

AWESOME ADVENTURES – JAPAN

Japan is an amazing country full of weird, but awesome stuff which attracts loads of people to visit.

Take Kyoto for example. Old Japan in a nutshell : atmospheric temples, sublime gardens, traditional teahouses and geisha scurrying to secret liaisons or the entertainment districts of Tokyo, but also go outside the well-known attractions. Ride the plane-like Shinkansen to Osaka or delve into history with a visit to Hiroshima's memorable Dome.

Wherever you go, Japan will immerse you in oriental mysticism with one surprise after another. At least that's the impression I got from it.

Go to Kawagochiko as we did to capture the "must have" picture for anyone visiting Japan. This iconic view of Mount Fuji with the Chureito Pagoda in the foreground is THE reference of Japan. But you must be lucky enough to have this splendid view after you climb the 400 steps to the top, because often the volcano is hiding in the clouds. Oh and please say hi to Rie Hayakawa at the West Inn Fujiyoshida, a wonderful place to stay.

Check out Shibuya crossing, one of the busiest intersections of the world, criss-crossing a few thousand people every few minutes.

Go to the focal point of Harajuku's teenage culture at Takeshita Dori (Takeshita Street) and its side streets, which are lined by many trendy shops, fashion boutiques, used clothes stores, crepe stands and fast food outlets geared towards the fashion and trend conscious teens. At some point I noticed a latex horse head which until today I regret not having bought it.

Allow me to point out a few weird things about The Land of the Rising Sun. Slurping manners, toilet stories, passenger pushers and more.

Eating without slurping loudly is commonly regarded as a good manner in most countries in the world, except for Japan. In Japan, conversely, eating without slurping is rude to the chef because it seemingly shows you are not satisfied with their food or it is sometimes even seen as disrespecting them. So Japan gives you a chance to slurp as much as you could and you will receive a big smile from the chef in return. Win-win, isn't it?

The simplest things are different here. No one will open the toilet lid with their hand. No, this happens automatically at the push of a button. After

you have done your needs, a warm jet of water, the temperature of which is of course adjustable, ensures hygienic cleaning of your posterius, after which your exhaust is blown dry. The lid closes automatically after you leave the throne.

Stroll down Takeshita Street, for example. One of the busiest and most notable shopping streets in Tokyo, with everything you could ever want, but above all a lot you don't.

Itsukushima, also known as Miyajima, is a small island in Hiroshima Bay, in western Japan. It is known for its forests and ancient temples.

Buy a rail pass to get around while enjoying Japanese cuisine on board at a speed of +300 km/h.

There are the "passenger pushers", an official job in the subway stations. In order to fit twice the number of passengers into a subway carriage, the stations employ uniformed staff known as oshiya or "pusher", whose goal is to cram as many people as possible into the subway tram. These white glove-wearing personal actually pushes people into the train, so the doors can be shut. This is so surreal, it has to be seen to be believed. When pushers were first brought in at Tokyo's Shinjuku Station, they were called "passenger arrangement staff".

I witnessed this funny job while waiting for the train at Tokyo Station. Boasting an area of 182,000 square meters, Tokyo Station serves over 450,000 passengers every day. On the Marunouchi side, the red brick Marunouchi Station building has become a Tokyo landmark. Tokyo Station's 28 platforms make it one of Japan's largest stations. First-time visitors to the station may be surprised by the complexity of the station's structure and the number of people within. Trust me, Tokyo Station is not just your average train station. It offers a very convenient place for shopping called "Ekinaka" (inside of station), with a variety of commercial facilities. You'll find a lot of shops selling Tokyo souvenirs and bento lunch boxes, as well as convenient stores.