

Ten Days in Japan

日本十日游

Gardens and baths, neon and glass

Tim Lyddiatt



From the moment we landed to the moment we left Japan, my eyes were opened wide to the wonder of it all. Over the course of the next ten days in the country, a million different things - magical and beautiful temples, circled by stark winter gardens; vast cities in perpetual motion; snow-capped mountains emerging from deep crystal lakes and swathed in the sulphurous steam that bubbles up from primal volcanic activity below - formed sentences in my head that spoke of another world: 'Tokyo is like the future in all its literary forms,' or 'Japan is like a dream of history, made of dark wood and surrounded by gardens.' Japan came as something of a surprise to me.

In ten days we travelled to Tokyo and Kyoto, spent a couple of days in Hakone and took a day trip to Nara, Japan's first permanent capital. We would see the sky-scorching towers and a natuescape of high mountains, deep lakes and thick forests, and learn some of how they can co-exist. We were on a budget - the last thing we wanted to be in Japan - and yet experienced all that we had hoped to, and much more besides.

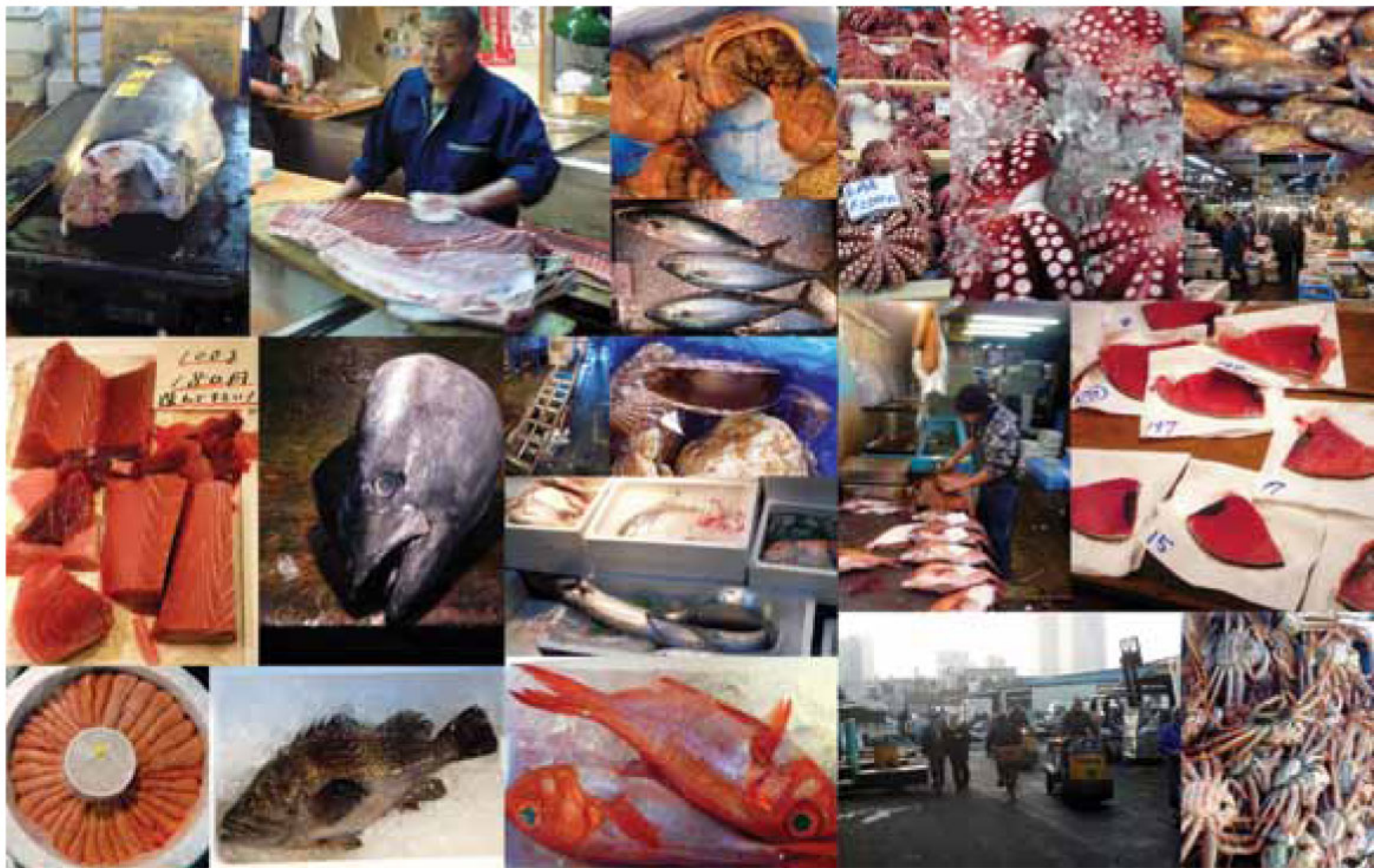
飞往日本，无论是落地还是起飞的那一刻，我的眼里自始至终都是它的美丽。回顾这十天日本之行，浏览了无数别样的风景—神奇而美丽的寺庙被冬季光秃秃的花园环绕着；城市中车水马龙川流不息；积雪覆盖的山峦屹立在结冰的湖面之上，周围还环绕着由于地下原始火山运动产生的硫磺蒸汽—这些言语在我脑海中形成了另一番景象：“东京就像未来所有描述它的文字一样。”或者是“日本如梦如幻，由深色木头组成，被花园所环绕。”日本带给我一些小小的惊喜。

在这十天里，我们去了东京和京都，在箱根待了几天，在奈良这个日本最初的都城游览了一天。我们看到了耸入云间高塔和高山，深湖，和茂密的森林，或多或少的了解了他们是如何可以共存。我们的预算有限—这是我们在日本最不想发生的事—并且还未能全部体验我们所希望的。

We landed at Narita airport, about an hour outside Tokyo proper. We got the train into town and to another world. If China's sprawling cities represent post-industrial development built on history, then Tokyo is whatever comes after that. It is all steel, glass and neon at its centre, with an exoskeleton of transportation - trains and subways and elevated roads and walkways - running in between. Advertising is everywhere as the leviathan corporations - Sony, Hitachi, and Panasonic - vie with each other to be the most visible (and visceral) retinal distraction. Especially at night, Tokyo looks like a dark story waiting to be told.

But it doesn't feel hostile. Of all the truly global cities I have spent time in - London, New York, Paris, Hong Kong - the millions of Tokyoites move the most serenely through its bustling highways and its labyrinthine transport network. They wait for traffic lights, allowing fear free pedestrian passage across its wide boulevards, and form queues through gates at subway stations: no need for pushing and shoving here. It is a centre of commerce, and yet many activities are available free of charge. We stayed in a cheap guesthouse ten minutes walk from Takadanobaba station, itself not more than 10 minutes from Shinjuku station, the world's busiest with some 3.6 million people passing over its myriad platforms daily, and the very centre of Tokyo.

In Takadanobaba, buildings are low slung and arranged on either side of narrow, winding and undulating lanes. In all my dreaming of Tokyo, never had I imagined that Tokyo could ever feel village-y. But, in places like Takadanobaba and Asakusa, where we joined the denizens of this old 'pleasure district' in the scalding hot water of communal sentō baths, it does: tiny places to grab noodles - by far the cheapest way to eat in Japan - offer free tea to anyone that eats there, and even smaller shops sell locally produced pickles and fish fresh from Tsukiji fish market, the biggest I have ever seen: another face of Tokyo revealed.



Still in Asakusa, around another lost corner, the Senso-Ji Temple and the bustling market that has grown up around it appeared. Just another centuries old temple hidden in the metropolis. You get used to that kind of thing in Japan.



From Tokyo we took the train to Hakone, a mountainous region famed for its onsen (communal baths filled by the hot spring water that flows up from Japan's vitriolic seismic foundations). We stayed in a traditional ryokan, all low tables, futons on tatami mats and simple yukata robes to wear, and an amazing kaiseki meal consisting of multiple courses of meticulously prepared Japanese food.

Hakone is beautiful. Low hills are lined with thick pine forest parting only for small, pretty towns and the winding roads that connect them. There are lesser peaks, a glacial lake and myriad modes of transport to explore them in. We took trains and buses, but also a funicular, boat and 30 minute cable car that provide stunning views of the landscape beneath. There are galleries of local art, museums and Buddhist shrines and temples; manmade structures in harmonious counterbalance to the natural beauty all around. And drifting through it all, sulphurous steam, rising up from the earth's core along fracture lines in earth's crust. All of it serves as your entry into the Japanese Alps with Mount Fuji at its core. She, Mount Fuji, really is a stunner. It is hard to describe her, such is her majesty as she rises, snow peaked and perfectly round, from the brownish green of the foothills below.

Next to Kyoto and Nara, ancient cities both, and fine examples of how Japan must once have been. Between them they host a staggering 25 UNESCO world heritage sites, each more jaw dropping than the last. Some, like the Nijo-Jo castle, are wonders of invention over mistrust; it's 'nightengale floors' squeak when walked over to warn of unwanted visitors, and there are numerous hidden chambers where bodyguards to the new dynasty could keep watch. Others, such as Sanjusangen, show off 800-year old artistry: its thousand Kannon (the Buddhist goddess of Mercy) stand guard over the 28 guardians of Buddhism, their expressions unreadable as if they are surveying you as you stare, in awe, at them. In Nara, the tame deer-filled park surrounding Kofuku-Ji opens up to reveal a five storey pagoda in dark wood and surrounded by immaculately kept gardens, typical of gardens throughout Japan: In Spring, the blossoms are world famous, whilst the summer brings firework blooms of colour; in autumn, the maple leaves fade into the winter abyss in death throes of red and orange. All of this is planned, and walking the paths of a Japanese garden is to see man's mastery over nature in all its splendour and vitality.

By the end of day one, we had already started out to do list for our next trip. It is a wonderland of the old and new, of nature and technology and unbelievable food. Can Japan be done on the cheap? No, not really. But it is more affordable than we first thought. If you make concessions, like taking the bus instead of the bullet train, or staying in Japanese style guest houses rather than western style hotels, savings can be made (like our two sleepless nights on the bus between Tokyo and Kyoto). Japan is another world, one I want to spend more time in.

我们的飞机降落在成田机场，距离东京市中心有一个多小时的路程。我们乘坐火车驶向市区，随后便进入一番别样的世界。如果说中国的一些幅员广阔的后工业化发展城市是建立在历史之上，那东京则紧随其后。市中心充斥着钢结构，玻璃，并且色彩斑斓，交通网络

发达—火车，地铁，高架路，人行道—在城市间穿梭。大型广告随处可见，如同企业怪兽—索尼，日立和松下等—互相竞争以吸引更多眼球。尤其在晚上，东京如同等待诉说的暗夜故事。

但却感觉不出任何敌意。在所有我到过的国际化都市像伦敦，纽约，巴黎，香港等一样无数东京人们在繁忙的公路和错综的交通网之间静静地穿梭。他们在等候交通灯，在宽阔的马路上小心的穿行着，地铁站内大家也都有序的排队上下：在这里不需推搡。这里是商业中心，可却有很多的活动是免费的。我们住在一间离高田马场车站需步行十分钟的便宜旅馆中，而从那里到新宿车站用不了十分钟，作为东京的中心，这里是世界上最繁忙的地方，日常过往的人群有时会达到三百六十万人。

在高田马场，建筑物排列在错综的线缆和蜿蜒狭窄的道路两旁。我想象中的东京，从未有过乡村之感。可是，在高田马场和浅草老街区，我们融入当地居民，在狭小的地方抢面条—目前是在日本吃东西的最便宜的方法—为在场食客们提供免费茶水，就连很小的商店都出售当地产的咸菜和来自筑地鱼市的鲜鱼，在这里我见到了东京的另一面。

浅草随着浅草寺和繁忙的市场热闹起来。几个世纪以来这间古老的寺庙一直隐藏于大都市中。你应该已经习惯日本这些类似的事情了。

我们从东京乘坐火车到达箱根，这个多山地区以温泉闻名（一种用以日本硫酸地震为基础向上流动的热泉水填充的公共沐浴）。我们入住的是传统的日式旅馆，榻榻米上摆放着矮桌和蒲团，穿上简单的浴衣，再来上道精心准备的日本怀石料理，妙不可言。

箱根很美。低矮的丘陵覆盖着茂密的松树林，将本来不大的优美的城市分隔开来，再通过弯路将她们贯通起来。这里有小小的山峰，冰川湖，周围交通便捷使人们更易探索游玩。我们乘坐火车和汽车，还坐上了缆车，船，还有半小时的出租车观赏下面赏心悦目的风景。这里有众多当地艺术的美术馆，博物馆和佛祠寺庙等；人文建筑与周围的自然美景十分和谐。漂流驶入，硫磺蒸汽通过断裂的地表徐徐上升。这一切都是由于日本的阿尔卑斯山—富士山屹立在地核之上。富士山太迷人了，美得难以形容，她威严，冰雪完美的围绕她棕绿色的山麓之上。

接下来我们来到京都和奈良，同是古都，很好的展现出日本曾经的面貌。两座古都承揽了25项联合国教科



文组织选定的世界遗产。像是二条城，真是难以置信的奇观；她的“鹈鸣地板”走上去会吱吱响，以警告走在其上的访客，另外这里还有无数暗室，新朝代的侍卫可在其中放哨。其他的还有三十三间堂，已有八百年历史：里面供奉着千尊观音雕像，周围还有28尊佛教护卫，很难读出他们的表情，当与他们对视的时候，顿时会有一种敬畏感。奈良公园内到处是驯养的鹿，兴福寺内的五重塔被深色密林所环绕，周围的花园干净整洁：春日里，满园的樱花举世闻名，夏季还有五彩缤纷的烟火；秋天红枫满地，渐渐埋入地下，预示着冬天的来临。这一切都归功于良好的规划，漫步在日本公园内的小径，能够看出人类征服自然，将自然的风光与活力完美的展现。

我们并没有太多的时间游玩日本。但在行程的最后一天，我们已经制定出了下次旅行的清单名录。这里是一个自然与科技，新与旧完美融合的地方，这里还有美味难以忘怀的食物。开销能再低点吗？应该不会的。不过这可比我们起初预想的稍便宜些。你需要精打细算，比如乘坐汽车代替高速列车，或是入住日式旅店代替西式旅馆，这样能省下不少（就像我们在东京至京都的汽车上度过了两晚不眠之夜）。我想花更多的时间游玩日本。



Thoughts for Food 食为天



It is impossible to talk about Japan without mentioning its cuisine. Whilst during the day, we lived on noodles - Raman, Udon and Soba - in the evenings we ran wild, taking our taste buds in some incredible directions. In Kyoto we ate the best Sashimi I have ever had, more than 20 types of fish, shell fish, eel and roe served with ear clearing wasabi and sweet, citrusy Ponzu. In Nara, we ate Shabu Shabu (beef and vegetables, self cooked in vats of bubbling broth before being dipped in sesame and other sauces), and cheap (but really very good) Tempura in Tokyo. All of which was washed down with warmed sake (a winter staple) or glasses of excellent Japanese beer. All of it was heavenly, and all of it blew the budget. In Japan, if you want to know where your money has gone, it is down your throat.

来到日本不谈谈这里的美食是不行的。白天我们尝试了各种面条—拉面，乌冬面和荞麦面—到了晚上，我们四处游走，打开味蕾，品尝各种美食。在京都，我们品尝了从未吃过的美味寿司，有超过20种类和贝类，鳗鱼和鱼子，沾上芥末和柠檬醋美味至极。在奈良，我们品尝了日式火锅（将牛肉蔬菜放在煮开的放有芝麻油和各种酱汁的汤中，自助食用），还在东京品尝了好吃的天妇罗（物美价廉）。品尝美味的同时喝上杯暖暖的清酒或是日本啤酒，岂不快哉。一切的一切都美轮美奂且花费较高。在日本你的钱是怎么花掉的呢？都被吃掉了。



How to Get There 旅行小贴士

- We found all our accommodation in Japan through www.airbnb.com, a site designed to help travellers find cheap beds in the cities they visit. Airbnb has listings for all of Japan’s major cities, as well as cities in more than 150 countries worldwide including China.
- Our ryokan was sourced through www.japaneseguest-houses.com, which lists properties throughout Japan.
- In Tokyo and Kyoto, we travelled on their extensive train networks but intercity , we took busses booked through <http://willerexpress.com>. The fares were less than half the equivalent train fare, but the journey obviously took much more time.
- 我们是通过www.airbnb.com预定的日本之行，这个网站专为旅行者寻找目的城市中便宜的房间。Airbnb内列所有的日本主要城市，同时还有全球范围内包括中国在内的超过150座城市的信息，
- 我们在www.japaneseguesthouses.com上找到的日式旅馆，网站上列举的旅馆贯穿全日本。
- 在东京和京都，我们尝试了广阔的城际铁路网，还在<http://willerexpress.com>上预定了汽车票，而车费只需铁路的一半，不过整个行程却耗费了更多时间。