

Post



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Goodbye, Japan! - April 23, 2023

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SUMMARY

Another day in Kagoshima. Our excursion today first takes us (via a ferry) to the almost-island that holds Sakurajima volcano, one of the most active in the world. We drive around to the Arimura observation/hiking area on the backside of the volcano and enjoy the views, cloudless blue skies and lovely temperatures. (And lots more stairs!) Back on the ferry for a visit to a glass blowing/cutting factory and the obligatory stop at its showroom. The things they make are beautiful but not my style so I am not tempted. Then the Sengan-en garden, which again didn't have enough flowers for me! Scott fell ill while we were there and so, back

onboard, missed the sweet send off they gave us from the peer. It included music from an almost all girl band playing In the Mood among other things, lots of people waving flags and a group displaying lettered signs that spelled out "Thank You See You Again Azamara Guests".
Goodbye Japan! - Karen

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DETAIL

We wake to beautiful blue sky, 69 degrees, and the promise of sunshine throughout the day. We're still in Kagoshima which is where we'll be spending our last hours in Japan. We are scheduled to go on an excursions after which we'll return to the ship, surrender our passports, and there'll be a 'casting off/good-bye to Japan' party around 3 pm.

Looking at the date it becomes apparent that we'll be home in a scant two weeks. Yikes. We've been running low on q-tips, preferred shampoo and face soap, so maybe it is time to get back to the old U S of A. The tail end of the trip would seem to necessitate reflection on whether the experience has been a success or not. We wanted to have a good time, see a lot of things and places, eat a lot of good food, and meet fun people. On all those counts our voyage has been a great success.

We also wanted to stay healthy, not get into trouble, and not lose anything too valuable. Again, so far we can claim success. Another hope was that this could be our one big trip to Asia. That we wouldn't have *such* a good time that we felt we needed to come back. That we could, instead, return our attentions to our first love, Europe, France, the UK, Scandinavia, etc. On that point we're not so sure we can claim victory. We really enjoyed Japan and feel that we do need to come back and spend more time here. Oh well, we were fairly successful.

One last goal for the trip was to be able to answer the question "is 72 days too long for a single trip?" I'm wanting to say "Er ma gerd, yes, it's way too long" but I think that's only something that can be answered after the whole 72 days, and after you've have some time back home to forget most of the trip. Ask me in a month.

On the bus our tour guide, a gentleman this time, introduces himself as Norry. He says he's from Japan and laughs heartily at his own joke. (Of course he's from Japan.) He asks where *we're* from. US, UK, Australia are shouted out. Yugoslavia is shouted out next. We're tempted to call BS on that one. No such place anymore. (Or maybe they've been traveling longer than we have and don't know the country has split up and changed names!)

We drive around town and landmarks are pointed out. Our itinerary is reviewed and Norry is happy to know that no one went to any of those places on an excursion yesterday. We're headed, first, to the volcano. It was on an island in the middle of the huge bay in front of us (the bay is as big as Tokyo Bay). The volcano is still there, as is the bay, but it's no longer an island. Recently lava flow connected the island to the mainland. We could, in theory, drive around to the volcano now, but opt, instead, for the ferry boat that can carry our big tour bus over there in just 15 or 20 minutes.

Off the ferry and now very close to the volcano, we drive around to the back side. Along the way we seen where they're farming yellowtail and amberjack out in the bay. There are big circular nets where the fish are raised and fed. Some of the feed gets past all of the fish and so smaller fish, beyond or below the nets, eat it. And that attracts the occasional pods of dolphin to feed on these smaller fish. Alas not today, but it would have been cool to see.

Off the bus, at the volcano viewing area, we see drifts of the volcanic sand that rained down at some earlier point. The sky is still pure blue without any clouds. When it is cloudy, we're told, it can be hard to tell what's volcano steam or smoke, but now it's clear, these white puffs are 100% volcanic in origin. We hike the path, passing the special structures we're supposed to dart into if there's an eruption. Pictures are taken. No eruption happens, and before long we're back on the bus and back on the ferry.

We're told that the ferry runs 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Not because it's needed, but because if it ever is needed (to evacuate the many people who live at the base of the volcano) they want it available and ready to go. We can understand that.

At our next stop there's also molten stuff, but this is glass. It's a glass blowing and cutting factory. It's venerable and famous and the products they produce are exquisite. The price is commensurate with their beauty and required effort. I'm thankful that our luggage is so full. Yesterday we toured the silk factory that just happened to have this huge, beautiful garden attached. Here, you guessed it, a huge, beautiful garden attached to the factory with the tour and gift shop.

As we tour the garden, in a stretched out snake of people, I feel the earth moving beneath my feet. If I were on the boat it might make sense. Here I'm thinking of the people who get used to the movement of a boat and then feel it on solid ground once they're off the boat. Sadly no, I know what this is. Ménière's Disease, well crap! It's a lingering gift from when I had Covid.

I unsteadily work my way up to Karen to have her help me stay vertical. We excuse ourselves and make the difficult walk back to the bus. It has barf bags, thankfully, which I hang onto but don't need (on the bus). Back on the ship, by the elevator, I eventually do need the bag. Sigh. It's not my first episode, so I know what it is, though it's always an unwelcome visitor.

While I rest in the room, Karen attends the "Good bye to Japan" casting off party. The ship has been wandering around the waters of Japan for seventy-some-odd days straight, so it's a bittersweet goodbye, according to the ship's crew. After a long rest in the room, and some dramamine (one of the few things one can do for this), I feel better. We do dinner again at the Prime C steakhouse. Steak Diane and Chilean Sea Bass with a miso glaze. Very yummy.

Upon returning to our cabin we find that the TV is on, which seems weird. The home screen of the ship's broadcast cycles through the featured stories and then we see it. We gain an hour overnight and thus we need to adjust our clocks. Sweet. We have an even more leisurely night than planned and eventually head off to sleep-land.

Photos



Breakfast out on our balcony. On sunny warm days we could really get used to that.



The ferry to the volcano that our bus will be on. What could possibly go wrong?



On the ferry we ditch the bus and check out the insides. Nice and clean.



Off in the water we can see where they're raising amberjack and yellowtail. No dolphins today, sadly.



The view of the volcano from the bus. We get the idea we're pretty close.



Volcanic sand. Where did that come from??



A sign... with Japanese writing on it...



In case of an eruption we're to scamper
into one of these and kiss our butts
goodbye.



Heading up to the volcano (or at least a
few meters closer). Any volunteers for
sacrifice?



You can see the viewing area isn't THAT
close



Proof that we were there



FARNSNIENTE

what our ferry looks like from a distance (i think)



Some pretty hot stuff. Molten glass being formed into a salable piece of expensive kitsch.





But first it needs to be marked, and cut,
and polished



Eight glasses for a mere US\$2,064 (pretty,
though)



A stone sculpture. To impress us our guide told us how big this flat stone is, measured in tatami mats. "Can you believe that thing is as big as eight tatami mats?"
Unbelievable. (How big is a tatami mat??)



Lots of people from the town seeing us off.
How sweet! Wonderful people, these Japanese.



Not our volcano but one a tad further south. Last we'll see of Japan. (For this trip, at least)

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