

DISCOVER ETERNAL JAPAN

on board HERITAGE ADVENTURER

1 - 15 June 2023



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Day 1

Thursday 1 June

Sapporo

Meeting at our hotel in Sapporo City, we gathered in the foyer and shared a meal to acquaint ourselves with each and mark the start of our Discover Eternal Japan voyage. Here we also met with our Expedition Team and Expedition Leader Aaron Russ, joined by his young family, who shared his plans for our adventures tomorrow at Sapporo before boarding our trusty expedition vessel *Heritage Adventurer* in Otaru. It was such a treat to meet fellow adventurers from around the world as we shared our mutual excitement for the voyage ahead.

Day 2

Friday 2 June

Sapporo to Otaru

After a hearty breakfast at our hotel our bags were loaded into our bus and we made our way to the Otaru Tenguyama Ropeway - a cable car which ascends Otaru's symbolic Mt Tengu some 532 metres above sea level. At the top we took in the incredible views across the city and out over the Sea of Japan, observed the antics at the 'Squirrel Park', and toured the Tenguyama Shrine and Tengu Hall, a small mask museum which contained fantastic masks collected from all over Japan.

We then took the cable car back down the mountain, boarded our bus and made our way to Otaru city centre where our explorations included one of Japan's oldest tram systems once used by miners in the area from times gone by.

Some chose to indulge in a specialty 8-layer ice cream for a pre-lunch dessert. Once we were full of ice cream we boarded the bus once again and made our way to the port for our first glimpse of *Heritage Adventurer*. Welcomed on board by our friendly Expedition Team, Crew and Hotel Staff we made our way to the restaurant for a delicious lunch before it was straight into our lifeboat drill with Captain Tomasz announcing instructions over the PA system. All up on the 7th deck wearing our vogue orange lifejackets.

Once the drill concluded we were able to explore our new home at our leisure with an introduction to the Expedition Team and a briefing for the following day's activities followed by a delicious meal in the restaurant.



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Day 3
Saturday 3 June
Hakodate

It was a pleasant start to the voyage to have a bit of a sleep-in this morning and shake off the last of the jet lag. As we cruised through the morning a pod of Pacific White-sided Dolphins came to play. Then Thijs got us truly started with his presentation Welcome to Japan. As it concluded we gathered for an early lunch as *Heritage Adventurer* docked at Hakodate under broken clouds and sunshine.

The ride to Onuma Quasi-National Park passed through the city, then farmland and into the hills. Lake Onuma was large and dotted with many small islands, perfect for a boat cruise which helped us get a feel for the area and sheltered us from a passing shower. After the rain cleared it was sunny weather throughout our walking tour from island to island over a variety of arched bridges. The verdant flora was composed of leaves of every size and shape – and 50,000 shades of green – glistening after the rain. Truly delightful.

We returned back to town for a ride to the top of the Goryokaku Tower, overlooking the star-shaped citadel that was now Goryokaku Park. The views from the tower of the old fort were spectacular. On the way back many of us chose to stroll the final leg of waterfront to *Heritage Adventurer*. Back on board, Captain Tomasz introduced his Senior Officers at the Captain's Welcome Cocktails as we cast off. Then dinner with plenty of chatter to end a super day.



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Day 4
Sunday 4 June
Noshiro

As *Heritage Adventurer* arrived at Noshiro we kicked things off with an early start. Our first stop was the Oga Shinzan Folklore Museum for an introduction to Namahage. The people of Oga have a unique tradition of being visited by 'monsters', or Namahage, on New Year's Eve in colourful, frightening masks and costumes, knocking on doors demanding to be let in. They interrogate the household in search of lazy or disobedient children and the parents would assure them that all was OK, but the Namahage will consult their record books and may try to pull naughty children from their house. It's a tale guaranteed to provide nightmares, but was all carried off in a wonderfully fun spirit. After a bit of food and sake everyone left happily. The museum and re-enactment of the encounter were also great fun. Next stop was the Mount Kanpuzan Rotating Observatory which gave great views over the countryside, albeit limited by cloud.

Having gone south during the morning, our afternoon excursion was to the north to Juniko 12 Lakes Park. The most famous feature of this area were the lakes, though actually more like 33 than 12, with some shimmering blue due to the clarity of the water, however it was the forest that stole the show. The easy trail passed magnificent huge trees in a mossy woodland and, in true expedition style, some set off to explore unknown trails and terrain. All emerged laughing and there was just enough time to squeeze in a short walk on the rocky coast before the predicted rain set in.

Back on board John gave us a quick Overview of Japanese History and *Heritage Adventurer* entered the open sea during dinner.



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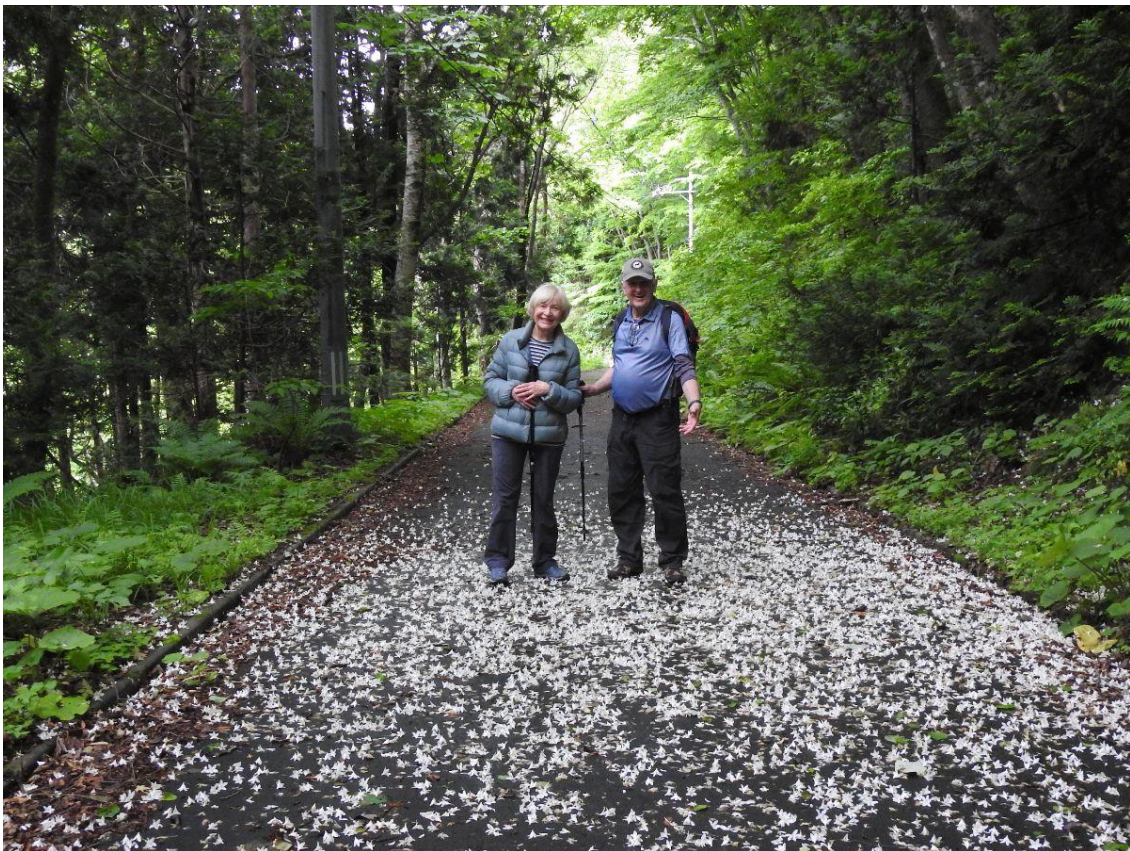
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Day 5
Monday 5 June
Sado Island

Japan truly is full of surprises. Our visit to Sado Island was well off the beaten track and an exceptional day of expedition travel. It started with a relaxed morning and a bit of education from Moshe on The Floral Zones of the World followed by John on The Life of a Geisha. An early lunch was followed by a quick Zodiac ride to the dock at Ogi, then the fun started.

In the warm sunshine we were greeted by a colourful and enthusiastic welcoming committee leading immediately to the Tarai Bune Tub Boat ride. Traditionally, huge miso tubs were converted to boats to harvest seafood from shallow waters. Not being real 'boats' they were tax free - and it was a treat to be ferried around the harbour in them. The skill of the paddlers, as well as their smiles, was appreciated.

A walk along the stark lava shoreline ended at the historic ship-building village of Shukunegi. The local museum gave us a rare and fascinating insight into historic Japan, as did the village of narrow alleyways with buildings made from ship's planks.

The highlight of the day was a lesson in Japanese Taiko/drums from the world famous Kodo drummers. Everyone got their own drum and the instructors led us through the basics before setting us loose to set our own rhythm. There was a chance to play the huge, beautiful bass drums crafted from a single huge tree trunk and root. Boom! Boom! Boom! After the lesson the instructors took to the drums to display their skill. The awe-inspiring display of flute and drumming was unforgettable.

They then followed us back to the dock for more drumming, dancing, waving, and genuine pleasure that *Heritage Adventurer* had visited Sado. It was hard to leave with so much true affection generated on both sides.

Our evening recap and another scrumptious diner followed, leaving us excited for how the voyage could possibly keep getting better.



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Day 6
Tuesday 6 June
Kanazawa

Heritage Adventurer arrived early on a pleasant Kanazawa morning to explore Kenroku-en Garden, 'Garden of the six sublimities' being: spaciousness, seclusion, artificiality, antiquity, abundant water, and broad views. These aspects were all apparent as were gardeners at work to keep the garden a living work of art. Having stretched our legs, we made our way

downtown to the Omicho Market. This large enclosed market contains shops of every variety selling fish, meat, fruit and vegetables, flowers, sweets and more – plus many food stalls and restaurants. The shopaholics and the photographers both had plenty to keep them interested and many stayed at the market and enjoyed lunch in town.

The afternoon was spent going back in time to the Edo Period (1603-1868) with visits to both the Samurai and Geisha districts. A small street along a rushing canal led to Nomura-ke, a restored Samurai residence. The house, with spacious tatami mat rooms and hand-painted sliding screens, was quintessentially Japanese while the superb courtyard garden with waterfalls and sculptured trees had everyone sitting on the verandas wishing that we could stay longer. Kanazawa's famed Higashi Chaya (Geisha) District saw us exploring the narrow alleyways studded with traditional teahouses. It was fun to see many locals dressed in traditional kimonos and robes. With the walkers in a good mood, the many shops did a brisk trade with Kanazawa's specialty of gold leaf ice cream being the hit.

We have been treated to several wonderful welcomes and send-offs and Kanazawa did not disappoint with a 30-strong Taiko drumming band getting us all out on deck to enjoy the show. We are now accustomed, and look forward to, our evening routine of drinks, recap, briefing and dinner. What an enjoyable way to end the day and share stories before going to bed to dream about tomorrow.



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Day 7

Wednesday 7 June

Sakaminato and Matsue

Today was a day for taking steps - a lot of steps, as *Heritage Adventurer* arrived at the port of Sakaminato for our visit to Mount Daisen and later Matsue.

We disembarked to travel to Mount Daisen via a new landscape of city, suburbs, and country. The road climbed up the slopes to drop us at the start of an easy but steady ascent. The walk was through nature at its most impressive, especially among the noble, ancient Japanese 'cedar' trees (sorry Moshe). It was a pilgrimage from shrine to shrine up the holy mountain. The Torii gates, Buddhist statuary, babbling stream, cicadas and calling birds all contributed to our feeling of reverence for this holy place.

Lunch was optionally enjoyed either aboard or ashore, while Matsue Castle gave us another chance to climb. This time from floor to floor through one of the few remaining original castles in Japan. The formidable rock walls, 'stone dropping' windows, arrow and gun slots, and steep stairways all made us glad that the gates were open and we were not storming the castle. The structure itself was dramatically strong with pillars and beams exposed, and the view over the city and moat were well worth the climb.

After this effort it was nice to see the Adachi Museum of Art and Garden was a more level stroll. But, what a stroll! Having been voted 'The Most Beautiful Garden in Japan' for 20 years running, and housing an astounding collection of traditional and modern Japanese art, it was hard to know where to look next. The windows showed garden as art, and the galleries showcased paintings as art. A wonderful contrast and convergence.

Back aboard after the now normal, but always appreciated, farewell, Rod described his affection for Giant Salamanders, we learned what will happen tomorrow, and felt pretty good about having that extra course with dinner after an action-packed day.



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Day 8
Thursday 8 June
Hagi

After *Heritage Adventurer* anchored at Hagi this morning, we took our Zodiacs ashore through light drizzle and boarded our bus bound for Akiyoshidai Plateau. On the way, we passed through settlements of traditional Japanese houses in small communities with classic rice fields and hillsides covered in *Cryptomeria* and bamboo forest. Higher up the road we reached the Akiyoshidai Plateau which was largely covered in grassland and dotted with weathered marble outcrops, unique limestone formations, and depressions (sinkholes) through which the ground water enters the underground caves. Incredibly this area was once a coral reef an estimated 300 million years ago.

After visiting the karst viewing platform we headed on to the Akiyoshido Cave, walked down the stairs and through a tunnel to explore the extensive cave system where we admired stalactites, stalagmites as well as the beautifully layered sinter terraces. We re-emerged back into the daylight beside the stream flowing through deciduous woodland and, not far from the cave's exit, perused a variety of small shops selling souvenirs and Japan's ever-present ice-cream.

Lunch options included back on board *Heritage Adventurer* or a enjoying lunch at the nearby fish market before making our way to the Samurai Quarter of Hagi. There was much to explore with traditional, narrow streets and iconic Japanese houses with tiny manicured gardens. We entered one of the houses, which was partly a museum-esque building, on a guided tour learning everything from the residence's roof style down to the authentic tatami mats and well structures.

From here we made our way towards the port and our final stops: a traditional Hagi pottery studio to see a potter in action and visit the Yoshika Taibi Memorial Museum to view the works of Japan's famed Hagi-yaki potter Taibi Yoshika. A perfect union for form and function, Hagi ware is famed for use in traditional tea ceremonies with the glaze designed to crackle overtime and transform through interactions with water and minerals. Following a short Zodiac back to *Heritage Adventurer* we bid farewell to the people and port of Hagi and set sail for a new destination in a new country.



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Day 9
Friday 9 June
Ulsan, South Korea

What a day! Upon *Heritage Adventure's* arrival dockside we were greeted by thousands of new Hyundai cars and giant new diggers glinting in the sun, a sign of the industrial might of South Korea, and 30°C. A transit through the bustling city of Ulsan and the towering residential high rises led to a totally different world - water lily blossoms and Tumuli Park in Gyeongju, the

site of 6th Century burial mounds at the Tombs of the Kings of the Silla Kingdom.

The excellent Gyeongju National Museum displayed artifacts from the Silla Kingdom which ruled the area from 50BCE to 700CE, as well as some from the paleolithic era. These included the gold crowns and other royal trappings as well as the saddle piece showing the Flying Heavenly Horse which was the talisman of the Silla Kingdom.

After our wonderful lunch, a delectable 15-course South Korean sampler (the dishes just kept coming!) we called into the Bulguksa Temple just a few days after the celebration of the Buddha's birthday. The Temple, with golden statues of various incarnations of the Buddha, reflecting ponds, and tended gardens were made even more beautiful next to the spectacular decorations and floral displays from the the recent celebrations. There was just enough time to visit a bamboo grove in a tranquil riverside park which, despite being planted less than 10 years ago, was already making a significant impact on the local pollution it was planted to counter.

Back on board *Heritage Adventurer* we welcomed the refreshing towels and sweet chocolate waiting for us after the day's activities. The sun was just setting as we set sail for Japan through the busy port full of ships and cranes (not of the avian sort). We are not in the 6th Century any more.



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Day 10

Saturday 10 June

Karatsu

Our day in Karatsu started with an exciting preview of Karatsu Castle commanding the skyline across the bay from where *Heritage Adventurer* had docked. First though, it was up the twisty path to the Mount Kagamiyama Observation Deck. A nice morning stroll which led to incredible vistas of the city, the sea and the intervening pine forest. Back down the hill, but soon up again - in the elevator to the base of the Castle. The best views of Karatsu came from climbing through the castle, exploring each level and its historic displays, for a more intimate view from the top.

Karatsu is famous for its enduring annual Kunchi Festival and while we weren't here for it, we enjoyed marvelling at the huge floats. Carefully crafted to frighten and inspire, it is incredible to think they are each around 200 years old!

On the Yobuko peninsula was the Nagoya Castle Museum and nearby Nagoya Castle ruins. This excellent museum was dedicated to exploring the relationship between Japan and Korea. Special attention was paid to the invasions by Japan in the 1590s, and to the enormous castle that was built at that time, but is now in ruins. Among the ruins is a reconstructed tea house where we enjoyed sampling a bit of traditional culture with a tea ceremony.

After an active day of castle exploration it was time to return to *Heritage Adventurer* where afternoon tea was waiting along with the chance to practice some origami crane making with Sarah and Phil, then learn some more about Japanese gardens and traditional tea ceremonies from Tina.

We have been treated to an absolute feast of Taiko drumming over the last few days. The performers at Karatsu also farewelled us with Taiko and certainly did their city proud. It was wonderful to see the mix of men and women perform together. They managed to not only create music with the drums and flutes, but also to show energy, style, grace, skill, precision and enthusiasm all while thoroughly enjoying themselves.



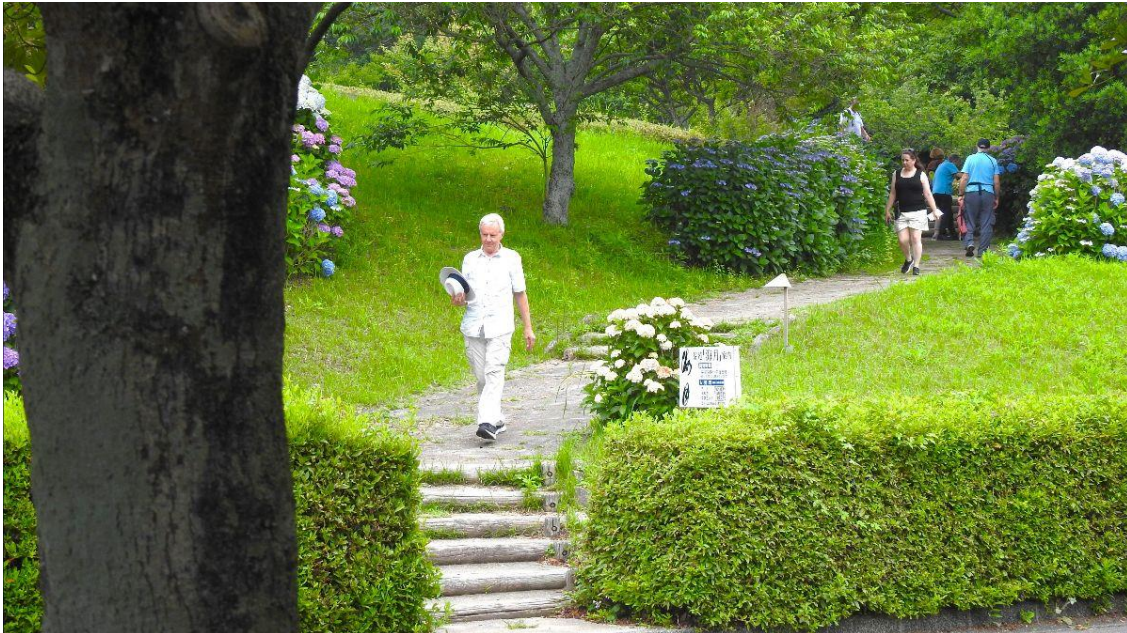
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Day 11

Sunday 11 June

Shimonoseki

We were greeted on our arrival to the Port of Shimonoseki to impressive views of Kanmon Bridge which spanned the narrow Hayatomonoseto Strait between Honshu and Kyushu Islands and featured in views from both sides of the strait during the day.

After a sharp shower, the rest of the day was cloudy but dry. This was good because several outdoor activities were planned. First was a crossing of the strait - but by tunnel, not bridge. Then a climb of a narrow, twisty, one-way road where our driver clearly proved that he was indeed "the best driver in Shimonoseki". We emerged at Mekari Park, an overlook just above the bridge with a large mural depicting the 1185 Battle of Dan-no-ura. The mix of history and nature continued with a visit to Kokura Castle, where the guides were dressed in historic period costumes, and the Shiranoe Botanical Garden, where we had a chance to get a proper walk up to the summit overlook.

We returned to our trusty expedition vessel travelling across the bridge this time. As is our habit, we were about half-and-half for staying ashore or lunching on board. The logistics were made easier today as we were docked withing easy walking distance of the Karato Market. As it was Sunday, the market was bustling with local families at play. The most unique feature was the display of deadly Puffer Fish. It requires a special license to prepare these fish due to the toxins they contain. The easy logistics continued with a stroll down the way to the Akama Shinto Shrine. This shrine tied into our earlier history as it honours the 8-year-old Emperor who was on the losing side of the Battle of Dan-no-ura and drowned. It is an elegant structure of vibrant colours.

Back on board *Heritage Adventurer*, the galley and dining room staff continued to spoil us with a sumptuous afternoon tea waiting on our return. Our adventures in origami continued, and John helped us understand some of what we have seen with his talk on Religion in Japan. As always, the evening routine was a good chance to catch-up and prepare for tomorrow, followed by yet another impossibly delicious dinner.



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Day 12

Monday 12 June

Uwajima

The weather prediction was for rain, and even thunder, so it was not a surprise when *Heritage Adventurer* arrived at Uwajima to a heavy shower. But the rain turned to drizzle along the way and soon stopped altogether. Whichever one of us in charge of the weather deserved a raise.

Our first item on the agenda was at the Doi Pearl Farm to watch experienced hands shuck a few oysters and carefully pry out pearls. We were also introduced to the other end of the process, the seeding of the oyster to produce these lustrous gems. Of course, this gave plenty of reasons not to go away empty handed and shopping bags were seen in many hands with smiling faces.

The next stop was also for local produce, albeit much more humble. The steeply terraced potato fields at Yuseumizugaura were almost unbelievable. The tour up the track gave only the barest taste of the work to create these growing patches, and the toil to farm them. These must have been (and still are) stout-hearted people. Back at the restaurant at the bottom, we were treated to the product of their labour with boiled new potatoes - a tasty mid-morning snack.

The afternoon excursion started with a climb to the top of the hill to reach Uwajima Castle. This is our second of the Japan's 12 castles remaining in their original form and is a rather different castle - much more compact and homey. The Tenshaen Garden nearby was lovely, carefully tended, and the pond full of voracious carp gave gentle reflections. Our final treat was a visit to the Nishimoto Sake Brewery for a nice family welcome, a tour of their facilities, and a sample of their award-winning products - delicious!

Back on board, Aaron shared the story of his family's achievement in his talk on Heritage Expeditions, the Story so Far. We continued to be pleased and amazed at how we keep uncovering the off-the-beaten-track and hidden gems/pearls of Japan on this voyage as there is always so much to share over drinks and dinner.



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Day 13

Tuesday 13 June

Hiroshima and Miyajima

With *Heritage Adventurer* alongside at Hiroshima, we enjoyed a tasty breakfast before disembarking our trusty expedition vessel on a short journey towards the Peace Memorial Park. Guided by Roy we were led down the streets of Hiroshima to the Peace Memorial Park and its iconic Genbaku/Atomic Bomb Dome site. We were able to visit the Children's Peace Monument where the origami cranes we had made earlier in the week were put up for display. From there we made our way towards the museum walking by memorial installations, the scent of incense was heavy in the air. We paid our respects with a moment of silence and then made our way to the museum, taking our time to absorb people's stories of life before and after the atomic bomb.

Soon it was time for lunch on board *Heritage Adventurer* before we began our adventures into Miyajima, led by Roy we walked by deer on the streets and headed towards Japan's famous 'floating Torii Gate' Itsukushima Shrine. With plenty of photo opportunities and people watching galore we each made our way through. Once out of the temple there was the option for some down time, exploring the township and heading up the hill towards the shrine.

We returned to *Heritage Adventurer* by Zodiac and enjoyed a delightful insight into the world of mangroves with Moshe as we weighed anchor and were on our way to Takamatsu.



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Day 14
Wednesday 14 June
Takamatsu

Heritage Adventurer made her way back to Shikoku Island overnight, this time to the city of Takamatsu. The trip to Ritsurin Garden was short and interesting, right through the centre of the city. So far we have been treated to a number of superb gardens – notably at Kanazawa and Uwajima, and Ritsurin easily ranked at or near the top of the list. The hundreds of years of refinement shone through, with each tree, rock, hill, bridge and teahouse carefully planned and executed. Truly a garden of poetic virtue. The botanical poetry continued with our visit to the Kinashi Bonsai Centre. The hosts have centuries of experience, taking the time and effort to make each small 'tree in a pot' unique. Besides that, they seemed to be having such fun doing it.

Lunch was either aboard *Heritage Adventurer* or ashore for the local specialty of udon noodles in town. The hillside historic village of Shikoku Mura had plenty to explore and appreciate. From the swinging vine bridge, through the historic precinct of sugar refining, soy sauce brewing, paper making and lighthouse tending, we were transported to an earlier era in an authentic manner. Added to this was the art gallery and the wonderful waterfalls, as following the climbing and falling pathways led us from one surprise to another. The Yashima-ji Temple held a variety of small shrines and statue gardens, and the atmosphere was one of calm and peace. From there it was a short walk out to the overlook of the city and the Seto Inland Sea.

Back aboard we tested our memories as Francesca turned quiz-master and a good laugh was had by all. The Captain thanked us, and his team, in the Farewell Cocktail Party and we remembered everything that had happened on the voyage from our wonderful slide show. Then it only remained to try to squeeze in as much time in the lounge or at dinner as possible, before we had to finish packing. Time has flown, and it has been a truly thrilling voyage.



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Day 15
Thursday 15 June
Osaka

Up early, bags out with the correct coloured yarn depending on our next destinations there was time to enjoy a final breakfast as *Heritage Adventurer* navigated and docked into Osaka. It was time for final exchanges of contact information with hugs and best wishes - expedition travel is not everyday life. Each day is a new adventure, experiencing moments of wonder. If we sat down at the dinner table tomorrow and waited, nothing would happen. If we put our laundry in a bag, nothing would happen. Expedition travel is a moment in life to be savoured and remembered. When we visit with family and friends back home and tell them our stories, they will nod and laugh, but they won't truly understand. You just had to be there, and we were there. Go well.



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