

# Tokyo—Found in Translation

March 24-30, 2018



After walking the cruise ship's plank, my Useless Medical Team of phoney Doctor Walt Blahey and nurses Brenda and The Dragon Lady camped at Citadines in Sin, er, Shinjuku—one of the nightlife areas. It attracts all kinds, including, if you look carefully at the very end of the street and look up, waaaaay up, you'll see...



...Godzilla hisself, still laying waste to Tokyo after all these years.



"Take this handkerchief back to the lab, Stevens. I want some answers on which monster did this— Godzilla? Gargantua? Who?"



Madame Hattori—her adventurer grandfather sailed in 1895 to San Francisco—is always tickled pink...well, yellow...to be back in the homeland. She really comes to life. She taught English in Osaka for five months in 1983.



Arguably the most colorful area of Tokyo, Shinjuku offers several neon-washed strips lined with bars, restaurants and...



...love hotels. Because of space shortages and expensive real estate, young people traditionally live at home until married. These short time places—2,000 yen is about \$20US—provide private nooks for romps on a futon.



Here's a row of them, somewhat more expensive. The priciest provide themed interiors, mirrors, and get wonderfully kinky. Cough cough. I mean disgracefully twisted. You may recall The Dragon Lady tricking me into a huge one for several days outside a southern city on our trip in 2016 in (futile) hopes she could have sex with me. <http://www.jasonschoonover.com/2016/11/japans-love-hotels-sex-shops-and-the-mythical-search-for-used-school-girl-panties/> She was up to her nefarious ways here again, dragging me into sordid sex shops, which we'll get to at the bottom of this blah blah, which is where it belongs.



Shinjuku has capsule hotels. I've long been curious about them.





Spending a lot of time in tents, I'm comfortable with small spaces, and was impressed how roomie they are. About \$30US. There's large, clean, common areas for baths and lockers. Very well planned and designed, in the well thought out Japanese manner.



You just don't want to be next to a pachinko parlour. Man, are these places LOUD!



Want your picture taken? For some reason.



Before we go into their bizarre themed restaurants....



...I must tell you that we arrived serendipitously at the most magical time of the year! Cherry blossoms—*sakura*—arrived a week early!



Tokyo has several enormous parks and literally millions of locals poured into them, often setting up picnics.





For if there's one thing the Japanese love to do—especially at this very brief time of the year (the petals last mere days)—it's party.





And party til ya puke. The downside of Japanese culture is long work hours and razor sharp competition. To escape the extreme stress they drink to get drunk. It's accepted.



Put money in a bubble dispenser, out pops a mini toy. Collect the whole set.



つらい花粉を洗い流す!

鼻の奥まで  
すっきり!

風邪・花粉の季節に  
痛くない  
鼻うがい  
ハナノア  
シャワータイプ  
雑菌・花粉を  
鼻の奥まで洗い流す  
空気清浄機  
耳鼻科検機器

小林製薬

詳しくは、[ハナノア](#) [検索](#)

Got barf up your nose? Here. Clean it out this way. Love their advertising.

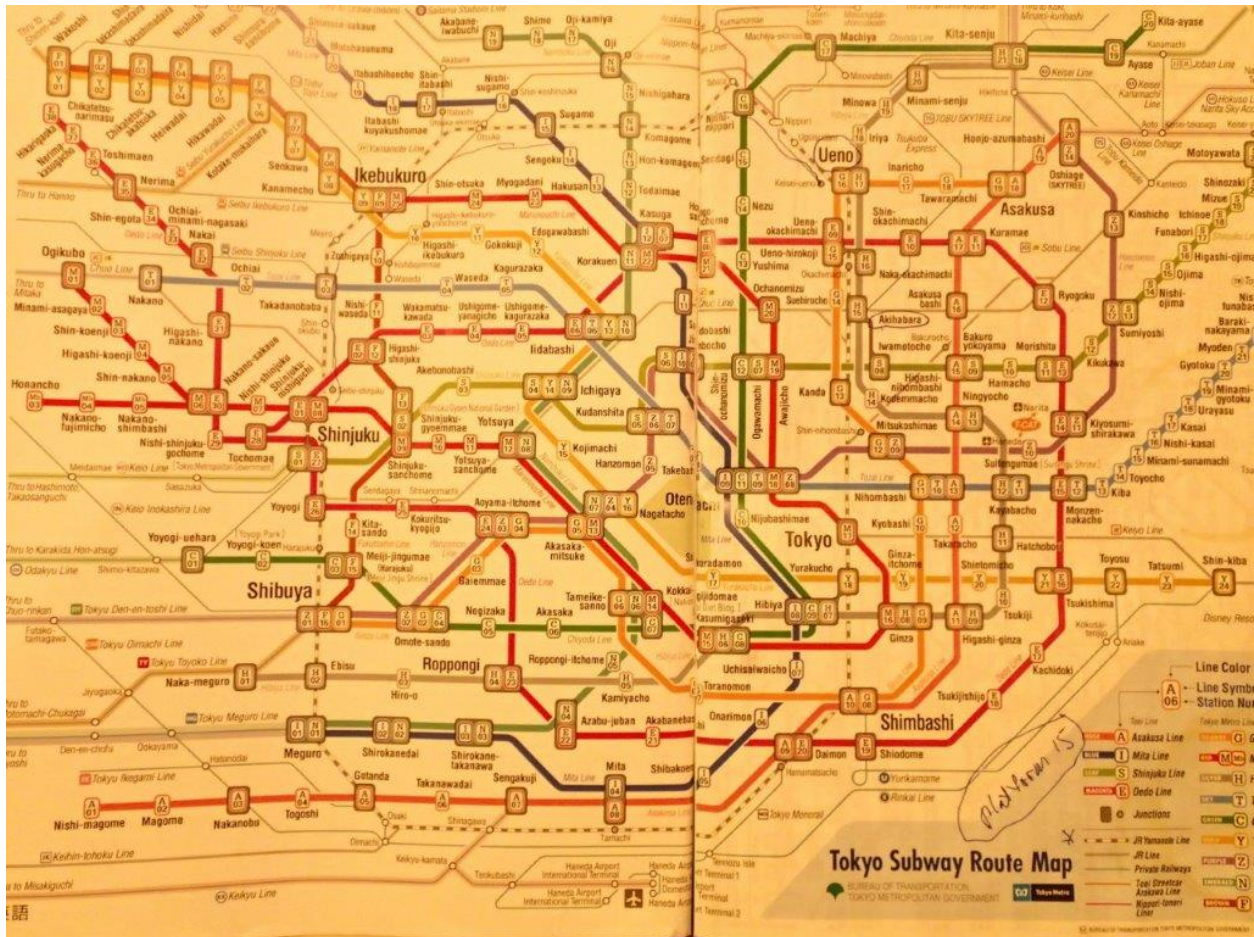


But I'm being tardy in introducing you to our Great Benefactor on our Tokyoan exploration. Professor Kelly McGrath, in the checkered shirt with my Hopeless Medical Team, is originally from Toontown but has been teaching here for 18 years. Brother of Colleen, and Guy who own F2 Fashions. He's gone full saki, marrying a Japanese and having a son. For three full days he very generously and enthusiastically squired us around the city, familiarizing us with it in a manner that would be very, very difficult otherwise. And thus I can do it for you.



Since Kelly teaches kinesiology, I asked him what's with all the pigeon toed Japanese girls...? Counterfeit Doc Walt speculated it might be a genetic thing. But professor Kelly explained that it probably goes back to kimono days when it was easier for women to walk that way in their tight garments, and now it's been passed forward as the desire to look *kawaii*, or cute. In that I saw few middle aged women toeing in, they grow out of it. And that it's a culture thing.





I've been here a coupla times before and at 35,000,000—the same as Canada—Tokyo is the hardest city in the world to get to know. London, Paris, Rome, you walk everywhere. Here, no. You have to take the subway from district to district. The subway handles 8,000,000 a day, compared to New York's sissy 1.8. In that all Asians look alike, you can imagine the trouble I had keeping track of Madame Su in the fast flowing, chaotic JAPANESE crowds.





The VAST underground goes on forever, but now, thank Buddha, has English signage. Even with that, and Japanese efficiency, every foreigner's first time down here is a shock. A nightmare of confusion. Thank Buddha again for Kelly. That said, once one gets onto it, it's brilliantly simplified. And trains timed down to the SECOND, with wait times never more than a few minutes.





The Tokyo Skytree is 634 meters high, but the first obligatory stop is at the 350m viewpoint and costs about \$20US.



Seeing this we decided not to bother paying the other \$10 to go to the top. Tokyo doesn't have a greatly interesting skyline, unlike New York or Paris. BTW, the smog here is very light compared to the rest of Asia, especially amazing when you think of the population. Because of the splendid rapid transportation system, traffic—and the jams and pollution—aren't the issue they are in, say, New Delhi or Manila.



Takeshita Street (love the name), 400 yards of food, fun and fashion. Look at the thick crowd all down the route. Many streets are like this, solid black heads forever. Welcome to Tokyo. This is one crowded city. But even the foot traffic flows are efficient, unlike Bangkok's equally crowded Chinatown where people are often bumping into you.



竹下口

Takeshita Exit

竹下出口 다케시타 출구

神宮前  
Jingū-mae

千駄ヶ  
Sendagay

東郷神  
Tōgō Jin



Ginza ain't the draw it used to be, though it has all the high fashion outlets, Gucci etc.



Good for a spiffy artsy-fartsy shot though. I love photography. Great art form.





Now the most famous corner in Tokyo—Shibuya scramble crossing—taken from Starbucks.



Shibuya station, one of the city's busiest, serves this major fashion, shopping and nightlife area. Another one.





Speaking of fashion, this is the international year of the Canadian lumberjack look. Though I doubt if anyone knows this is an iconic Canadian design. My PJs canoeing are lumberjack red flannel checks. I grew up in lumberjack country, in Carrot River. Our main café was even called Logger's Inn.



“Su, let me buy you this traditional Japanese kimo—“  
“NO!”



Thousands daily take turns having their picture taken with Hachiko. For nine years after his owner died suddenly while at work in 1925, the akita returned daily to meet him at the station. He became a national symbol of loyalty.



His counterpart is in Fort Benton, Montana, with Shep, a herding dog who began waiting at the railway station for his owner, who also died, in 1936. After our second Missouri paddle we whooped it up in the 1880s wild west hotel behind him. I love dogs and once had one, Stokely, I miss to this day, but I travel too much to have another. My life's great sacrifice.



We went to this temple...oh, jeez...that damned camera....





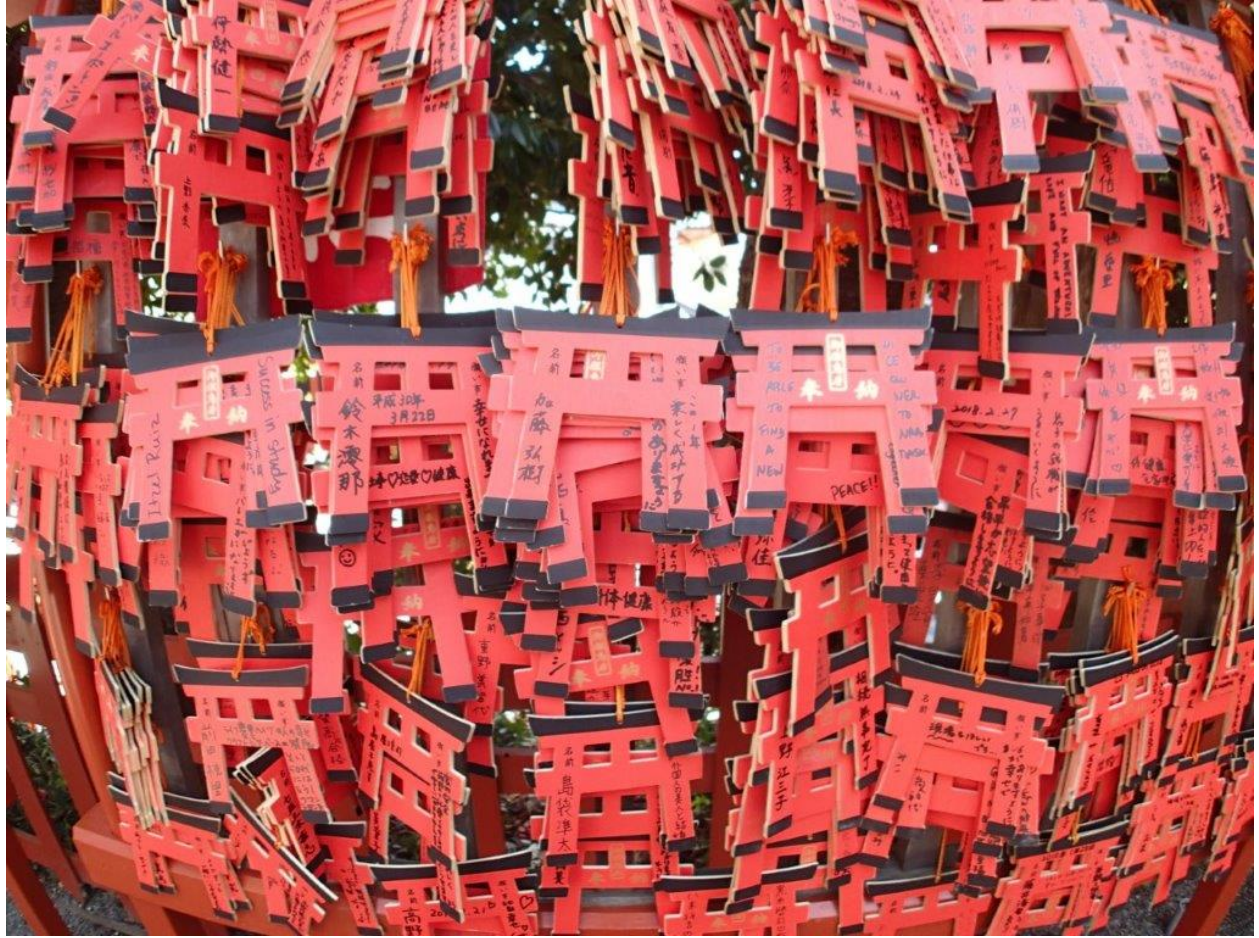
This one. Temple life is still very much alive and well amongst the Japanese. I've incorporated the animism of Shintuism into Schoonoverism.





Kelly took us on an excursion out of the city by train to see the Great Buddha of Kamakura. Built beginning in 1252, it's 11.4 meters high. I hope followers of Schoonoverism will do the same with Me after I croak and as My religion continues to sweep the globe.







Another serendipity was learning that a major retrospective of the Brueghels—some 100 paintings—were on display at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum! It highlighted *The Wedding Dance* borrowed from Munich's Alte Pinakothek Museum. We saw it there during our European Grand Tour by camper in 2015. <http://www.jasonschoonover.com/?s=hitler%27s> This was a veritable feast for me, as the Brueghels are among my very favorite painters. I was impressed with the thousands of Japanese filing respectfully past the paintings. They have an international outlook and appreciation.



I've had *Hunters in the Snow* on my wall since the 1980s.



The classic red brick train station was rebuilt after the war.







Tokyo specializes in bizarre restaurants—like the Alcatraz ER café. A prison's ER, complete with jail cells and nurses. Finally, I could get some decent medical care.



I was handcuffed and led our group of prisoners to our cell in the cellblock.



The menu. I passed on the sperm juice. If you've ever watched Japanese game shows and contests on TV you know just how off the wall outrageous and hilarious the national imagination is.



I couldn't say no to their Two Titty Fried Rice dish. Note the "plate."





• meat omelette with rice  
• Curry omelette with rice  
¥1.350

Omelette with rice  
¥1.150

Curry rice ¥1.150

pepe

*Anime* (animation) and *manga* (comics) are huge in Japan, often erotic, and a top fantasy is maids (and school girls).



So, naturally, Maid Cafes are the rage. The theme is schoolgirl, with school desks etc.





The waitresses are in full character mode, playing the parts of silly, airheaded girls. One stepped on a small stage with a mic and sang with great animation and talent. Well, *animi*. It's hilarious. I've never left a café before still laughing.





The food—like everything else—is incredible in Tokyo. This is a major foodie city, with over 100 Michelin rated restaurants. We couldn't believe how delicious the strawberries were.



Besides Professor Kelly (back left) and my Hopeless Medical Team, one evening we were joined by Vancouver's Seamus and Colleen Munns, on the right. One of Jim and Diane's brats, he's a chef and she's a teacher. They dumped their two sub-brats on the grannies and jumped a plane to Japan for an escape. His old man Jim was a life long friend, back to Boy Scouts.



You ain't tasted sushi until you've had it in Japan. BTW, prices on everything are comparable to Canada. The exceptions are taxis. The 1.5 hour trip to Narita Airport for Walt and Brenda was \$260CAN! We flew out of Haneda. An hour. \$110US. Landing in Bangkok, the 1.5 hour trip home to Soi 8 was 20 bucks, and it was that high because we got caught in a rush hour traffic jam. For budget travelers in Tokyo, there's trains for a fraction so don't freak out.



And, every time I could, I had one of my favorites, *udon*, fat noodles. I'm delighted that nearby in Bangkok are several Japanese places springing up where I can get them. It drives Su quietly mad when I *sluuuurrrrrp* the noodles up loudly in the Japanese fashion. I'm disappointed she has no appreciation of my sensitivity honouring her culture.



Cusco? Giza? Nope. The moat wall at the Imperial Palace. Despite the innumerable earthquakes and tremors, they remain solidly locked. The Japanese have been building things to last for centuries.





By this time we've had time to reflect and form a solid impression of Tokyo. It's a BIG city and leaves big impressions.



It's sexy, eccentric, sexy, highly efficient, sexy, very crowded, sexy, cultured, kinky, creative, sexy, perfectly safe...did I say sexy? We'll get to that—but the biggest impression is just how downright friendly, helpful, sensitive, polite, considerate and respectful people are. The Japanese are, with the Nepalese, my favorite people in the world.



I'll bet you thought, as I did, that the frequently seen surgical masks are worn because of air pollution, right? Nope. The pollution ain't bad; you can't see it at street level. It's because they have a cold or a touch of something—and don't want to pass it on!



A major focus of the culture is thoughtfulness. These yellow lines are guides for white canes used by the blind. The Japanese are the most considerate people in the world. Transit buses “bow” to the curb to make it easier to mount and dismount.



There's even pissoirs for little boys, or Peter Dinklage. Or both. Or drunk, semi-comatose businessmen who can flop their faces into it.



The contrast with the brutal, racist generation I know exploring the WW-II Thai-Burma Death Railway on the River Kwai since 1982 couldn't be wider. 100%. It's stunning. Today's Japan is the most successful culture—in terms of getting along smoothly with each other—in the world. It's one of the safest cities in the world, and the people are indelibly honest. A major contrast with American society. And the Japanese protect their culture with arguably the strictest immigration policy on the planet. How strict? For example, third generation Japanese born Koreans don't have citizenship. That takes guts in today's politically correct world and I salute them. Seeing the EU—and especially the Netherlands, France and Germany—destroying themselves from within with their self-destructive open door policy, I wish we were doing the same in Canada.



The Japanese are famously talented for taking everything from the West and improving it. Nowhere have they excelled like the biffy with its heated seat and instrument panel that does so many things I can't figure it out. The Dragon Lady is more technical than I am and I think she did. At least she'd disappear into the bog a couple of times daily and all I heard was moaning for a half hour before she'd emerge flushed, hair dishevelled, blouse askew, and with a lopsided grin.



Old horny? That's certainly not me. Not after the cruise where I was the teenager aboard. But this brings us to the red light area of this blah blah.





Once my Mail Order Doctor and Nurse flew back to Calgary, and Professor Kelly ran out of places to take us, The Dragon Lady dragged me to what is touted as the largest sex shop in Tokyo. M's Pop Life in Akihabara—Akiba—brags about seven floors stocked with all kinds of kinky Japanese creativity. *Lonely Planet* says it's a major tourist draw.



Well, I was disappointed! Cough, cough. I mean, Su was disappointed.



Each “floor” was little larger than our dining room! Really! The Nobunaga Shoten sex shop in Kyoto she forced me into two years ago was FAR bigger! It had *real* floors!



If you don't know this is, let's just say that it's a male solo entertainment device. And this one is meant for Godzilla.





Tenga has built an empire out of them. This display is at a Don Quijote, a popular chain selling everything imaginable. I like how the Japanese treat sex like just another commodity—kitchen supplies on those shelves, party products there, sex toys here.



Akiba is also the *anime* and *manga* center. As I said, it's a huge subculture.



It can be incredibly lascivious. This is big wall poster for some teen's bedroom wall. I used to put pictures of Mickey Mantle up. (Baseball hero.) (Nothing sexual.) (Honest.)





Virtually anything goes. The Japanese have a VERY rich fantasy life. There's a reason there's 127,000,000 of them. Since this is a family blog—ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha and ha—I'm reluctant to post the more uninhibited, let's say, stuff so instead please do a Google Images on *Manga*. You will be entertained.



Even dolls can be incredibly sexy. But it's a young population. One gets the impression that the thousands upon thousands upon thousands one sees on the streets have an average age of 22.



Let's finish with two quintessential Japanese symbols. This shot is Su's. (And, BTW, in past Blah Blahs I haven't given her credit for lots of great shots.)



And this. Soyonara.

