

Project “X” Tours Japan Day by Day: DAY 11

19 MAY



Breakfast at hotel. Departure by bus over Shikoku (third of the four main islands of Japan) to catch the ferryboat to Nu-shima Island to observe the naturally occurring tidal whirlpools (vortices) in the Naruto Strait. Lunch on Nu-shima. Return to Shikoku for dinner and overnight at Hotel Renaissance Resort, Naruto. Dance at hotel.



Jamila Savoy at
the
Renaissssance
Resort, Naruto.
PHOTO: Jim
Elliott

NU-SHIMA ISLAND



Tour ship. PHOTO: Rob Roy



Tour members aboard ship. PHOTO:
Rob Roy



Yukinori Matsushita shipboard.
PHOTO: Rob Roy



Koshu Kawahara and others in the

stern of the ship. PHOTO: Jim Elliott

"We have a box lunch at the place, then take a large vessel out into the harbor to observe the tidal whirlpools (vortexes) in the Naruto Strait. It is a beautiful and sunny boat ride, with everyone laughing and taking pictures. An afternoon on the water seems to be exactly what was called for ... especially for me ... to wind down from the activities of the previous day. . . .

"After the boat ride, we take a hike around the island, up and over the hills in a circle, observing the sites: ocean, forests, paths, small shrines here and there, and the village itself."

—Journal entry by Gary Buchanan



On the hiking trail on Nu-shima Island. PHOTO: Ron Theriault



Waterfront shrine on Nu-shima Island. PHOTO: Ron Theriault



Outside Gokuraku-ji Temple in Naruto City. PHOTO: Sean Savoy

After dinner on this evening there is a performance of Japanese dance: "Awa odori," the Dance of Fools. Awa Odori is the largest dance festival in Japan. The heart of the tradition lies about ten miles away in Tokushima City and is usually held August 12-15.



Dance performance at Renaissance Resort, Naruto. PHOTO: Jim Elliott



Jim and Karen Elliott made an evening appearance in stylish hotel-supplied bath robes at Hotel Naruto. Many Japanese guests were wearing similar robes all over the hotel as per usual in a resort.
PHOTO: Ron Theriault

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Project “X” Tours Japan Day by Day: DAY 10

18 MAY



Golden Pavilion. PHOTO: Sean Savoy

Breakfast at hotel. Today is a day at leisure to explore Kyoto. Reservations are needed to visit the Kyoto Imperial Palace (Kyoto Gosho). There may be an opportunity to see the famous geisha and their apprentices in the various districts of old Kyoto. Free for lunch. In the evening, attend Sonatherapy seminar on Wave Front Bioresonance in Osaka. Rev. Gary Buchanan delivers lecture; Rev. Yukinori Matsushita interprets for Japanese attendees. All participants receive certificates. Free for dinner. Overnight at Hotel Keihan Kyoto.



Kazu Kakuichi talks privately with Dr. Buchanan about Sonatherapy before the lecture. PHOTO: Sean Savoy

"We breakfast at the hotel, then later Yuki and I meet with Kazu Kakuichi, an old friend going back two years – one who has visited us at the Healing Center at Steamboat."

–Journal entry by Gary Buchanan

KYOTO IMPERIAL PALACE



Imperial Palace, Kyoto. PHOTO: Jim Elliott

Kyoto Imperial Palace (Kyoto Gosho) is an imperial palace of Japan, although the emperor of Japan has not been in residence there since 1869. The palace is situated in a rectangular enclosure that contains gardens and numerous imperial halls and residences. The palace has been destroyed and rebuilt eight times; the version currently standing was completed in

1855 and attempts to reproduce the original Heian Period architecture.



Garden at the old Imperial Palace
in Kyoto. PHOTO: Ron Theriault

SIGHTSEEING IN KYOTO

Notable sites in Kyoto are the canal-lined older streets, the Arashiyama District with its picturesque mountain lake, the Gion and Pontocho geisha quarters, and the Philosophers Walk, a cherry tree-lined pedestrian path that passes many temples and shrines and takes about thirty minutes to complete.

The Gion District, famous for the preservation of forms of traditional architecture and entertainment, remains dotted with old-style Japanese townhouses and teahouses where the patrons of Gion—from the samurai of old to modern-day businessmen—have been entertained by geisha in an exclusive manner for centuries.

[Read more about Kyoto and visit a picture gallery](#) on

Wikipedia.



Bullet train in Kyoto Station.
PHOTO: Jim Elliott

Visit [Jim Elliott's public gallery of Kyoto Station photos](#).

SONATHERAPY SEMINAR ON WAVE FRONT BIORESONANCE



Audience filling the lecture room
in Kyoto. PHOTO: Jim Elliott

"Gradually people begin to fill the room, and at around 7:00 PM we begin the presentation to a packed house. Yuki is translating for me, Jim Elliott takes photos, and we record the entire lecture. I sign copies of SONA, and the lecture appears to be a success, in terms of attendance, reception, and in helping pay for my trip to Japan."

—Journal entry by Gary Buchanan



Gary Buchanan lecturing in Kyoto.
PHOTO: Jim Elliott



Yukinori
Matsushita
translates as
Gary Buchanan
delivers lecture.
PHOTO: Jim
Elliott

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Project “X” Tours Japan Day by Day: DAY 9

17 MAY



Miyuki walking in the rain outside
Ginkakuji Temple. PHOTO: Gary
Buchanan

Breakfast at the hotel, facing the Pacific Ocean. Then, departure by bus from Ise to Kyoto at the center of the island of Honshu. Kyoto was Japan's capital and imperial residence from 794 to 1868 C.E. Sightseeing in Kyoto including Ginkakuji Temple. Rain! After lunch, visit the Temple of the Golden Pavilion (Rokuon-ji-kinkaku) and the Ryoan-ji Temple. Free for dinner. Overnight at Hotel Keihan Kyoto.



Ginkakuji Temple forest overlooking the city of Kyoto.
PHOTO: Gary Buchanan

Near the end of the eighth century, when the influence of Buddhist priests on the imperial government became too great, the emperor Kammu built a new capital—Heian-kyo (“tranquility and peace capital”)—designed as a scaled replica of the then Tang dynasty ‘s capital of Chang-an (present-day Xian) in China. The new city grew into Kyoto, which remained the capital of Japan until Tokyo was chosen in 1868.

The numerous historic monuments of ancient Kyoto are listed by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites. With its 1,600 Buddhist

temples and 400 Shinto shrines, as well as palaces, gardens, and architecture intact, it is one of the best-preserved cities in Japan and holds some of the most famous temples in Japan.



Kobo Daishi

Kyoto was another place that was significant in the life of Kobo Daishi. Kyoto was where Kobo Daishi first studied meditation as a youth before he left for China in 804; and it is where he returned two years later and received permission from the emperor to teach. In Kyoto, Kobo Daishi established the first tuition-free university for commoners and taught for ten years, moving from temple to temple around the capital until he was granted Mount Koya-san to create a spiritual training center. At the Imperial Palace in Kyoto, shortly before his death in 835, Kobo Daishi performed a week-long service for the eternal peace of Japan.

GINKAKUJI TEMPLE



Ginkakuji Temple Gardens entrance.
PHOTO: Sean Savoy



Ginkakuji Temple Gardens.



Ginkakuji Temple Gardens. PHOTO:
Rob Roy



Ginkakuji Temple Gardens.



Ginkakuji Temple Gardens. PHOTO:
Sean Savoy



Ginkakuji Temple forest. PHOTO:
Sean Savoy

Read about the Temple of the Silver Pavilion at [Ginkakuji Temple](#) in Wikipedia.



Map of Ginkakuji Temple Complex. PHOTO: Rob Roy

TEMPLE OF THE GOLDEN PAVILION



Temple of the Golden Pavilion. PHOTO: Sonya Savoy

The Temple of the Golden Pavilion (*Rokuon-ji-kinkaku*) is a Zen Buddhist temple and one of the most popular buildings in Japan. Each of its three floors is styled on a different architectural heritage period. Its garden is an excellent example of Muromachi Period garden design and is one of 17 World Cultural Heritage Sites in Japan.

Read more about the Temple of the Golden Pavilion at [Kinkakuji-ji](#) in Wikipedia.

TO-JI TEMPLE



Five-story pagoda of To-ji.



Toji Temple Main Hall.

In Toji Temple are housed fifteen gold statues that Kobo Daishi brought back from China.

Read about [Toji Temple](#) in Wikipedia.

RYOAN-JI TEMPLE



Tour members at the Ryoan-ji Temple Garden. PHOTO: Ron Theriault

Read about [Ryoan-ji](#) in Wikipedia.

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Project “X” Tours Japan Day by Day: DAY 8

16 MAY

Breakfast at hotel. Depart by bus for Ise, Mie Prefecture, on the Shima Peninsula, home to the Ise Grand Shrine (Ise-jingu), Japan’s most sacred Shinto shrine. Lunch and more sightseeing in Ise. Dinner and overnight at Hotel Ijika-so on the sea.



View from the Hotel Ijika-So.
PHOTO: Ron Theriault

RADIATION PROTOCOL POSTED ON YOUTUBE

After breakfast on May 16, Gary Buchanan posts his radiation protocol on YouTube. Link to the [YouTube Radiation Protocol video](#).

ISE GRAND SHRINE



Vendor on the old approach to Ise
Inner Shrine. PHOTO: Sonya Savoy

"We boarded the bus at 9:00 AM on our way to the Ise Shrine.

"We visited two shrines at Ise, the newer and the older. The older is being rebuilt, as is the custom, every twenty years.

"There is an entire town built around the sanctuary – lots of shops – and where our restaurant for lunch is located.

"Many of us notice and photograph rainbow rings around the

sun."

—Journal entry by Gary Buchanan

Mythology is as important to the Japanese people as it was to the early Greeks. The difference is that the descendants of the gods no longer reign as kings in Greece; in Japan, the descendants of the *kami* (spirits) remain the ancestors of many ancient clans, including the imperial family. Ise is home to Ise Grand Shrine (*Ise-jingu*), the most sacred Shinto shrine in Japan. The history of the city is linked to that of the Ise Grand Shrine. Ise has long been a popular destination for travelers. The settlements that grew around both the Inner and the Outer Shrine developed into small villages, and these grew into the present city of Ise.

Ise Grand Shrine has two main parts, the Inner Shrine and the Outer Shrine. They are about three miles apart and are joined by a pilgrimage road. Both parts of the main sanctuary are situated in two hundred acres of "divine forest" that has been untouched since the time the shrines were founded nearly two thousand years ago. The forest is now a national park.

The imperial Sacred Mirror (*Yata no Kagami*), one of the Three Sacred Treasures of Japan, is said to be housed within the grounds of the shrine.

The shrine, rebuilt every twenty years with fresh lumber, is in its 61st reconstruction, which indicates that this tradition has been carried out for the past 1,220 years. It is customary for pilgrims to visit the Outer Shrine before following the pilgrimage route to the Inner Shrine. Even the emperor follows this custom.

The Outer Shrine, founded about 1,500 years ago, is dedicated to Toyouke-Omikama, the goddess of life's basic needs, and is

surrounded by beautiful grounds and walking paths.

The Inner Shrine, founded about 2,000 years ago, is dedicated to Amaterasu-Omikami, the sun goddess, the gentle harmonizing presence who blesses everyone indiscriminately with serene light.



Ise Grand Shrine. PHOTO: Sean Savoy

Cultural facilities—a history museum, fine art museum, agricultural museum, and library—are housed at the top of Mount Kurata, a small hill at the midpoint of the pilgrimage road between the Outer Shrine and the Inner Shrine. Outside the grounds of the shrine are numerous historical-looking merchant buildings and eateries. The area hosts festivals of nature of all kinds throughout the year and is very popular with Japanese tourists.

[Tour Ise Grand Shrine](#) on the official web site .

SIGHTSEEING IN ISE



Scene from the seaside town of Futamigaura near the Married Rocks. PHOTO: Sean Savoy



The group stops by the Married Rocks in the sea, a traditional Japanese site. PHOTO: Rob Roy

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Project “X” Tours Japan Day by Day: DAY 7

15 MAY



Sunrise at Mount Koya. PHOTO:
Keiko Inoue

Sunrise at Mount Koya. Attend Buddhist service and breakfast at the temple. Then, on to visit temples at the old Japanese capital city of Nara, including Tachibana Temple where Prince Shotoku was said to be born in a manger like Jesus, and Todai-ji Temple. After lunch, continue on to visit Heijo-kyo or the “citadel of peace.” Dinner and overnight at Hotel Sun Route Nara.

SUNRISE SERVICE

"We are up at 3:30 AM for departure by bus from the temple to a spot on Mt. Koya for a Sunday Divine Sunrise Service. Gene, Sean, Yuki, and I wear collars and vestments."



Sunrise Divine Service on Mt. Koya. PHOTO: Rob Roy

"Yuki and his team have found a select site, a construction yard on the side of Mt. Koya facing the eastern horizon. It is actually quite appropriate, as it brings to mind our construction yard at Red Rock Consecrated Sanctuary back home."

"At the site we set up a table for Gene, Sean, and Yuki to officiate. I set up just behind them on a large, flat, wooden table top – sitting on a plank – and playing the small piano keyboard."



PHOTO: Sean Savoy

"We have a slightly altered Divine Service, including prayers by Yuki in Japanese, and the singing of 'Grant Life Unto Me' in Nihon by our Japanese Community members.

"Shortly after 5:00 AM the sun makes its way up through the trees on the horizon.



Sunrise on Mt. Koya. PHOTO: Sean Savoy

"It is a soft and comforting sun, quite special.

"We then intone the "AOUMENIMs" and set the disk in motion.



PHOTO: Sean Savoy

“After the concluding prayers I play ‘Meditation II,’ and we remove ourselves to the side for unvesting. We quickly disassemble the set-up for return to the temple.

“At 6:30 AM we attend a half-hour Buddhist service in the temple.”

–Journal entry by Gary Buchanan



Sekisho-in Temple garden. PHOTO:
Keiko Inoue

NARA AND TACHIBANA TEMPLE

In the prefecture of Nara, covered by mountains and forests, the group visits Asuka National Historic Park. Here there are located numerous ancient temples of the Nara Period of Japan (710-794), the time when the royal court of Nara established relations with Sui and then Tang China.

Even today strict rules govern construction in this historic town.



Sean Savoy in Nara on
replica of diplomatic ship
used for envoys to Tang
China. PHOTO: Rob Roy

For a photo gallery of the ancient temples of Asuka National Historic Park, [visit the official web site](#).

For information on Nara prefecture and maps of its location, [read this article on Nara Prefecture in Wikipedia](#).



The unique five-storied pagoda is the tallest wooden tower in Japan.
PHOTO: Ron Theriault

The entire city of Nara is a protected preserve for deer. Deer are everywhere, roaming the streets, filling the parks, and children and tourists are everywhere petting and feeding them.



Deer being fed by tour members.
PHOTO: Jim Elliott

Among the many temples located in this area is Tachibana Temple, where Prince Shotoku (574-622 CE) was said to have been born in a manger like Jesus; one of seven major temples built by Shotoku.



Tachibana Temple. PHOTO: Ron Theriault



Tachibana Temple interior shrine.

PHOTO: Ron Theriault



Tour member paying respects at a shrine. PHOTO: Ron Theriault

HEIJO-KYO



Building from the Nara Period in Heijo-Kyo. PHOTO: Rob Roy



Interior of the building pictured above showing sunburst figure.
PHOTO: Rob Roy



Exterior view of Todai-ji Temple in Nara. PHOTO: Jim Elliott



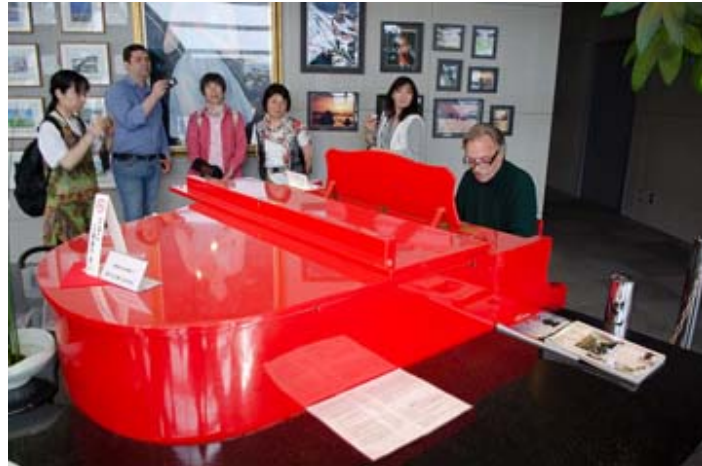
Todai-ji Temple interior with seated Buddha. PHOTO: Ron Theriault

"Heijo-Kyo, the 'Citadel of Peace,' is amazingly BIG! It is the largest wooden building in the world – with tens of thousands of visitors daily. The largest statue of Buddha in the world is inside."

–Journal entry by Gary Buchanan



Sun over Heijo-Kyo. PHOTO: Sean Savoy



Gary at the piano in the Pearl Falco shop in Nara. PHOTO: Jim Elliott

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Project “X” Tours Japan Day by Day: DAY 6

14 MAY



Sonya Savoy and Hiroyo Ueno in front of Sekisho-in Temple. PHOTO: Keiko Inoue

Breakfast at hotel. Depart by bus for Koya-san, the headquarters of the Shingon sect of Japanese Buddhism, founded by Kobo Daishi (Kukai) in 816 CE. The Shingon teachings, or mikkyo (secret teachings), have their origin in the esoteric traditions of India and China. Lunch on the way to Mount Koya. Special arrangements have been made for our stay at the Sekisho-in Temple. Dinner and lecture on the temple grounds by Kurt Kubli Genso, an “ambassador” of the hospitality organization Yokoso! Japan, who facilitates the reception of foreign visitors to the Koya sanctuary. Overnight at the temple monastery.

KOYA-SAN

“After breakfast at the hotel, we bus off to Koya-san, headquarters of the Shingon sect of Japanese Buddhism, founded by Kobo Daishi Kukai in 816 CE.

"We lunch at a nice restaurant along the way – with stops for toilet and store visits, as well.

"We arrive in early afternoon and are met by an English-speaking (Swiss) priest, Kurt Kubli-Genso.

"Following depositing our luggage in rooms at the Sekisho-in Temple monastery, we spend the afternoon touring all the shrines – and the HUGE cemetery in Koya-san.

–Journal entry by Gary Buchanan

Sacred sites and pilgrimage routes in the mountain range of the Kii Peninsula extend for miles and have been recognized by UNESCO as one of Japan's World Heritage sites. Mount Koya is the major one.

Koya-san is the headquarters of the Shingon sect of Japanese Buddhism and home to one of the first Japanese Buddhist temples in Japan. The sanctuary was first settled in 816 CE by the founder of the Shingon sect, Kobo Daishi (Kukai), as a training hall for the secret teachings (*mikkyo*) of Shingon, teachings that have their origin in the esoteric traditions of India and China.

After Kobo Daishi was initiated in China as the eighth master of Esoteric Buddhism after only two years of preparation, he returned to Japan, later to found the monastery at Koya-san.

The two main pillars of his teachings were (1) that everyone has the ability to attain enlightenment or Buddhahood (Sokushin Jobutsu) within their lifetime and (2) to bring eternal peace to Japan.



Kobo Daishi

For more on the life of Kobo Daishi (Kukai), read [the article on Kukai in Wikipedia](#).

Okunoin, the mausoleum of Kukai, is surrounded by the largest cemetery in Japan. It is said that Kobo Daishi entered Okunoin with an oath to save people forever. He is popularly believed to be in eternal meditation here since March 21, 835.



"Hall of Lamps" in the cemetery surrounding mausoleum of Kobo Daishi. PHOTO: Jim Elliott

"Here in the sanctuary at Koya-san are planted monuments connected with the Luminous Teaching of the ancient Church of

the East (Keikyo).

"I take many photos – the best in front of the Nestorian monument."

–Journal entry by Gary Buchanan



The Irishwoman E.A. Gordon, author of "On Kobo Daishi and the Nestorians in China," donated the replica of the monument erected on Mount Koya, which was dedicated with full Buddhist ceremonial on Sunday, October 3, 1911.
PHOTO: Jim Elliott

Today there are 117 temples in Koya-san, although the broader image is that the whole mountain is one large temple.



Tour guide Kurt Kubli Genso introduces the layout of the temple complex. PHOTO: Jim Elliott

The Head Temple of Koya-san Shingon Buddhism is erected on the site of the residence of Kobo Saishi's first disciple, Shinzen Daitoku.



The rock garden surrounding the Head Temple, completed in 1984, is the largest rock garden in Japan and picturesque throughout the year. PHOTO: Jim Elliott

At the site called Danjo Garan, Kobo Daishi conducted the groundbreaking ceremony and dedicated his life to the construction of the monastery. The site now consists of nearly twenty structures, including the magnificent Konpon Daito, which is considered to be the central point of a mandala covering all of Japan according to Shingon doctrine. Inside are images of the eight patriarchs of Esoteric Buddhism and sixteen Bodhisattvas (Bosatsu). The main image is of the Five Buddhas: the four Buddhas of the Diamond Realm surrounding the central Buddha Dainichi Nyorai (Mahavairocana) of the Womb Realm. The hall called "Miedo" ("the hall of the honorable portrait") contains a portrait of Kobo Daishi painted by his disciple Shinnyo and is closed to the public except for a few select people who are permitted to enter on special occasions.



Shrine site on the guided tour of
Koya-san. PHOTO: Ron Theriault



Shrine site on the guided tour of
Koya-san. PHOTO: Ron Theriault



Shrine site on the guided tour of Koya-san. PHOTO: Ron Theriault



Garden at Sesisho-in Temple. PHOTO: Jim Elliott



Garden scene at Sesisho-in Temple.
PHOTO: Jim Elliott

For a complete virtual tour of the sanctuary of Koya-san, the present-day headquarters of Koya-san Shingon Buddhism, [visit the official web site](#).

MIKKYO LECTURE



Monks serving dinner at Koya-san.
PHOTO: Ron Theriault

"In the evening at dinner in the monastery, Kurt gives a long talk about his mikkyo (secret teachings)."

–Journal entry by Gary Buchanan



Kurt Genso presents lecture on the present-day inner teachings of Shingon. PHOTO: Gary Buchanan



Sadayuki Hagihara (aka "Kojak")

posing with a statue in front of
the monastery at Koya-san prior to
departure. PHOTO: Ron Theriault

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Project “X” Tours Japan Day by Day: DAY 5

13 MAY



Entryway to Kono Shrine. PHOTO:
Sean Savoy

Breakfast at the hotel. Then, visit the Izumo Grand Shrine, Japan's oldest and second most important Shinto shrine. After lunch, see nearby Kono Shrine, the oldest shrine in Japan, and neighboring Manai Shrine, the original Grand Shrine where the sun goddess Amaterasu was enshrined. Dinner and overnight at the Ark Hotel Fukuchiyama.

"This day is definitely a special one for us. The sun in the morning is manifesting. I am immediately drawn into the rays and find it difficult to break away to join the others for breakfast.

"Alongside the waterway across the street there are archetypal symbols embedded in the shore's concrete sidewalk – and they are gleaming in the mists of the crashing lake waves."

–Journal entry by Gary Buchanan

IZUMO GRAND SHRINE



Izumo Grand Shrine (Izumo-taisha) is one of the most ancient and important sacred places of Shinto. The hall and its buildings are

designated National Treasures of Japan. PHOTO: Blue Lotus

According to the oldest chronicles, Izumo Grand Shrine was the largest wooden structure in Japan when it was originally constructed. The main structure is built in the oldest style of building shrines. In 2008 the inner shrine was opened to the public for the first time in sixty years.

This sacred site is said to enshrine Okuninushi, the deity of marriage and considered to be the creator of Japan. According to the oldest chronicles of Japan, Okuninushi granted his country to Ninigi, grandson of the sun goddess Amaterasu, when he descended from heaven.

For more on Izumo Grand Shrine and a photo gallery, read the article "[Izumo-taisha](#)" in Wikipedia.

KONO SHRINE



Kono Shrine, the most important shrine in Tango Province and the oldest shrine in Japan, is said to be founded more than 2,000 years

ago. Pictured here is the main
door to the shrine. PHOTO: Sean
Savoy

Kono Shrine is, with the neighboring Manai Shrine, the original Grand Shrine where the sun goddess Amaterasu was enshrined before she resided at the present Grand Shrine in Ise.

Kono Shrine is built in a unique architectural style that is seen nowhere else but the Ise Grand Shrine.

Some recent theorists have suggested Jewish and Syrian origins for some of the peoples and religions of Japan and point to evidence for their theory with symbols found at Kono Shrine.

"We drive a couple of hours to visit the Kono Shrine. It is almost sunset, and the sun continues to manifest.

"On the way we visit a winery near Kono and check out the products. The light outside is irresistible, so I spend most of my time on the outside porch observing the light over the vineyards and local lake.

"Following the winery visit, we drive only a couple of blocks to the Kono Shrine, oldest in Japan. It is now sunset, and even though we can take photos out front and watch the setting sun over the shrine, the shrine proper is closed and gated off."

—Journal entry by Gary Buchanan

Link to the [Kono Shrine official web site](#).

MANAI SHRINE



Manai Shrine, dedicated to the god Izanagi, is located behind Kono Shrine and is part of the original Grand Shrine. Pictured is the main entrance. PHOTO: Sean Savoy

"We begin walking west and up another high hill to the Manai Shrine – that of 'eating and wellness,' from 'manna.'

"While we are ascending the stairs up to the shrine, I hear people calling my name and telling me to hurry.

"As I reach the top, along with the others there is a fellow standing directly in front of the shrine with his back to us.

"Then, just as I arrive and take my directed position behind him, he begins playing an ancient stone flute melody, with long, drawn-out high tones, in worship. He is cycle-breathing, and the piece goes on for quite some time.

"I hasten to pull out my camera and begin videoing his performance.



Musician playing bamboo flute at
Manai Shrine. PHOTO: Sean Savoy

"Next, he changes his stone flute (iwabue) to one in a higher range. This was followed by a vocal chant – quite strongly delivered. Finally, he picked up a bamboo didgeridoo and began playing – clearing the shrine – then turning and pointing the sound at each of us in the assembly."

"I am able to capture a bit of both the flute and vocal chant before my video card is full."



*Gary and other tour members visit
with the musician after his
performance. PHOTO: Sean Savoy*

"Afterwards, the musician meets with me – with lots of hugs and smiles, incredible warmth – as we stand together for photos. Our Japanese Consociates explain to him that I am the musician in our religion back in the U.S."



Shinto priest "clearing"
field of Yukinori at
Manai Temple. PHOTO:
Sean Savoy

"Meanwhile, the other Shinto priest in attendance (from the Ise Shrine), over to the side, is treating Yuki – working on clearing his aura, swishing with his hands and whistling, pulling negative influences out and throwing them away."

"Gene also meets with the priest and they discuss a potential future visit to Reno for sunrise services, perhaps upcoming conference in September, etc."

"We leave the hill feeling as if ALL has been perfect on this sunny day!"

–Journal entry by Gary Buchanan



One of the smaller shrines at the larger Manai Shrine. PHOTO: Ron Theriault

Watch [“Manai Sunset,” a video of the Japanese musician’s performance on YouTube.](#)

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Project “X” Tours Japan Day by Day: DAY 4

12 MAY



The dinner table
at Hotel
Ichibata. PHOTO:
Rob Roy

*Breakfast at hotel. Bus all day to the main island of Honshu.
Upon arrival at Izumo, enjoy dinner. Bishop Gene Savoy Jr.
delivers a brief talk. Overnight at Hotel Ichibata.*

Visit <the island of Honshu through Wikipedia
[<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honshu>] >.

LANDSCAPES



PHOTO: Sean Savoy



PHOTO: Sean Savoy



PHOTO: Rob Roy



PHOTO: Gary Buchanan

LECTURE AT IZUMO



Gene Savoy Jr. delivers a brief lecture at the Hotel Ichibata.

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Project “X” Tours Japan Day by Day: DAY 3

11 MAY



PHOTO: Sean Savoy

Communion Service and Third-Degree Ordination for Reverends Shoko Ohba and Eriko Ueno. Breakfast at hotel. Depart by bus for Seiwa Bunraku Puppet Theater to watch a full play. Bunraku companies, performers, and puppet makers have been designated Living National Treasures. Then, visit the Heitate Shrine, closed for centuries as the "Hidden Shrine." Heitate is considered the navel of the world, where the legend of "High Heaven's Plain" (Takamagahara) was born. Lunch. Continue by bus to Takachiho, site of one of the most well-known and important legends of Japanese mythology, that of the great sun-goddess Amaterasu. Tour Amano-iwato Shrine and Ama-no-yasugawara, the "Cave of the Sun Goddess" or "Heavenly Rock Cave." Dance performance at nearby art center. Dinner and overnight at Hotel Shenzhou.

COMMUNION SERVICE



Noriko Soejima shows off her embroidery handiwork before the service. PHOTO: Sean Savoy

"Birthday of Gene Savoy, Sr. He is in our thoughts.

"We are up early (4:00 AM) to depart to a site on Mt. Aso for a sunrise service. Unfortunately, it is still overcast. Thus, we are unable to debark and set up for a service. We return to the hotel to put into action 'Plan B.'

"After breakfast we hold a small Communion Service in a side room off the lobby ... with rice cakes, followed by a 3rd-Degree Ordination service for Eriko and Shoko.



Congregation gathers for Communion of Fellowship Service PHOTO: Rob Roy

"Music is played by myself on a small keyboard ... while some of our Japanese Consociates accompany with singing bowls in the correct keys. Quite effective, and there are many wet eyes in the room."

—Journal entry by Gary Buchanan

ORDINATION CEREMONY



Bishops (from left to right) Sean Savoy,

Gene Savoy Jr., and Yukinori Matsushita open Ordination Ceremony. PHOTO: Rob Roy Deaconesses Eriko Ueno and Shoko Ohba receive Third-Degree Ordination. PHOTO Rob Roy (from left to right) Deaconesses Yaeno Sanada, Shinobu Uwataki, Miyuki Okayama, and Keiko Inoue of the Bell Choir play crystal bowls during Ordination Ceremony. PHOTO Sean Savoy

SEIWA BUNRAKU PUPPET THEATER



PHOTO Sean Savoy

In the Aso district the group visits Seiwa Bunraku Puppet Theater to watch a full play.

Founded in the seventeenth century, bunraku is a theatrical art form expressing the movements of human feeling and gesture. It is an author's theater. The Joruri music that accompanies the play is a form of traditional music that

emphasizes lyrics and narration over the music itself.

The puppets of bunraku range in size from two to four feet in height. The heads and hands are carved by specialists; the costumes are designed by a costume master; the preparation of the puppets' hair is an art in itself. All but the most minor characters require three puppeteers.

Training a main puppeteer can take thirty years.

Bunraku companies, performers, and puppet makers have been designated Living National Treasures.



Bunraku puppeteer amuses the audience after the performance.
PHOTO: Gary Buchanan

<Read about Bunraku on Wikipedia>
[<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bunraku>].



Tour member Jalayne Grady appears onstage with puppeteers and puppets. PHOTO: Sean Savoy

The theater at Seiwa is an award-winning design, a large-scale version of the conventional layered-wood structure with eaves thirty-feet high, designed to stage a form of bunraku that has been performed from the time of the Tokugawa Shogunate.

<Read about the architectural design of the Seiwa Bunraku Puppet Theater
[\[http://www.pref.kumamoto.jp/uploaded/attachment/16270.htm\]](http://www.pref.kumamoto.jp/uploaded/attachment/16270.htm) >.

"The play was being filmed for TV broadcast on May 21.

"The theater show is a 160-year-old art form – oral tradition – drama and music, Japanese "opera." Members of our group were invited to try out the puppets – great fun!"

–Journal entry by Gary Buchanan

HEITATE SHRINE



Heitate Jingu Shrine is considered one of the most outstanding power spots in Japan and the origin of the world. Every five years, a celebration is held at the shrine celebrating the origin of all peoples: the Five-Colored Grand Festival.

In the city of Aso the group visits Heitate Shrine, a famous “power spot” on the Japan Median Tectonic Line, on which are many other sacred places, including Ise Shrine. Heitate Shrine is considered the navel of the world, where the legend of “High Heaven’s Plain” (*Takamagahara*) was born.

Closed for centuries as the “Hidden Shrine” to preserve its extraordinary sanctity, Heitate Shrine is not big and not easy to access, but ambassadors and officials, spiritual leaders and people from around the world have come here to visit

during the Five-Colored Grand Festival (*Goshikitaiai*), which is held every five years in August to celebrate the ancestors of humankind and to pray for peace.



Spring at Heitate Shrine. PHOTO:
Rob Roy

"At 11:30 AM we depart for Heitate Shrine – 'Navel of the World' – 'High Heaven's Plain.'

"It is a long climb up stone steps to the shrine at the top of the hill. For a long time a 'hidden shrine,' the original was simply trees and rocks (very old trees). Now there are several buildings and individual springs and smaller shrines...for drinking sacred waters and washing hands.

"We learn/observe the entry protocol of two bows, two claps, and final bow before entering.

"One could feel a great presence at this shrine...and after walking down a nearby pathway into the forest. There was also a unique smaller shrine with five small priests (appearing like children) looking heavenward."

–Journal entry by Gary Buchanan



One of the smaller shrines within the Heitate Shrine. PHOTO: Ron Theriault



Members of the tour group on the way to Takachiho Shrine PHOTO: Ron Theriault

TAKACHIHO SHRINE

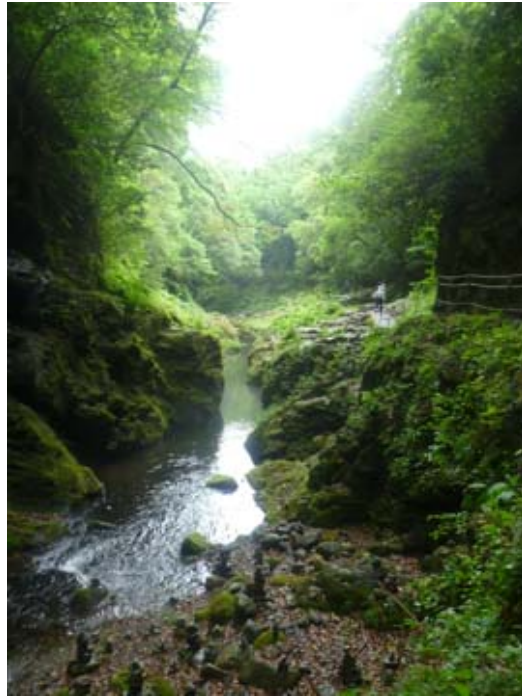


Ancient cedar tree at Takachiho Shrine. PHOTO: Sonya Savoy

Takachiho is the site of one of the most important and well-known legends of Japanese mythology. According to Japanese mythology, the land of Takachiho is where Ninigi, the bringer of celestial gifts and great-grandfather of the first emperor, descended from the heavens, sent by the Shinto sun goddess Amaterasu. According to the popular tradition, the three gifts he brought are the imperial sacred treasures: the sacred mirror, the sacred sword, and the sacred jewel. Today the mirror is enshrined at the main shrine of Ise Jingu, the sword at Atsuta Jingu in Nagoya City, and the jewel in the Imperial Palace.

Takachiho Shrine enshrines the three gods of the three generations (*Joko Takachiho Sumegami*) that appear in the Himuka imperial foundation myths. According to oral tradition, the shrine was founded early in the first century CE. In the precincts is an 800-year-old cedar tree planted in the twelfth century by the famous samurai Hatakeyama Shigetada, who visited the shrine on behalf of the Kamakura Shogunate.

AMA-NO-IWATO SHRINE



Landscape near Ama-no-iwato Shrine. PHOTO Sonya Savoy

Ama-no-iwato Shrine, according to the myth, is where the sun goddess Amaterasu hid in a cave, outraged by her brother's cruelty, bringing darkness and cold to the world, until she was lured out by a wild dance led by Ame-no-Uzume, goddess of the dawn and revelry. The other gods placed a mirror at the opening of the cave, so that when she came out to see what was going on she would see her own image in the mirror. As she looked out, she was blinded by the light and, thinking they were celebrating the arrival of a greater goddess than herself, she came out of the cave. The world was bathed again in light and a holy seal was placed on the cave so that she could not hide there again. The Sacred Mirror, recognized as one of the three imperial gifts from heaven, is enshrined at Ise Grand Shrine.

The cave is enshrined in the West Hall of the shrine; the goddess Amaterasu herself is enshrined in the East Hall. A shortened form of the legend is reenacted for tourists every night of the year as night dances (*yokagura*) at the Takachiho shrine.



Kagura dancer. PHOTO: Sean Savoy

Read more about < *kagura* [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kagura>] > in Wikipedia.

AMA-NO-YASUGAWARA



PHOTO Sean Savoy

South of town is Takachiho Gorge, formed by the lava that once flowed out of Mt. Aso. Designated as a special natural treasure and scenic spot, it is famous for the feel of its rocks and the mysterious beauty of their forms, such as the

precipice Byobuiwa.

The “Cave of the Sun Goddess” or “Heavenly Rock Cave” grotto is filled with visitors and hundreds of small rock piles, devotionals built as offerings to the shrine over the centuries. This is the legendary cave where the sun goddess emerged after being kidnapped.

Manai waterfall in Takichiho Gorge is one of the most prominent falls in Japan. Approaching the falls by boat is a thrilling experience.

TRADITIONAL DANCE PERFORMANCE



In the evening there is a dance performance at the nearby art center. PHOTO: Sean Savoy

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Project “X” Tours Japan Day by Day: DAY 2

10 MAY



Looking out the entrance of Izumi Shrine. PHOTO: Sean Savoy

Breakfast at hotel. After a brief orientation, depart by bus

for Kumamoto. Visit Kumamoto Castle, which covers nearly one square mile. Enjoy lunch at Suizen-ji Park, one of the most beautiful formal gardens in Japan. The park hosts Izumi Shrine. Then, continue by bus to visit Mount Aso in Aso Kuju National Park and surrounding farmlands. Mt. Aso is the largest volcano in Japan and among the largest in the world. Dinner and overnight at Aso Villa Park Hotel.

KUMAMOTO CASTLE

“Kumamoto Castle. Enormous and impressive – covering nearly one square mile.”

–Journal entry by Gary Buchanan



Kumamoto Castle. PHOTO: Robert Roy

Kumamoto Castle, with its signature curved stone walls, is one of the three premier castles in Japan. The history of the hilltop castle complex dates back to 1467, when its foundations were established.



Suizen-ji Joju-en Park. PHOTO: Ron Theriault

Kumamoto is also home to Suizenji Park (Suizen-ji Joju-en), one of the most beautiful formal gardens in Japan, less than two miles from the city's landmark castle, at a site selected in 1636 by Lord Hosokawa for its spring-fed pond whose water makes excellent tea.

The park, declared a national historic site of scenic beauty, hosts Izumi Shrine.

IZUMI SHRINE



Tour members enter Izumi Shrine grounds. PHOTO: Gary Buchanan

"Izumi Shrine in Suizen-ji Park. Beautiful architecture and gardens. Buddhist-Shinto mix of styles. Miniature Mt. Fuji in the park. Good vibes. Lots of large fish in the ponds."

—Journal entry by Gary Buchanan



Izumi Shrine. PHOTO: Gary Buchanan



Garden with replica of Mount Fuji,
Izumi Shrine. PHOTO: Gary Buchanan

ASO KUJU NATIONAL PARK

Mount Aso, in Aso Kuju National Park in the east of Kumamoto Prefecture, is the largest active volcano in Japan and among the largest in the world. Aso caldera holds five peaks and the small city of Aso. The crater of the peak at the center is still active, constantly sending up black smoke and rumbling underground. In and around the park are many hot springs.

“Aso Kuju National Park and surrounding farmlands that stretch to the horizon. Among the largest volcanoes in the world. However, it is raining and overcast, and we are only allowed to visit the museum, which nevertheless is also impressive. We viewed a film of the entire history and geophysical development of the Aso area.”

—Journal entry by Gary Buchanan

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