

Japan – 2011

Normally I receive a prompt answer when I e-mail the head of our group about wanting to go on a trip. But this time things went more slowly. Fortunately, a couple of days after my e-mail asking to go to ISMD (International Symposium on Multiparticle Dynamics), the annual conference I usually go to, and WPCF (Workshop on Particle Correlations and Femtoscopy*), another conference I sometimes go to, I received invitations to speak at both. WPCF is at the University of Tokyo 20–24 September, and ISMD the following week, 26–30 September, on Miyajima Island near Hiroshima. I forwarded them and got a very quick reply that I could go. I, of course, went a few days early and stayed a few days afterwards. It had been 11 years since my last (only) trip to Japan, and I was anxious to visit it again.

In many ways Japan is a very nice country to visit. The people are polite and friendly; everything is (exceedingly) clean; you can drink the water, although it may taste a bit of chlorine (like the U.S.); it is safe, i.e., there is little danger of mugging or pickpockets; and no one expects a tip, in fact an offer of a tip may be insulting.

Tuesday, 13 September. I got to Schiphol well on time, more than two hours before the 14:55 scheduled departure. It would have been OK to arrive an hour later, since I had only carry-on baggage, but you never know with the trains these days.

Then we sat in the plane for 2 hours while they repaired one of the motors, which had a problem that they only discovered when they tried to start it. And, the plane was full. I had seen on the web the day before that there was still a vacant seat next to me, but that had been one of the few, and now it had been filled. But at least it was with a small Japanese man, not some fat slob.

Wednesday, 14 September. They managed to make up some of the time so that we landed only about one hour late at 10:07. I was quickly photographed and fingerprinted at immigration, found at ATM to get some Japanese money, and headed down to the train station under Narita airport. Then a bit of luck. They have a new service, or rather they have reinstated an old service. So I was able to get a direct train to Asakusa, the part of Tokyo I visit first. This train follows one of the private Japanese companies tracks, then goes over the tracks of the Toei metro line (there are two metro companies in Tokyo, Toei and Tokyo Metro), which has a stop in Asakusa—very convenient. On the other side of Tokyo, the train gets back on its own tracks and proceeds to Tokyo’s other airport, Haneda, but that I didn’t need.

The Japanese are known to be very honest; there is little street crime (although, of course, one shouldn’t take needless risks). This honesty was demonstrated as I left the train. The man sitting next to me jumped up, tapped me on the shoulder and gave me a coin (¥50, I think it was), which had apparently fallen out of my pocket onto the seat.

Out of the train, I felt how warm it was, low thirties (Celsius), and very humid. It was a few blocks walk to Ryokan Asakusa Shigetsu. Although “*ryokan*” (a traditional Japanese inn) is in its name, it also has Western-style rooms, one of which I had booked for two nights. I left my luggage (you could only get into the room at 3, typical for

*Femtoscopy is like microscopy, but at distance scales of a femtometer rather than a micrometer.

Japan) and set out to see Asakusa, which is one of the Tokyo neighborhoods which has not changed too much, at least at its center.

My hotel is in a narrow street just off a pedestrian street leading to the temple Senso-ji. (Photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/Gb4sDvG9cUZSGEdYA>.) The pedestrian street runs from an entrance gate up to the temple and is lined with small shops and souvenir stands. Senso-ji is a large temple with a history dating back to 628 that has been destroyed and rebuilt a few times. The most recent destruction was during a 1945 bombing raid near the end of World War II, and when they rebuilt it after the war they decided to do it “permanently”, in reinforced concrete. This is supposed to be Tokyo’s most popular temple, and there were certainly enough people visiting it. The story is that two brothers who were fishing in the nearby Sumida River found a tiny golden statue of Kannon, the Buddhist goddess of mercy and happiness, who has the ability to release humans from all suffering. Senso-ji was then built in her honor. The statue is supposedly housed in the temple, but it is never shown to the public. Next to the temple is a small peaceful park with some small shrines.

Then I went to a train station (another private rail company) to buy a ticket to Nikko, where I will go on Friday. In the heat, with a glaring sun, many of the women are using parasols. I passed a store with an advertisement for coffee, a brand “charcoal roasted since 1970.” I never heard of charcoal roasted coffee before.

Thursday, 15 September. I tried the Japanese breakfast at my hotel this morning: miso soup, rice, dried seaweed (to wrap around clumps of rice), egg, fish, pickled vegetables. It was pretty good, though slightly Westernized I thought: scrambled instead of raw egg and fried salmon instead of raw. I was glad about the egg.

I got a bit confused about where the right metro was, which cost me some time. The vending machines selling metro tickets operate in English as well as Japanese, which made it easy to buy a day ticket for the Toei lines, ¥700, whereas single ride tickets cost from ¥160 to ¥300 depending on distance. (¥100 was about €1, although the rate was fluctuating quite a bit.) I had seen that I could do everything I wanted to today using only the Toei lines. This saved me ¥300, since a combined day ticket for both Toei and Tokyo Metro costs ¥1000.

But I discovered that some of the transfers are really far apart. One required leaving one station and walking about 300 m to the next one. So it was almost 10 by the time I got to the Tsukiji wholesale fish market, there wasn’t much going on except restaurants and an ordinary market in the adjacent streets.

Then I went to the nearby Hama-rikyu garden (photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/o25Fg9HG3ieNTgvm8>), which was formerly an Imperial garden and before that a retreat for the shogun, much of it destroyed and not rebuilt, *e.g.*, the house where U. S. Grant stayed for three months. Since it is now the week leading up to the Respect for the Aged National Holiday next Monday, seniors (65 or over) were let in free saving me the ¥150 reduced senior price. Given that so many buildings had not been rebuilt, the garden was more spacious than usual for Japanese gardens. There were ponds, and a tea house. Particularly interesting was a duck hunting pond. This was a pond with several channels dug into the surrounding woods. They looked like small creeks. At the end of the channels there was a blind. Tame ducks were used to lure wild ducks up the channels. When the hunters were satisfied with the number of ducks, they would release nets from the trees to capture them. Although buildings in the garden were not rebuilt, lots of tall buildings have been built in the neighborhood

around the gardens, rather spoiling the sense of isolation.

Next, the metro up to the Imperial Palace to visit the East Garden and the foundations remaining from the castle's fortifications. It is a large garden, but not so interesting, although it does have a lot of different kinds of trees. (Photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/AGCtWyCAU9LVkysf9>.)

And for the final attraction of the day, a metro across town to the Edo-Tokyo Museum. Here too there was a discount for seniors. This is a very modern museum showing the history of the city. There are some very impressive models of streets and houses of the Edo period. One has about 1500 people (no, I didn't count) in the streets and buildings. There are English captions and explanations. The final section about recent history, *e.g.*, World War II, was less interesting, and rather reluctant to give any background to the war, just the destruction and hardship.

I ate at a restaurant next to my hotel, which specializes in tempura. It was listed in both *Lonely Planet* and Frommer, but like many Japanese restaurants, there was only the name of the place in Japanese outside. I wasn't even sure it was a restaurant, but the Japanese characters corresponded to those in the guidebooks. I thought the tempura was a bit on the greasy, soggy side, but maybe that is the Asakusa style, tempura being an Asakusa specialty.

Friday, 16 September. The hotel was a lot fuller last night. So there were many at breakfast, which made it slow. So I missed the 8:10 train. Again I had the Japanese breakfast, which was similar to yesterday's, but with a different kind of fish and different pickled vegetables. I took the 9:10 train, which got me to Nikko at 11:20. I picked up a map at the tourist information office, and the woman there showed me where my *ryokan*, the Turtle Inn Nikko, was on the map. That made 4 maps I had of Nikko, one from *Lonely Planet*, one from Frommer, one I got with the train ticket, and now this one. And they all looked different! But Nikko is not very big; population is only about 17000. (Photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/TVERPxxSxHJzgcGK6>.)

Fortunately, it is a bit cooler here, thanks to being 695 m higher and 140 km further north, but still in the high twenties. On my way to the hotel I passed the Sacred Bridge, a reconstruction of the 17th century original, built at the spot where Shodo Shonin (735–817), a Buddhist priest who established a hermitage here, was carried across the river on the backs of two giant serpents. After a few false turns I found the Turtle Inn, checked in, was given yet another map, left my luggage since it was too early to get into my room, and set out to see the sights.

Around 1600 Tokugawa Ieyasu defeated rival clans, becoming the most powerful Lord, and was made shogun by the emperor in 1603. He consolidated power at Edo, which grew to be the largest city in Japan, and perhaps in the world at that time. Tokugawa and his descendents ruled Japan until 1868. Tokugawa's grandson, the third Tokugawa shogun, built a mausoleum for his grandfather at Nikko. Some 15000 artisans were brought from all over Japan to make a group of buildings more elaborate and gorgeous than any existing Japanese temple or shrine. Toshogu Shrine is rich in colors and carvings; some 2.4 million sheets of gold leaf were used, which could cover an area of almost 2.4 hectares (6 acres). It is in a grove of Japanese cedars planted in the 1600s. Some 13000 of the original trees are still there, making the sight seem remote and still (befitting a mausoleum). An interesting point was the Sacred Stable, which houses the sacred white horse. Horses are often dedicated to Shinto gods and are kept at shrines, as are monkeys, which are supposed to protect

the horses. The stable is decorated with carvings of monkeys, including a “see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil” trio, which demonstrates three principles of Tendai Buddhism. Unfortunately for me, the main hall is being restored, and is only partially visible. But the Yomeimon Gate was fantastic: red, blue, gilt, about 400 carvings of flowers, dragons, birds and other animals, unlike most Japanese shrines, which are rather austere.

A 5 or 10 minute walk from Toshogu Shrine is another shrine, Taiyuin-byo, which is the mausoleum of the grandson, Iemitsu, a more sober undertaking, but still quite nice. And nearby that is another temple, Futarasan-jinja, the shrine founded by Shodo Shonin. However the current building dates from 1619, which still makes it Nikko’s oldest.

It was not easy to find a restaurant. Most visitors to Nikko apparently do it as a day trip. So almost everything closes between 5 and 6. After a search I found one little place (4 tables, one of which was occupied by a young woman who looked to me to be Chinese). I had *yakitori* (pieces of chicken on a skewer, 5 skewers) rice, and noodles (sort of like spaghetti) with a few pieces of cabbage. It was surprisingly good for ¥800.

Back at the *ryokan* I went to the Japanese bath: first showered and then soaked in the 40°C bath—felt good. Tonight’s room is a Japanese style room—4 *tatami*[†] plus an entry way with a wash table and a closet, *futon* on the floor, a TV on a small table, a rather modern style small low table, a cushion to sit on, and a plank along part of one wall.

Saturday, 17 September. Breakfast (Western style) was free, an offer by the hotel to help promote tourism is the wake of the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear accident. At breakfast, I met the same young woman who was in the restaurant last night. Turns out she was from Singapore. She said that if she had known we were staying at the same hotel she would have waited for me.

Forecast for today was intermittent rain. I hoped it wouldn’t be too heavy and donning my raincoat I set off for the temple I had not had time to see yesterday, Rinnoji, leaving my luggage at the hotel. (Photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/kbZMuD5fES3P6V1k9>.) It, like the Taiyuin-byo shrine was founded by Shodo Shonin, and is of the Tendai sect of Bhuddism—the number of Bhuddist sects is huge. The temple is undergoing major reconstruction, scheduled to be completed in 2020. Basically, they have built an entire new building, which encloses the temple so that they can work unhindered by weather. One could walk through the parts of the temple not being worked on, and so I could see the most important part, the three 8.4 m high gilded, wooden images of Buddha. Impressive, but as so often in temples the lighting was poor. There were also interesting displays on the reconstruction, but the explanations were only in Japanese. Museums in Japan seem very good on having English as well as Japanese, but temples not.

After the temple I went to the Nikko Tamozawa Imperial Villa. This was quite interesting. It was built in 1899 for the crown prince, Yoshihito, who later became the Taisho Emperor, although its central core dates back to 1632 when it was the Edo residence of the Kishu Tokugawa clan. In 1872 it became part of the Imperial

[†]Straw and rush mats used as floor covering. They are of a standard size, although the standard varies from one part of the country to another. Since they are standard size, they are used as a unit of area. Being rather fragile, you are only allowed to walk on them in your socks or barefoot.

household. When part of the Imperial Palace was destroyed by fire the following year, it was used as the temporary Imperial palace. Later it was moved to Nikko and used by the Yoshihito as a retreat. The present emperor was evacuated here in 1943 for a year. The simplicity of design and the workmanship are striking.

Next I took a walk along a path by a river with fast flowing water, rapids, falls, and pools. The area was formed by lava flows from an old eruption of Mount Nantai and the Daiya River. It is a spot sacred to Buddhism. The path is more or less lined with stone statues of Jizo, the *bodhisattva* of children, about 70 of them. About, because the number always seems to change. They say if you count them on your way up the path and again on your way back, you will never get the same number. It was warm, low 20s, and almost 100% humidity with occasional light rain, but nevertheless very scenic and enjoyable.

Finally, back to the hotel to get my luggage and a walk to the station. I should have been about 5 minutes sooner—just missed a train. So I had to wait almost an hour for the next one. Then I made a mistake. I thought we were at the end—the time was about right, and everyone was getting off. So I jumped up and got off too, and then saw the train pulling out with a few people still on board. But there were lots of trains coming through. I saw one going to the right place. It was a local. I hadn't realized we had passed through so many stations on the way out and was getting worried that maybe the train wasn't really going where I thought, But after 5 or 6 stations we were finally there.

I then got the metro to Ueno, a Tokyo neighborhood not far from Asakusa, without any problem, but got lost trying to find my *ryokan*. Fortunately, three young women, noting my bewildered studying of my “map”, offered their help. After studying my map and talking amongst themselves for a few minutes they said I was heading in the wrong direction.[‡] I must turn around and after a while, at the intersection with the rice cracker shop, I should turn left. Afraid that I might miss the rice cracker shop, they offered to lead me to it.

As I realized a minute or two after they left me, they had brought me too far. I should have turned left one stop light earlier. They had misread the map, not noting that the label “rice cracker shop” had a long arrow attached to it which pointed to the intersection after the one where I should have turned. But that was easily corrected, and I quickly found my *ryokan*.

The room is a bit bigger than last night (6 *tatami*), but there is no private toilet. And, the *ryokan* does not serve breakfast. However, there is a refrigerator in the hall, which is handy for keeping food for breakfast.

I went out to find a restaurant. There are a lot of them in the neighborhood. I finally went for a cheap Chinese. Then I went to a convenience store to get a can of cold beer for tonight and a bun filled with nuts and (I think) plum paste and a plastic container of pineapple pieces for breakfast.

Sunday, 18 September. I woke up when it got light at 6, decided that it was too early and went back to sleep, until 8:30. I made some tea and ate my pineapple and bun.

[‡]I later discovered why I was heading in the wrong direction. My trusty Boy Scout compass, which I have used reliably for 60 years, somehow suffered a magnetic field reversal and now points South instead of North. And it was now dusk so that I couldn't use the sun to tell me which way was West.

Then I headed for the metro. On the way I ran into a little procession—it must be an important day for the local saint or whatever. (Photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/rRw4uzZvT883NttY7>.)

I took the metro across town and then a train to get to the Open Air Museum in Kawasaki, not far outside Tokyo. (Photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/XaLYrnagUhxU3hmu5>.) It was quite nice, with about 25 buildings mostly from Kanagawa Prefecture, which includes Kawasaki, but some from further away. Talking with a Japanese woman there I learned that the man who started the museum was inspired by the one in (she thought Norway, but since she also said it was the oldest one in the world it must have been Skansen in Stockholm).

Then back on the train to the Harajuku district of Tokyo and a visit to the Ota Memorial Museum of Art, which has a great collection of woodblock prints. They are displayed in traditional rooms, so it was shoes off, slippers on, and then again off to see the prints in a case on a raised *tatami*-covered platform. Very nice! I had never appreciated Japanese prints so much. The museum was only moderately crowded, but outside there were so many people it was difficult to walk. I guess that's normal in the shopping districts.

There was just enough time remaining to go to the nearby Meiji Jingu shrine, which is dedicated to Emperor Meiji and his consort Empress Shoken. (Photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/S2wGjWADKnEVwZGp7>.) It is in the middle of a “forest” of about 170,000 trees of 245 species in the heart of Tokyo. The shrine was founded in 1920, 8 years after the death of Emperor Meiji. From all over Japan (and overseas) people donated in total 100,000 trees and volunteers planted them to create the forest. Meiji is the emperor who was “restored” to power after the “opening” of Japan and the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate. He promoted friendship with other countries and the introduction of Western civilization and technology while preserving Japanese identity. However, after such a build-up the shrine itself was rather disappointing, although the forest was nice.

Finally, the metro to Shibuya. It was just one stop, and considering all the walking and stairs to reach the tracks, it would have been less effort to walk. But at least being in the metro I could follow the signs for the exit (exit 8 out of 14) for the statue of Hachiko, which was erected in 1936 to commemorate the dog Hachiko. The dog's master was professor Ueno, who lived in the neighborhood in the 1920s. Every afternoon Hachiko would come to the station to await his master's return. The professor died suddenly in 1925, but Hachiko continued to go to the station and wait every day until his own death 11 years later.

The square around Hachiko's statue was crowded, mostly with young people, apparently intending to have a good night out. It was now dark, and not being interested in a night out I took the metro back to my hotel.

Walking from the metro to the hotel I ran across a procession, larger than the one this morning. Apparently the morning one was for the kids, and now it was the adults' turn. They carried floats and there was a large float on a truck. This was all accompanied by music including a lot of drum beating. There was also a small booth along the way with three musicians, who played as the procession went past.

I ate in a Chinese, much better than last night, but also twice as expensive. The menu was not in English, there were no pictures, and no one spoke English. But a Japanese diner offered to help. She could translate a bit.

Monday, 19 September. Checking out took some time as their credit card system didn't want to accept my card. After several phone calls they managed to straighten it out. It seems that there are sometimes problems with non-Japanese cards. That is also true of ATMs—most ATMs only accept cards from a Japanese bank. I left my luggage at the *ryokan* and headed for the Tokyo National Museum. (Photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/4dYjWARnoPkNrcnU7>.)

Normally, the Tokyo National Museum has a very reduced price for seniors, ¥70 if you are 70 or older, but today being a national holiday (Respect for the Aged Day), it was free for the permanent collection. They were also having an exhibition of Esoteric Buddhism, which was not free. I decided to see the permanent collection and if there was time (and energy) over try the exhibition. There wasn't! The permanent collection was as much (actually more) than I could handle, even though it was all quite interesting and well displayed with things labeled in English as well as Japanese. But after about 6 hours I gave up, went back to the *ryokan*, picked up my luggage, and walked (half an hour or so) to my hotel near the University of Tokyo, which is where the first conference, WPCF, is.

This is a “business hotel”, *i.e.*, for businessmen. The room could be described as a shoebox with bath and toilet. There is a small desk, so I can work on my laptop, but the internet outlet is next to the bed. I have to be careful not to trip over the internet cable if I get up to go to the bathroom. There is a TV with a lot of free Japanese channels and two pay porn channels. So I won't be watching TV. But it is not too expensive and is only a 10 minute walk to the university.

There are lots of inexpensive restaurants in the neighborhood, as one might expect with the university there. I ate at a little restaurant: deep fat fried prawns (2) and large chunks of chicken (3), a large bowl of rice, a sort of curry soup, a bit of what I would call coleslaw, and a couple of pieces of pickled vegetable for ¥800. Not bad.

Tuesday, 20 September. This was the first day of WPCF. My talk was in the afternoon. In the evening there was a reception—sushi, deep fried things, *etc.*, beer, sake. There were several kinds of sake. I was told that the difference is a different brewer, different water, rice from a different area, with a different soil and climate, although the type of rice is usually the same. Sound familiar?

Wednesday, 21 September. This afternoon was the excursion to Kamakura, an hour or so from Tokyo. Kamakura was the power base of the ruling shogun from 1185 to 1333, which was also the time that Buddhism spread from the ruling class to the masses. Hence there is a high concentration of Buddhist temples and statues.

A typhoon had been working its way East along the coast of Japan, and it reached the Tokyo area this afternoon. The rain and wind really picked up just before we reached Kamakura, and at the first temple we were supposed to see, Hase-dera, we were informed that they had closed the temple 15 minutes earlier because of the typhoon.

We proceeded to the next temple, Kotoku-in, home of an 11.4 m tall, 850 ton, bronze statue of Amida Buddha. Cast in 1252, it was originally housed in a huge hall, but the hall was washed away by a tsunami in 1495. (Photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/gHw442Y7VZEnZVvTA>.) Since then the statue has stood out in the open, surviving all sorts of weather including today's typhoon. We all stumbled out of the bus and braved the rain and strong wind to enter the temple grounds and see the

Buddha. We were not alone. A Japanese school group, kids about 11 or 12, was there too, under the shelter of a porch of one of the temple buildings near the Buddha. After a quick look at the Buddha, we too headed for the porch. The kids quickly realized we were foreigners and one boy came towards me holding up his hand, and it was high-five. Quite a few others quickly followed his example. I braved the rain and wind to get a few more pictures, and soon we were ready to leave.

The tour guides made a few phone calls and found that everything else on the program, other temples and shrines, was closed. And the planned one hour hike was also out of the question. But, since the tour was supposed to end at 6, something had to be found to fill the time. So, they brought us back to Tokyo to visit a colossal Toyota showroom and a shopping center next to it. On the way, the wind and rain continued. On a long bridge over a bay, traffic slowed to a crawl. We could see trucks ahead of us swaying in the wind, and I assumed traffic was just being safe. But then we narrowed down to just one lane, and soon we saw the reason for that. A truck had been blown over on its side, blocking the left lane. (In Japan they drive on the left.) And a bit further there was another one, and another, and another—in total four. There was also a large tow truck to pull or push any fallen trucks into the left lane. After we were again back to using two lanes, the speed picked up a bit, but not too much. Not being particularly interested in the Toyota showroom or the shopping center, I didn't mind a longer time in the bus. The tour guide used the time to tell us some things about Japan and teach us a few words of Japanese.

Actually, the Toyota showroom turned out to be a bit more interesting than I expected. There were displays explaining how their various drive systems worked, from classic internal combustion to electric and various hybrid systems, in English as well as Japanese. And there were many models which I have never noticed in the West. There was also a simulator in which you could test drive various cars, including race cars, but it wasn't working—not sure why.

Finally back at our hotel, I went out to eat with a post-doc from Yale, who happened to be in the room next to mine. The weather had calmed down a bit, but to be safe we went to a little restaurant near the hotel—various pieces of raw fish on a bowl of rice.

Thursday, 22 September. I heard that they had closed part of the metro yesterday as a precaution in case of flooding, but that in fact it had been unnecessary. That caused a lot of rush-hour problems. But “better safe than sorry”.

The typhoon did have one good effect. It is considerably cooler, low 20s, which is nice.

Friday, 23 September. Today is a holiday in Japan, the autumn equinox. But for us a normal conference day, except that finding a place for lunch is a bit difficult, since the university and most of the restaurants on campus are closed. I find it interesting that in Japan the spring and autumn equinoxes are holidays, while in Scandinavia it is the summer solstice (and extending further south also the winter solstice, shifted to Christmas) which is important.

Tonight, the conference banquet: a buffet at a large restaurant called Daichi-no-Okurimono (“Presents from the Earth”) <http://www.diamond-dining.com/daichi/kondate.html> (only in Japanese, but some nice photos) with a specialty of Japanese home-style organic foods, about 60 different dishes, and Ume-shu, the latter being

typical Japanese liquors made from Japanese apricots (called Ume), as well as other similar liquors from other types of fruit. They have about 100 different kinds of Ume-shu. Of course there is also a good selection of sake and beer.

I only tried one of the liquors, which was made from plums. It was not strong, but not really liking it, stuck to beer. But I managed to try maybe three-quarters of the food dishes, almost all of which were very enjoyable.

Apparently following Japanese custom, the restaurant tables were booked for 7–10 p.m. So at 10 we had to leave!

Saturday, 24 September. The conference ended at noon. I walked to Ueno to buy a train ticket for tomorrow, walking through part of Ueno Park on the way. Then I visited the Shitamachi Museum with a few old buildings from the Edo period. (Photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/gnyB4MfuWA6HyQJo9>.) The purpose of the museum was to show how ordinary people, *i.e.*, not lords or samurai, lived. It contained a few houses, but was rather small. I was shown around by a volunteer, a retired man who spoke slow, but rather good, English. He had worked for Akzo-Nobel and had visited the Netherlands once.

To get an additional dose of Edo, I went next to the Fukagawa Edo Museum. (Photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/opZihdm5UAW2rg1e7>.) It is basically a large hall where a few streets of Edo have been recreated, in contrast to the real houses of the Shitamachi Museum. However, being much bigger, it succeeded better in showing what life in Edo was like for normal people. It would have been nice to have a similar museum for the samurai class. Here too there were volunteers to show you around. The elderly lady who showed me around explained things well in English, but it was pretty much a learned speech, for she did not understand most of my questions.

Sunday, 25 September. I took the metro to Tokyo Station. The train tickets, like the metro tickets, have a magnetic backing encoding all the information. You put the ticket in the reader, retrieve it, and the gate to the trains opens. After thus getting into the station area, I found the Shinkazan (“bullet train”) section and repeated the ticket process to enter there, passing both the train ticket and the special Shinkazan supplement ticket through the machine. The train fare Tokyo to Hiroshima is ¥11340 plus a Shinkazan supplement of ¥7210, or in total €183.54, not cheap for 916 km, but the Shinkazan part (Tokyo to Hiroshima, 894 km) only takes 253 min.

The trains stop exactly at a prescribed place along the platform, on which the entrances to the cars are marked. So you know ahead of time exactly where to stand to board your car. The Shinkazans seemed scheduled for one train per track every 20 minutes, Tokyo being an end station: First there are 5 minutes for passengers to get off. Then an army of cleaning women dressed in pink board and turn all the seats around, change the head rest covering, and pick up any litter. That takes 6 or 7 minutes, which leaves a few minutes of free time before boarding. Precisely 5 minutes before departure the doors open and passengers board. Needless to say, the train left precisely on time. After a short stop at a suburb station (still within the Tokyo fare, I guess) the conductor entered, bowed, said something in Japanese (introducing himself, I think), and then checked the tickets. When he had gotten to the end of the train, turned around and passed through my car again, he turned around and bowed again before leaving the car. In fact every time he entered or left the car he would bow to us, as would the lady who came through periodically selling food and drink.

At Hiroshima station, I left the Shinkazan area by the reverse process of entering. The machine swallowed the Shinkazan supplement ticket and returned the train ticket, since it also was for Hiroshima-Miyajimaguchi, which I then used to enter the normal section of the station. I found the right track and train. This was a very local train, hardly more than a metro, but it was not far. At Miyajimaguchi the ticket machine swallowed my ticket as I left.

It was a short walk, just five minutes, to my hotel. Again, it is a business hotel, though the room is slightly larger than the one in Tokyo.

The ferry terminal is right next to the hotel. I took the ferry (¥170, about 15 minutes) to Miyajima island. It was about a 15 minute walk from the ferry to the hotel where the conference was held, but I looked around, took some photos, and visited a temple on the way. (Photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/YUXkf19kZ17TPnUf6>.)

The conference hotel is a real *ryokan*, rooms with *tatami* floors, good meals included in the price. I would have liked to stay there. But they only have rooms large enough for 6 people, although, of course, fewer people can occupy them. The price is correspondingly high. So, for price reasons I chose the business hotel, even though it meant a 15 minute ferry plus a 15 minute walk twice a day.

There was some food and wine waiting for us as we registered for the conference, which meant I didn't need dinner. The wine, almost entirely French, had a variety of labels: mostly Bordeaux, but a bit of Bourgogne and some Midi.

Monday, 26 September. The conference begins at 8:30, which means getting up about 6:30 in order to have breakfast (included in the room price), take the ferry, and walk to the conference site. The breakfast was a buffet with some Japanese things and some Western things, including croissants. The ferry ride is actually rather pleasant. The island is pretty and seeing the temples on the island getting larger as we approach is nice, particularly the large *torii* of the sea entrance to Itsukushima shrine, which appears to float in the sea at high tide, but is seen to be firmly set in the ground when the tide is low. (Photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/nwsqUPL2jYj5fra7>.)

Lunch is included in the conference fee, which is normal at this conference. It encourages keeping together and discussion. It was in the form of a *bento* box, a take-away meal in a compartmentalized box. Office workers buy them for lunch; school kids eat from them in their class-rooms; travellers buy them on the train or at the station. You can also get them in convenience stores and super markets. They vary from very simple to very elaborate affairs, with corresponding prices. The ones we had were somewhere in between. The number of compartments varies, as does the content of the compartments. Each compartment contains something different, the whole making a pretty, tasteful (to both eyes and mouth), and varied meal. You can find just about anything in these boxes, and according to the guidebooks they vary from region to region with local specialties. You don't always know what you are eating, but there wasn't anything I really disliked.

Dinner (for those of us not staying at the *ryokan*) was at a nearby restaurant. It was a set meal—no choice—because we had to eat quickly in order to get back for the evening session. Evening sessions are not normal at this series of conferences. But, the organizers explained, submission of abstracts of talks had been so slow that they had accepted everything. Presumably people had been holding off as long as possible on deciding to come because of the nuclear accidents. Then at the last minute a large number of talks had been submitted. Not the best of organization, many of us

thought.

I left the evening session early in order to catch a ferry. In the evening the frequency of ferries decreases.

Tuesday, 27 September. Breakfast appears to be the same every morning. It will get pretty boring after a few days.

This afternoon was the excursion. First we all went to an *okonomiyaki* sauce company, where we were told how to make an *okonomiyaki* and then got to do it. The Hiroshima-style *okonomiyaki* is a sort of filled pancake. First a bit of batter, then lots of shredded cabbage, a couple of thin slices of pork or bacon, perhaps some dried fish, noodles, an egg, some seasoning, anything else you might think of, and finally another bit of batter. Turning it is a bit of a problem, since it is quite thick, although the cabbage shrinks a lot as it cooks. When done, it is topped with some *okonomiyaki* sauce, of which there are different varieties. In the Osaka-style *okonomiyaki* the ingredients are mixed together first rather than layered.

Then we got to eat our creations. I thought it was pretty good. Some people ended up with rather thin *okonomiyaki*, having not included all the ingredients (the dried fish and the spices smelled “funny”) and having not put in enough cabbage.

All in all it was sort of fun, except that the kitchen could only handle about a third of us at a time. So it was all rather time consuming

Then we divided into two groups, those who wanted to go to the Atomic Bomb Dome and Peace Memorial Museum and those who preferred the Japanese Garden Shukkeien, a traditional Japanese style garden from the 17th century. I chose the garden. (Photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/JADQwEEJfriibMok7>.) Shukkeien can be translated as “shrunken-scenery garden”, which is a good description of the garden. Valleys, mountains, and forests are represented in miniature in the garden’s landscapes. Through carefully cultivated land and vegetation, the garden mimics a variety of natural formations and scenic views. I thought it quite well done. The only drawback, as with many such gardens in the middle of a city, is the sky scrapers around it.

After the excursion, those of us on the Board of Elders, the group of people who have previously organized the conference which acts as the governing board of the conference series, had to go back to the island for a meeting, the purpose of which is to evaluate this year’s meeting and make a final decision on where next year’s meeting will be and provisionally for subsequent meetings. It was unfortunate that the organizers scheduled the meeting so early in the conference. The meeting was in one of the fancier hotels of the island and started with a meal.

We sat in a U-shaped formation in low chairs (fortunately not on the floor) and were served by two ladies in traditional garments. The food was delicious, although I don’t know what half of it was. I sat next to a Brazilian of Japanese descent who is about the same age as I am. He also did not know what many of the dishes were, but he could ask the serving woman. After she explained, he still was not always sure. To drink we had beer and French wine.

The meal took quite a long time. The organizers explained the tsunami and nuclear accident related problems they had had, but we did not really have time to discuss very much, because we had to have a presentation by next year’s aspirant organizers (which we approved) and be done before the last ferry left. We just barely made the ferry.

Wednesday, 28 September. Another long day. (Photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/U3nEGqzrZaL3gvnD6>.) At lunch time I took a short walk in the woods next to the *ryokan*. I skipped most of the evening session.

Thursday, 29 September. Before going to the island, I stopped by the station to buy a ticket to go to Kurashiki tomorrow. The man at the counter did not speak much English, but it was sufficient since I already knew which train I wanted.

I skipped the afternoon session to visit a temple and climb a mountain. (Photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/C24LbK8cupExutJA6>.)

The Daisho-in temple is slightly out of town and next to one of the paths up Mount Misen. It has a number of buildings and Buddhist statues.

Calling it a path up the mountain is a bit of a misnomer, since it consists mostly of steps carved into the stone. Mount Misen is the tallest mountain on Miyajima, 525 m. This doesn't sound so high, but one starts climbing at sea level. It is pretty exhausting. There are, however, some nice views along the way. The guide book said it takes about 1½ hours, and I think I did it in about that. At the top there is a two story high observation deck giving nice views of the island and surrounding area.

I descended by a different path, somewhat longer, which ended right next to the conference site. It too was mostly steps, but contained some real path in the forest. Nevertheless, about three quarters of the way down my legs had just about had it and were not doing what I was telling them to do. The muscles used in stair climbing and descending were not working right on such uneven steps. If I had had my walking stick to take some of my weight off these muscles it would have been OK. It was as though I was constantly misjudging the vertical distance to the next step. I had to rest a bit and proceed very slowly. But eventually I made it, completely covered in sweat.

The sweat left lots of salt stains on my shirt. And tonight was the conference banquet, with no chance for a shower and clean shirt before.

We were taken by hired boats across to a large, fancy hotel. There we had a mini-concert by five people in traditional costume playing traditional instruments. They were joined for a couple of the pieces by one of the organizers of the conference, whose hobby is the panflute. He learned to play it in Switzerland when he was at CERN for a year. Later he discovered that the ancient Japanese had a similar instrument, and he had one made for himself. He said it was pretty expensive and that his wife did not approve. I just found on you-tube someone (not him) playing such an instrument <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PgiW71c1Fo>.

Then we moved out onto the terrace. Fortunately the clouds above us only let a few drops loose during the evening. There were several long rows of tables, each for four people with a gas barbecue in the middle and several plates with fish, shell fish, meat, sausage, vegetables, *etc.* to grill yourself. There was far more than we could eat. And there was a well-stocked bar (beer, sake, whisky, *etc.*), far more than we could drink.

Promptly at 10 they shut the bar, and we were told the boats and a bus were waiting to take people back to island or to the business hotel. Another guy and I were apparently too late for the bus, since we had first made a trip to the toilet. So we had to walk, but it only took about a 10 minutes.

Friday, 30 September. The conference ended at noon. After lunch I had time for a brief visit to the small History and Folklore Museum on life on Miyajima in earlier times. It is in a 19th century mansion and contains household utensils and furniture as well as some artworks.

Then it was back to my hotel to pick up my luggage, and to the train station. First the little local to Hiroshima, then a Shinkazan to Fukuyama where I changed to an ordinary train for the rest of the trip. The Shinkazan part was the shortest of the three, only 24 minutes. I could have stayed on the Shinkazan to Okayama and then take an ordinary train back, but it would only have saved me 5 minutes and would have cost an extra ¥1770, because the total distance would be 199 instead of 167 km.

It was a 20 minute or so walk from the station to my hotel in the center of the old historic section of Kurashiki. I had booked the hotel through an internet hotel booking site, the only one of the trip I did that way. I had booked all the others myself directly on the hotel's web site or by e-mail, except for the one in Miyajimaguchi, which ISMD had booked for me. I had also looked at the web site of this hotel, but its own prices were higher than the internet booking site. It would have been a nice enough hotel, but there was trouble checking in—they couldn't find my reservation. After 10 minutes or so they found it. But then the room, which was comparable in size and facilities to the business hotels I had been staying at, reeked of tobacco smoke. I don't think I have ever had a room so bad. I debated complaining and demanding another room, but considering the problems I had already had, I decided that it would probably take a lot of time with not too high a chance of success.

I went out to look around, but by this time it was nearly dark. By carefully comparing the characters on the sign with those in the guidebooks, I decided the restaurant I had found really was the right one. It specialized in home made noodles. I had some raw fish and a big bowl of noodles in broth with a few other ingredients including some mushrooms. The next day I saw the cook making noodles, which he did in a room with a big window at the front of the restaurant, which reminded me of some pizza restaurants.

You may have noticed I have not mentioned having a beer or wine in any of the restaurants. That is because I didn't. It was quite expensive, usually around ¥450, and they always gave you either water (often with ice) or tea. I would usually go to a convenience store *e.g.*, 7-Eleven, Lawson's, or Family Mart afterwards to buy a can of beer and if necessary something for breakfast.

For some reason the large convenience store chains usually have English names—I don't know whether they are all Japanese subsidiaries of Western chains, or some are home-grown. Well, I just answered that question myself. Thanks, Wikipedia. Lawson's was originally a chain of convenience stores, mainly in Ohio, which went through being bought and renamed a number of times by large firms such as Sara Lee. It started in Japan as a joint enterprise with a Japanese firm, but has since become completely Japanese owned. Of course, 7-Eleven is a Japanese subsidiary of the U. S. firm, any American would think. Wrong! Just the opposite. It started in Dallas, true, but in the 1980s it ran into financial problems and was rescued by a Japanese company. Family Mart seems to be home-grown Japanese, probably in imitation of the others. It has stores in other countries too, including the U. S., where it is known as Famima.

Saturday, 1 October. I woke up early, about 6, had tea and a roll I had bought the night before in my room. Then I went out to take pictures before the crowds descended. (Photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/wJv1738edqqXgwiki7>.) Kurashiki was an important warehousing and market town in the feudal era. The historic area has many old buildings, in particular a group of warehouses along a picturesque canal and a couple of streets. Later the town became an important textile center. My hotel, along with some restaurants and shops, is in an old red-brick factory building (dating from 1889). The streets within a couple of blocks of the canal remain in the old style and are very pleasant to stroll along. Many of the buildings now are restaurants and souvenir stores, but if you don't look too closely at what's displayed in the windows, and if you can ignore all the tourists (easier at night or in the early morning), you can imagine you are back one or two centuries in time.

I had finished seeing the historic district, except for the musea, by 9, and went back to the hotel to check out. I left my luggage there and proceeded to a couple of musea. First was the Ohara Art Museum with mostly Western art amassed by the local textile millionaire Ohara Magosaburo (1880–1943). It includes various Western impressionists, *e.g.*, one of Monet's water-lilies, and several Japanese who either painted in Europe or were heavily influenced by the impressionists. There is also a separate building with contemporary Japanese art—for me a mixed bag, like most contemporary art museums—and a small building with old Japanese and Chinese artifacts.

I also visited the Kurashiki Museum of Folk-craft. It was similar in some ways to the museum on Miyajima. It is in a complex of old warehouses dating from the 18th century and contains exhibits of glassware, textile, and furniture from the period.

Since it was included in the ticket to the Ohara Art Museum, I stopped in at the Kojima Torajiro Memorial Hall. He (1881–1929) was a European style painter, who helped Ohara build his collection. This Hall contains some of his works.

Finally, I picked up my luggage, went to the station, and got the train for Kyoto. First a local to Okayama, and then the Shinkazan to arrive in Kyoto at 2:14. The Shinkazan part took 60 min for 219 km.

I found my *ryokan*, about a 10 minute walk from the station (once you find your way out of the station). Their map was not too clear, and I spent 15 minutes or so finding the right street. So it was nearly 3 when I got there and I was able to check in. It is a *tatami* room, with a shower and bath across the hall, but a toilet attached to the room. And there is a refrigerator in the hall for common use. Fine for three nights.

Nearby are two large temples, both of the Jodo-Shinshu sect. The Higashi Hongan-ji was built as a competitor to the earlier Nishi Hongan-ji after some disagreement around 1600, which was seized upon by Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu to split the powerful Hongan-ji. I had visited Higashi Hongan-ji when I was here in 2000, but had not seen much of the other one then because (a) all five of its interesting buildings were under scaffolding and (b) it was raining. (Photos of Hongan-ji at <https://goo.gl/photos/ShXUmzNc4wuqZ5mUA>.) This time one of the large halls had attached to its front a large enclosed, temporary structure containing a large number of seats. Apparently there were going to be, or had been, some mass services. From what I could make out from the various posters, it is to celebrate Shiran Shonin's 750th memorial service. He was apparently the founder of this particular brand of Buddhism, and this temple was originally built in 1272 in the Higashiyama mountains by his daughter, who was

a priestess. The temple complex was moved to Kyoto in 1591.

The two main halls, open at the front, have a large *tatami* floored area, the full width of the building, where you can kneel or bow and do your thing. Beyond that area, *i.e.*, along the back wall, are smaller areas which can be shut off from the main area by sliding screens, which are nicely decorated. In these areas are statues of Buddha and other Buddhist decorations. When I was there two of the three were closed, and a monk shut the third one as I watched. Presumably there is some schedule. There are supposed to be a number of National Treasures here, but they are rarely or never shone. More interesting were a couple of smaller buildings, in particular the Karamon gate, which is highly ornate.

I ate at one of the many restaurants in the department store (11th floor) next to (part of?) the station—a Chinese, O.K., with a view out over Kyoto.

Sunday, 2 October. First I went to Nijo Castle (photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/7ZccMb8QWjrgaUVZ6>). There are no grand fortifications; it is more of a palace than a castle. It was built by Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu to show off his power and riches and to provide a place where, on his visits from Edo, he could receive the Emperor. The walls and doors are beautifully painted with birds, animals, landscapes. Some of the rooms have costumed dummies to illustrate the use of the room. In the *Ohiroma Ichi-no-ma* (first grand chamber) the shogun sits on a dais at one end of the room. The *daimyo* (feudal lords) kneel, bowing, at the other. In between, on one side, sit a pair of the shogun's ministers. Unseen, behind a sliding panel at the shogun's end of the room, wait the shogun's body guards. High-tech security devices, in the form of nightingale floors warned in case of intruders. These floorboards were designed such that when walked upon, the nails rubbed against a jacket or clamp making a squeaking noise, not unlike that of the *uguisu* or Japanese Bush Warbler, which is something like a nightingale. There are also extensive gardens around the palace.

I then took the metro again to get within walking distance of Chion-in temple. (Photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/4k8sGBVNgQ1q2JcQ7>.) This temple has a huge Sanmon gate, the largest in Japan. On the side of a hill, you have to do some climbing to see all the buildings. There is a huge bell, which is rung 108 times on New Year's eve, once for each sin Man is prone to commit. This is apparently a big thing, since it is broadcast on TV—ringing in the new year, Japanese style. Chion-in is the headquarters of the Jodo sect and occupies the site where Honen, the sect's founder, started to preach in 1175. Many of the buildings burned down in 1633, but were entirely and lavishly rebuilt by the third Tokugawa Shogun Iemitsu, the one who built the mausoleum for his grandfather at Nikko. Consequently, the roof beams are all carved with the family crest of the Tokugawa family: three hollyhock leaves, and floors have a construction similar to the nightingale floors, since the shogun sometimes stayed at the temple.

At Chion-in, as at Nishi Hongan-ji, there was some kind of festival: lots of signs and huge crowds. In the parking area in front of the temple bus loads of Japanese arrived, queued up, and patiently awaited their turn to be lead through.

From there it was a short walk to Yasaka-jinja shrine where I was lucky enough to catch a wedding procession and another bridal pair having lots of pictures taken. (Photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/RALAWEB9J1PA2Pxo8>.)

Then a walk through the Gion district, the geisha district, much fixed up compared to what I remember from 11 years ago. While I did not see any geisha, I happened

on a young woman in traditional costume and a camera crew, making shots of Gion for a TV program.

I planned on going to the Kyoto National Museum, but found it was closed. They are constructing a new building, and for some reason have closed the old one. So I wandered back to the station area and bought my ticket for the train to Kansai airport Tuesday morning, ¥3490.

I then passed some time in department stores, discovering a large super market in one of them, and decided on buying food, some dumplings and some sushi, and beer to eat in my room—not bad.

Halloween is coming—little Jack-o-lantern candies are in the stores, and there is some Halloween advertising—any excuse for a party or something to sell.

Monday, 3 October. I was up and out by 7:30, (photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/KSZMBmsQDyqLDzyC9>) walking to Kiyoinizu-dera Temple, and neighboring Jishu-jinja shrine. I had been there before (in 2000), but it is a temple and shrine that I like. The shrine is lots of fun. There were many groups of school children being shown around. The guides explained all of the ways to obtain good luck: rubbing a statue a certain way, *etc.* You could also purchase wooden cards with wishes, *e.g.*, for a good mark on an exam or for success in love, which you hung on a board. They would be collected each day by a priest.

The temple is famous for the large platform in front of the main hall, which extends out over the side of the steep hill. There is a sacred fountain from which one should drink.

Next I walked along the old streets with nice houses towards Maruyama Park. (Photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/XH5NinUytAMtUebp6>.) On the way I passed, but did not visit, Ryozen Kannon with its 24 m high concrete Buddha, which commemorates Japanese soldiers who died in World War II. However, I did visit Kodai-ji, a quiet temple where a wedding was taking place in one of the main buildings. But, in contrast to the wedding yesterday, photos were not allowed.

I proceeded on to the park and Yasaka-jinja shrine—no wedding today. (Photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/ehfau2Agynz1XELw6>.) Exiting the park, I toured Shinbashi, just north of Gion, and then walked further north to Heien Shrine. This is a ‘new’ shrine, built in 1895, the 1100th anniversary of the founding of Kyoto. It was meant to boost Kyoto’s morale and economy, both rather low after Tokyo was made the capital in 1868. It’s main interest is that it is a replica of the main administration building of the Heian capital. It also deifies two of Japan’s emperors: Kanmu, 50th emperor of Japan, who founded Heian-kyo in 794; and Komei, 121st emperor, who ruled from 1831 to 1866. It has extensive gardens, which are famous for weeping cherry trees in spring, irises and water lilies in summer, and coloring maple leaves in fall. Not being one of these seasons, and given the entry price, I decided to skip it and head for the “Philosopher’s Walk”, a walk along a canal. I had done this last time, but it is a pleasant walk. It begins with what must be a very exclusive neighborhood with large, beautiful houses. By the end it is more normal. (Photos at <https://goo.gl/photos/CUSpvkk7ueEoxEgq9>.)

The Ginkaku-ji temple, known as the Silver Pavilion, is near the end of the Philosopher’s walk. I had been there before, but went again. Originally (1482) the pavilion was built as a retirement villa for Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimasa, who intended to coat the building with silver in imitation of the Golden Pavilion built by his grandfather.

But construction took longer than expected, being halted during the Onin War, and he died before the silver was applied. It remains, however, an elegant wooden structure.

After the shogun's death, it became a zen temple. The official name is Jisho-ji or the "Temple of Shining Mercy". The temple is today associated with the Shokoku-ji branch of Rinzaï Zen. It is famous for its garden. There is a formal sand garden with the sand raked in the shape of waves and with a mound shaped to resemble Mount Fuji, as well as a large garden and forest area.

It's being 5, and everything closed, I took a bus back to Kyoto station and had dinner at a Chinese. The dishes were described as hot on the menu, but were not. I could hardly tell there was chili pepper in it—must be adapted to Japanese taste.

Tuesday, 4 October. I had to get up early. The alarm went off at 5:15, I ate a roll and drank a cup of tea. Then I walked to the station. Turns out I was nearly 30 minutes early. I could have slept longer, but probably good to be safe. I had been thinking of getting a bottle of Japanese single malt at the tax-free, but refrained when I saw the prices. Even at the Japanese tax-free, Scotch single malts were cheaper than Japanese ones.

The 12-hour flight seemed long, particularly with a full plane, but it was on time. I was home by 6.