app on my iPhone lights up. It's our tour guide. He feels terrible and has a high fever. He's going to have to cancel. He tried to find a replacement from his tour guide friends, but they're all already working. Yay!

We relax and enjoy a more leisurely morning. We'll do some of the same stuff as the tour, just on our own. We clean up a tad and head down to the breakfast (included with our room) in the main dining room. They use a full face scanner to check our temperature. We're all good. Can we say the same for the breakfast? It's OK. We have much of the western stuff and it's fine. Maybe we eat less because it isn't super.

While sitting and nibbling we find an ATM that should work. It's directly across from the entrance to the hotel, at the Japan Post Office at the train station. And it's open on Saturdays, which is today! Yay. After breakfast and a bit more readying for rain, we head across the street and hit the 'open' button on the door. Nothing. Ah, it opens at 9:00 am, in ten minutes.

Instead we head off for another task: getting our multi-day metro pass and a train ticket to Nagano (round trip). We need a four day subway pass. Their largest is three days (72 hours). But we can buy one of those and a one day pass, and the clock doesn't start ticking for either til they're used. Yay! Cash only. Boo! But we're told there's an ATM at such-and-such a place nearby.

The ATM is where the nice man said it would be and works swimmingly. We get money from our BofA account with no problem. Had it NOT worked so swimmingly, there is a phone there and the screen says I could pick up that very phone and speak to someone in English. Is this a great country or what?

With our new found yen we buy our metro passes and (somewhere else) our bullet train (Shinkansen) tickets for Nagano. I ask if we would be likely to see sakura (cherry blossoms) in Nagano, or along the way? The sweet, young girl behind the counter screws up her face, trying hard to figure out how to say "probably not" without actually having to utter those words. Message received.

At our hotel, before heading out on our little errand-fest, we'd asked a nice man at behind the counter where we could get the Covid test we need for the cruise ship. He found a place and tried to show us where it is on the map. He didn't feel like he'd done a good job, so I whipped out my phone and showed him a picture of the street, pointed and said "Right THERE??". YES! That's it. We'd been looking, from an overpass, down on the scurrying mass of humanity on that very street just the night before.

We walked, in the rain, to that exact spot and no Covid test. We look up and down the street. Karen holds the name of the place, on a slip of paper our hotel guy had written, on the glass of a closed business for the cleaning lady inside. She pointed down the street. No joy. At another shop Karen asks a sales person and he personally walks us the two blocks to the place. So sweet!

Rather than pay the outrageous US\$65 each at the port, we're now only going to each pay US\$75! (Wait, that's going in the wrong direction.) and this is just OK for in-country travel. Screw it, we're here, we're doing it. Roll the damn dice! There are a half dozen Japanese medical technicians in white lab coats who try to pantomime what they need from us, how it's going to work, what we should expect and when, etc. etc. It couldn't have been funnier if the Marx brothers themselves had set this up.

Once we're taking the test it's spitting, through a short straw, into a small plastic vial. Karen's fairly certain she doesn't own that much saliva and is howling with laughter. I try to calm her down and encourage more salivation. Eventually we get the laughing to stop and the spitting to begin. In the end they have everything they need, we're all best friends and so we take a group picture.

Next stop: The Meiji Shrine, in the rain, about three quarters of a mile away. On our walk we pass the cutest pet grooming store with the two cutest matching small dogs (maybe 5-1/2" at the shoulder) being groomed together. I prepare to take a picture when one of the groomers taps on the glass and points to the half-dozen signs I'd missed that say no photos. What the what??

The shrine is really impressive and it's on an absolutely enormous plot of Tokyo land with towering trees and beautiful walking paths that are so regal and tranquil (and today, soggy and rainy). We take lots of pictures of the shrine (and necessarily also of the many umbrella-toting tourists there as well). At one point we see a formal procession moving from one covered part of the shrine to another. It was obviously a wedding or some dignitary with many of the women in gorgeous kimonos. I prepare to take a picture when a white gloved official standing near by stops me, wiggling his finger from side to side. What the actual what?

We walk another six tenths of a mile to a great sounding French restaurant for lunch. We both agree our feet are completely soaked. The French wine really helped with that. Lunch was exquisite and we take the metro back to our hotel. A much more civilized way to travel on such a drizzly day.

Somewhere in the middle of all of that I've found a good sushi restaurant for dinner. It's in demand and I'm happy to be able to make a reservation. A good while before our dinner reservation we (reluctantly) put back on our not-yet-dry shoes and head back out. The flowing throngs of people are equal in number to last night, but now each has an umbrella. Normally you just worry about whether you should zig left or zag right to avoid the person coming at you. Now you also have to figure out whether you're going to lift up your umbrella really high, or are they? Such fun.

We find our restaurant, but it's still 45 minutes til our reservation. We go two doors down, to a stand up whiskey and beer bar. Karen gets a Negroni and I order a large Asahi Dry (beer). Karen says "Are you sure, large?" The bartender shows me how large a Large is, asking if I'm sure this is what I want. I think "Go big or go home" and say Yes. When I get my one liter mug of beer I realize I have made a grave mistake.

At dinner, down stairs, the host looks up our reservation. He can't find it. He wants to know with which service I made it. I show him the email. Finally he says "Ah, Farnsworth!" and takes us to our table saying "sorry, sorry, sorry..." the whole way. We're fine. Dinner is really good. To order you use their tablet at the table. It has what you can order, food and drink-wise in Japanese, and also in English (but only pictures). It's a trip. We use our Google translator and the sushi is wonderful. The place specializes in Tuna and it's good tuna. Sushi, sashimi, grill-it-yourself at te table. Sake. Good dinner, not expensive.

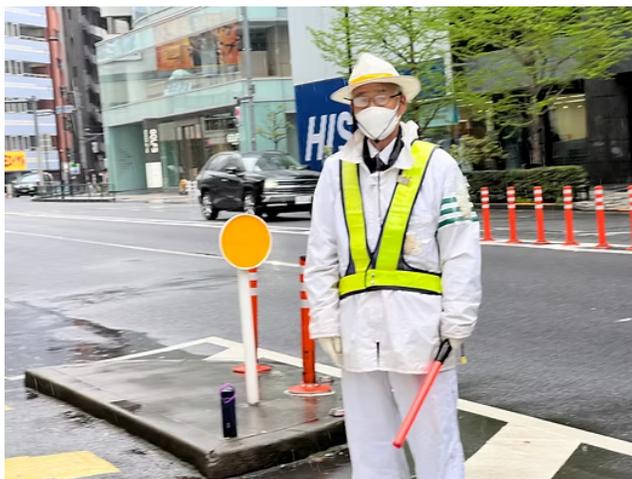
Hopefully no rain tomorrow.

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## Photos



Umbrellas everywhere, all day, today



Thankfully the city had these guys at so many intersections, telling turning vehicles when they could and couldn't turn (so we pedestrians could cross safely)



Getting our covid test



The shrine. Am sure it's more impressive in the sunshine.



Near the shrine, a wall made of barrels of sake. Haven't yet looked up what that is all about.



Our French restaurant for lunch



Fois gras. So good.





The sea of umbrellas on the way to dinner.



At our beer and whiskey bar before dinner.  
Mistakenly ordering a liter of beer. (It did  
get consumed)



At dinner with our amuse bouche. Cook it yourself.



The sushi was amazingly fresh

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