

### Thursday 4-5/2015

Departed 514 W @ 8:30A for SIA for the 9:45 to Seattle. A flight that is going to initiate and adventure to the Land of the Rising Sun. So there I boarded ANA's 787 Dreamliner for flight NH177 and a 10hr hop across the top to Narita, JP.

Uneventful and pretty smooth flight pulled into the airport at Narita at 3:40P local time. Breezed thru Immigration, picked up me bag and met Brendan and Hilary outside. Still had a 90 KM train trip of just under 3 hours to hit Yokosuka and home for the next 2 weeks. Took the express to Yokohama then a couple JR lines to his station at Maborikaigon arriving at 7:30P. Hung out til I ran out of gas round 9ish.

### Friday 3/6/2015

Lazy morning planning the day and drinking coffee presses. Hils was able to get a rental car so we packed for a trip to Mt. Fuji. Heading to the base to get wheels we stopped and got moi a train pass. Cabbed over to the rental lot and voila mobile. Drove to the carrier pier as the GW was in, but no sponsor, no access. So grabbed a couple dry dock shots of ole DD63, getting a facelift.

Into town parked and found the Forex, turned \$300 into 35,400 yen. Dined at the kids favorite Ramen bar. Put you money in and push the items you want click done, get tickets for the cook, who makes your bowl! Off we go to Fuji with full stomachs.

Interesting drive to the mountain. All outer roads are toll roads and quite expensive. The rental car came with vouchers that saved us over y15,000. All vehicles pay depending upon engine size for amount. The roads are excellent and the slope protection is second to none, very impressive.

Approaching the Fujigoko area it was apparent the mountain was shrouded. Light snow in a few places and blustery clouds owned the evening. Grabbed a couple sunset shots over Lake Kawaguchi in the 5 Lakes area, then headed back to Yokosuka-shi. Stopped briefly at Hils apartment, arriving at Bren's 8ish for a 9:30 tuck in.

### Saturday 3/7/2015

Another lazy morn with the coffee press. Got rolling around 10A and returned the rental car after a stop at the Exchange. No Fuji gear so we settled for lunch at Chili's then a cab to the main gate. We wandered around Yokosuka and in the vertical mall I found meself a new cap for Y3200. Then to the basement and Food City for a few items. Also some grab shots.

Back to Bren's and BBQ'd burgers with crockpot chili. Great dinner and company til 9:45ish

### **Sunday 3/8/2015**

Up 6:30ish and caught up over a press of coffee. Then grabbed me camera and out for a stroll. Getting familiar so didn't stray too far. Back home Hils was up se we started breakfast. Then a trip to Tokyo to mix with the masses and shop.

To Yokohama then the train to Tokyo. Hils got off at Shibuya and we headed for the Akihabara station and camera gear. Walking without destination we finally hailed two lads on the street (one had a camera around his neck) and inquired. Turns out they were from China and looking for a camera store also. But they were using Google Maps, lol. Talked and walked til arriving at Yodobashi's. A multi-level mall with the camera and watches and appliances on the street level.

Its there that I found camera heaven. Every make and model I knew behind glass. Found my 10-24 f4 and with the assistance of a hand waving associated I got the box to the checkout counter where an English speaking cashier explained the price and it was awesome. Took her home for a test drive. About a mile hike back to the station to train down and meet Hils, so she got workout.

Met Hils in Shibuya and did some people watching and shooting. My gawd more people than the free buffet at the trailer park. They just keep coming and coming wow. Found a coffee shop for a rest and decisions on dinner. Finished our Top Coffee and railed to Yokohama for a buffet at the Rio Grande Grill. The spread was amazing, delicious and continuous. Grabbed some night shots around the mall then the ride back to Yokosuka.

Stopped in chou so Hils could drop off her shopping. It was a nice stroll but we took a cab back to Bren's. After visiting til 10:45P it was light out.

### **Monday 3/9/2015**

Up 6ish and journaled over a press of coffee. Still pissed about being able to delete photos off my phone and the damn thing survived a tsunami. Headed out for a shoot round 8A in a light mist. Made it down to the seawall. Still pretty gray but snapped a few around the hood. The kids got rolling 10 ish and we headed to the station for a ride to Kamakura. After walking thru the shopping area we made it to the Shinto Shrine Tsuru-gaoka. Hachimangu built the shrine in 1063 and is at the geographical and cultural center of Kamakura. It was dedicated to Emperor Ojin and moved to its current location in 1191.

After our tour we headed to the best Hawaiian Burger in Japan for a late lunch. The trek back to the station was in a steady rain. Hils needed a pick me up so we hit Beck's for a latte before the train ride back. We got off in chuo to transfer and the kids hit the chu-hi stand for a really potent beverage. Back to Bren's where we visited til 9:30ish.

## **Tuesday 3/10**

Out for a stroll round 8ish thru the hood and ended up at the seawall. First sun since arriving so of course it became a shoot.

Back to House of Hoy and some planning. Hils had errands to run on base so Bren and I packed up and headed for the great Buddha Diahatsu at the Temple Kotoku-in. Battered and broken several times over the millennia it stands still today to be admired by all.

Upon entering we were approached by 4 grade school looking students. One little gal was there spokesperson and asked if they could interview us, to which we agreed. Asked our names and shown a map to point to home, they inquired as to where we'd been in Japan. Loved it and had them pose for a group shot. Another older gent rolled up and asked what Brendan had on his glasses, a croakie! They exchanged a bit of Japanese then he broke out in English. Rides his bike here several times a week from Yokohama to practice his English. Very fun and we chatted for several minutes or more.

Two of the best interactions so far! We walked up to the Temple from here and the gardens were just barely blooming. The main pagoda was covered with scaffold and under renovation. The grounds are covered in very small statues representing lost children, shrines and monuments cover the expansive grounds. Reverence and respect very much the aura felt here. A surrealistic calm when you witness the outpouring of spirit in this temple Hasedera.

Hils was already at Bren's so we hoped the northbound heading for chou and their favorite Korean BBQ. Very tiny upstairs eatery but a waiting line. Plan B was a short walk over to the downstairs Nirvana, Indian Curry shop. Again so tiny and cozy, the service was excellent and the food was original and very good. This from one who doesn't do curry, moi! Back to Brens and taps 10ish.

## **Wednesday 3/11**

Stayed home today. No pics, ate pizza and watched the Hobbit and drank chu-hi's.

## **Thursday 3/12**

Today we head west for Kyoto then Osaka. 10A purchased our reserved seats of the bullet express to Kyoto, Y14,000. Picked up our car, 11 and found our seats, had the whole row and off we went. Extremely smooth ride thru some of the most mixed use hectares of land I've seen ever.

In our airplane like seats we zipped thru Yokohama past rice fields and crop lands then Sony factories and blocks of high rise apartments sprinkled with the tall nets of a driving range. Hundreds of these but no signs of any golf courses. Past the Panasonic and Kawasaki plants towards the foothills. You could see the snow buildup on the house's we past and it was fresh. Then the tunnel. At 150 mph it could have been ten miles long. Amazing ride and sights.

Arriving at Kyoto station we immediately departed out the wrong side but it was karma as there before our eyes was a Guinness sign. So in for a pint we went about 1:30P. There we ran into the American bartender from Tacoma who'd been living here for 30 years. She taught English and married a national. Anyway got some shopping and sightseeing tips from her then toddled off to our room at the Kyoto Towers Annex. Dropped bags and headed out for an adventure.

First stop a ride up the Kyoto Tower and a photo op. Great views with moderately nice light. From here took a cab ride to the Torii Gates at the Temple. Shared a crab leg on a stick going in, really good. Crowds of people all around the grounds, which again was huge and full of photo ops. Took the train back to the Gion District and the Nishiki market. Endless blocks and blocks of covered market. If this wasn't enough the streets were walled with malls and stores and markets. These people can out shop us I believe.

By this time Bren had located another resting station offering pints of Guinness so we popped into Gael's Irish Pub for beverages. Finished our shopping and made way to Kyoto station and the 10th floor ramen shops. Found one with a shorter wait, paid for our choice's, got our tickets and waited. As they collect your tickets ahead, when you are seated your meal shows right after the beer is delivered. Sat next to Ana from Germany who is doing a 5 week tour hitting hostels and riding trains. Hit the skywalk for another photo op and the bonus was Kyoto Tower was awash with lights. Then there was the LED staircase. There were several serious local folks shooting so I broke out the tripod and joined in.

After the shoot we stopped at Mr Donut for a morning snack. The wind turned really cold so we headed back to our tiny little room at the annex. It was so damn hot couldn't use covers, had better nights sleep, lol!

### **Friday 3/13**

Woke early and found the sun back lighting the tower out our window. Dressed quickly and headed out into a very brisk freaking breeze but cobalt blue and Mandarin orange sky's. And there it was the tower. Grabbed a few before she rose to a bothersome altitude. Headed towards the station looking for some reflections and was rewarded with several decent shots. The breeze picked up and it got cold so headed back to find the kids up. We had our donuts and packed to a local to the Sagano Bamboo Forest.

But not before we had a bit at the Cafe Veloce with the lady in pink. Shot our way around the forest which goes on and on and one train lines goes thru it. Walked to the bus stop and grabbed a seat to the Handicraft Market for some serious shopping. Picked up a cab back to Kyoto station for the trip to Osaka. These express trains go so damn fast rolling shutter is an issue even at a 10,000. Anyway arrived and cabbed to the hotel and checked in round 3P. After a short rest it was off to Osaka Castle.

Arrived by cab just before dusk in a mist. Our entrance is front to huge stone walls creating a moat. Unbelievable masonry everywhere right in the center of Osaka. While there the blue hour descended or broke out of the clouds providing a spectacular backdrop for the castle. Shot it from different sides and angles as we made our way out the back gate to the river and Osaka Business Park. Just a few blocks away we hit Salvatores for a little Italian. Great pizza and sides were enjoyed by all. Turned in around 10P.

### **Saturday 3/14**

Raining this morning so we hit the mart for a little snack then a cab to the castle. OMG umbrellas everywhere. Tour groups citizens all here to see the castle. Very different from the one's in Europe. I was disappointed by the content. All the ancient relics were somewhere not in sight. Again the crush of bodies was manifest. Much nicer experience last night. We grabbed a cab to the Aquarium.

The Aquarium also hosts the Tempozan Ferris wheel once the tallest in the world. Now ranks 6th. Paid our Y2000 for old guys and did the walk. The aquarium has a huge selection of fish including a whale shark. Again the crush of people. A Japanese grandpa pointed to his grandson and me camera and motioned to take a pic, which I did, thanking him with bows and arigato's. On the way to the train we hit a beef bowl eatery for a late lunch.

Making our way to Osaka station we purchased our Shinkansen tickets for the two hour and ten minute ride to Yokohama. Then the 45 minute ride on the locals to Yokosuka arriving at Bren's 6:30 ish.

### **Sunday 3/15**

Late morning then to the base for brunch at the CPO club. A Little bit of military is ok and this was enough. Did some shopping around the base then Hils went home to pack for their trip to Italy. Bren and I hit the Lassen's bar only to watch a structure fire down the block. Went lookie louing and they had about 20 rigs on scene and half a mile of hose out. One of the volunteers was placing black X's on the hose where it leaked. Tried finding the boys something but not yet. So back to Bren's and taco's and the 3rd Hobbit movie. Then I headed out for a night shoot, yea down by the seawall. Made it back 9:30ish with some nice shots.

### **Monday 3/16**

Slept in til 7:15ish and made coffee. Bren was up 7:30 so we checked the train schedule for tomorrow's trip to Narita. Hils had errands so Bren and I headed for the Don Quixote (White Elephant) store. No luck for the kids. We dropped into the Costco size AVE Supermarket. Spotted some Wegu steak for tonight. Hit the Livin store and finally found shirts for the boys. Over to Homes to get a larger pot and some soil for Hils Canna Lily. Grabbed some parting shots as we headed back in a steady rain. BBQ'd and packed for tomorrows long day flying.

## **Tuesday 3/17**

Up around 8 ish finished and grabbed the 1:30 for Yokohama and the Narita Express. Rolled into Narita 4:30ish got me boarding pass and walked with to the gate and said goodbye and safe travels to this kids on their trip to Italy. Out of the gate at 5:55P for the 9+ hour, less than full flight to Seatac. Uneventful, seat belt sign off all the way. Get thru customs no sweat and head to the gate to here my connection home has been cancelled, lol. All was well as I got on the full, 2:00 to Spokane. This one was rough enough no service all the way, too bumpy according to the skip. Arrived back at 514 W 4:00P a very long day.