

EXPLORING ASIA'S SUBTROPICAL ISLANDS

on board HERITAGE ADVENTURER

14 June - 28 June 2023



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions

Day 1

Wednesday 14 June

Osaka

We meet, excited travellers from around the globe at the Hilton Osaka where we will spend the first night. Welcomed by our Expedition Leader, Nathan, and some of the Expedition Team we enjoy an evening meal together as we get to know each other and look for common backgrounds, interest and experiences followed by a night of leisure and dreams of our upcoming adventure.

Day 2

Thursday 15 June

Osaka and At Sea

Following breakfast at the hotel, we set off on the first adventure of our expedition. Travelling by coach through the busy streets, we learnt that Osaka was the third largest city in Japan and one of the busiest. However, it was only a short ride away until we were in another world walking through a quaint old street to the lushly forested slopes of Minoh Park. For most of us, a 40 minute stroll through a beautiful green valley beside a tumbling stream brought us to a spectacular waterfall over 30 metres high. Then it was time for a rest in the cool, clean air and photos of the falls before heading back downhill. Others chose to visit the nearby Minoh Park Insectarium full of fascinating entomological displays and an enclosure of beautiful butterflies.

Then it was back into the heart of the city to visit Osaka Castle, rising majestically out of a large, wooded park. Originally built in 1586, it had been destroyed by battle and fire several times until finally being restored to its current state in 1931. From the top floor we had a panoramic view over the park and across the city, while on the floors below there were fascinating displays which told the story of the castle and its significance in Japanese history. This included an exquisitely

detailed screen which depicted the Summer War of 1615, when a fierce battle saw the reigning Toyotami family defeated by the rival Tokugawa clan.

We made our way to the port and enjoyed our first glimpse of our new home, *Heritage Adventurer*. She is a beautiful ship and, as we checked in and find our cabins, we learnt she is just as beautiful and luxurious on the inside too. Greeted by the Expedition Staff and shown to the dining room for our first sample of the fare and first experience of the service. Both were first rate.

As our departure time was later in the evening, most of us opted for the optional short walk to the aquarium where we found huge tanks of exotic marine creatures. We were soon back aboard for the mandatory lifeboat drill. Our first briefing was in progress as we left the dock. It was an introduction to the vessel by the Hotel Manager, Sergiu; an introduction to the plans for the voyage by Expedition Leader, Nathan; a brief personal introduction from each member of our Expedition Team; and a look ahead at Takamatsu by Rod.

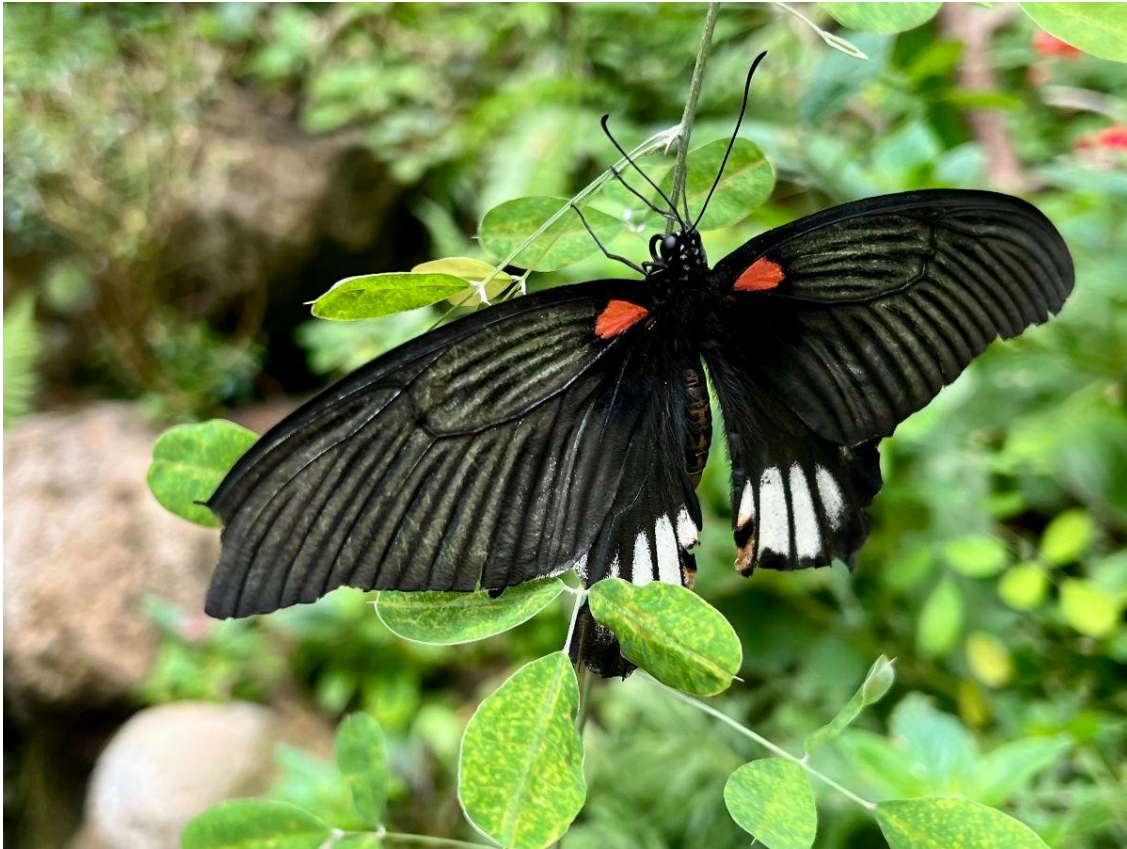
Having become familiar with the bar and lounge, along with another chance to get to know one another, we returned to the dining room for our first dinner. The menu had so many choices. We picked our favourites, and a wine to match, then the chatter continued well into the evening. What a superb start to our voyage.



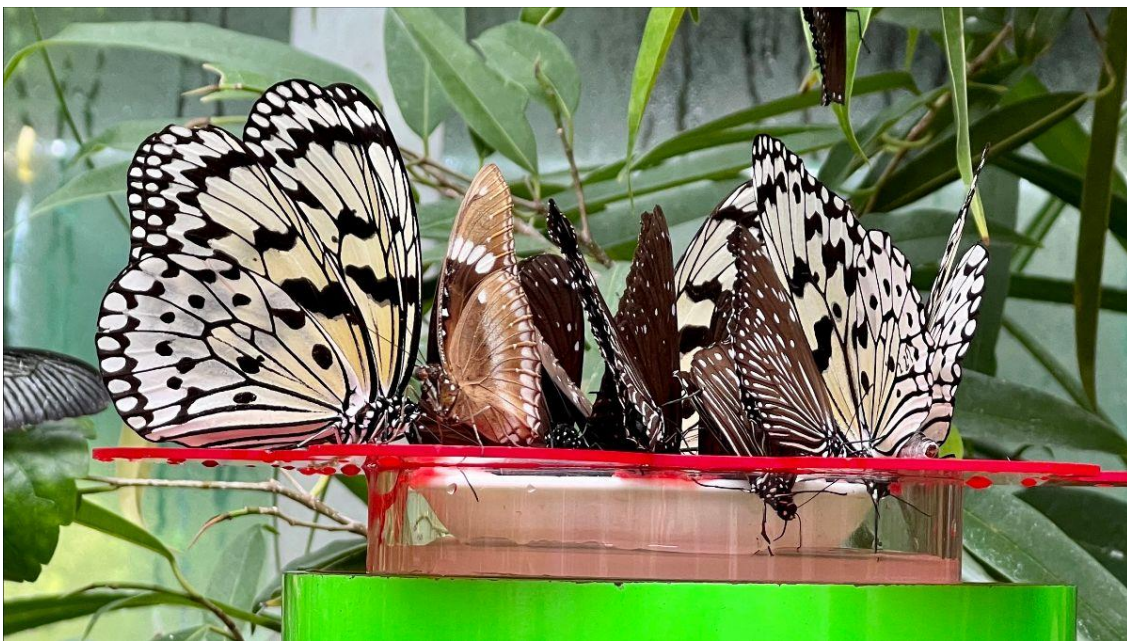
© S.Noakes, Heritage Expeditions



© N.Nightingale, Heritage Expeditions



© S.Noakes, Heritage Expeditions



© S.Noakes, Heritage Expeditions



© S.Noakes, Heritage Expeditions

Day 3
Friday 16 June
Takamatsu

Our day started as *Heritage Adventurer* sailed into the port city of Takamatsu, on the island of Shikoku, in the early morning light. Once ashore we enjoyed a gentle stroll through the famous Ritsurin Garden. It was created over 400 years ago as a series of ponds, landscaped hills and rockeries, with manicured trees and other plants, all set against the backdrop of forested Mount Shiun-zan. It was designed for the pleasure of the Daimyo, or feudal lord, of the time and remains enchanting to the present day. A series of deliberately located viewpoints gave us excellent opportunities to stop, admire and photograph this sublimely fashioned landscape.

At our next stop the plants themselves had been fashioned into art. It was Kinashi, the main Bonsai production centre of Japan. Here, on a farm handed down through five generations, we were able to marvel at the exquisitely miniaturised trees and learn about the sophisticated techniques used to create them. The most beautiful and valuable specimens had taken many decades to grow, showing the great passion, patience, and dedication required to be a Bonsai master. While some returned to *Heritage Adventurer* for lunch, others stayed in town to enjoy some local cuisine, especially the Udon noodles that Takamatsu is renowned for.

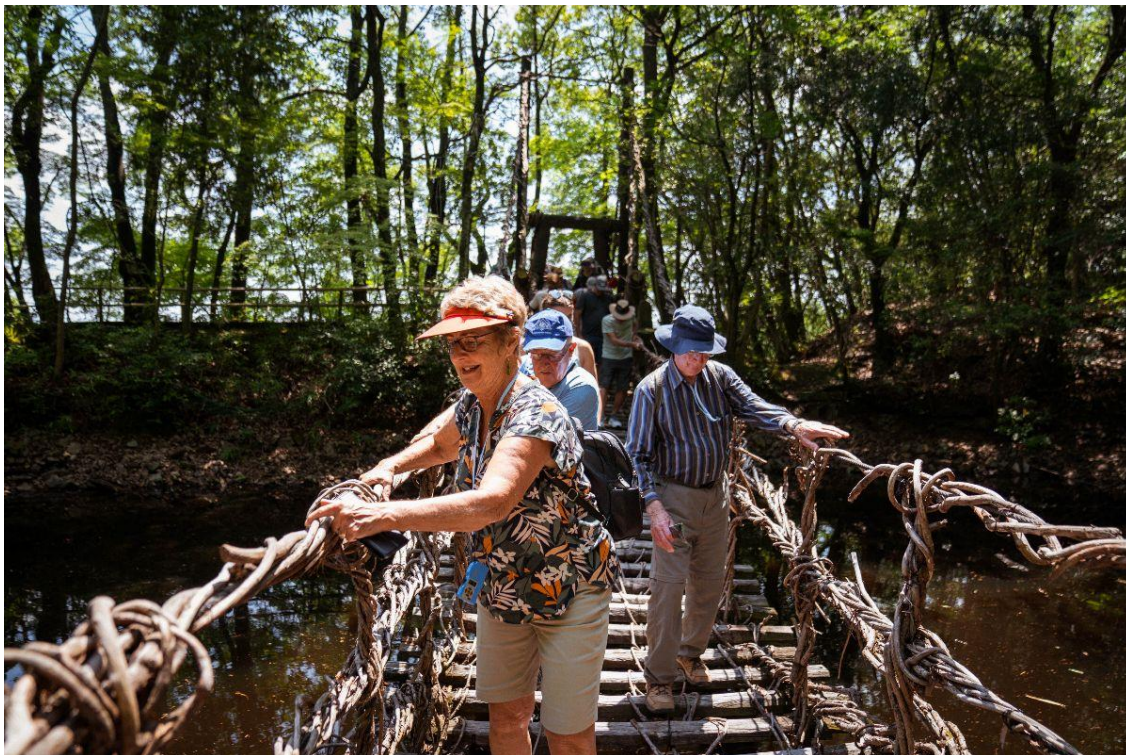
The afternoon began with a tour of the Shikoku Mura Museum, a fascinating collection of traditional houses and industrial buildings that had been rescued from all over the region and reassembled here on a forested hillside. It gave us an insight into countryside living in the 18th, 19th and early 20th Centuries, including soy and paper making, sugar cane pressing, family houses, a lighthouse and series of lighthouse keepers' cottages. Our coach then climbed up through wooded hills to Yashima-ji Temple, one of Shikoku's major pilgrimage sites. Entering through a large red torii gate, we found ourselves in a quiet courtyard with multiple temple buildings. At the main temple, a small group of pilgrims had assembled to chant prayers, adding to the wonderful atmosphere of reverence and tranquillity. Walking a little further we arrived to a spectacular viewpoint and, in the warm afternoon sun, looked out over the city and harbour of Takamatsu to the waters of the Inland Sea and the misty islands beyond.

As we arrived back at *Heritage Adventurer*, girls from the local high school entertained us with a truly impressive display of giant calligraphy on the quayside. The evening gathering in the lounge started with the Captain's Welcome Cocktail Party

and the introduction of the heads of all of the ship's departments. A Zodiac briefing prepared us to be safe as we use the boats for the first time tomorrow for the transfer to Miyajima Island. The chef and his team excelled for the Captain's Welcome Dinner with a few extra courses and options. After dinner it was Happy Hour for the folding of origami paper cranes in preparation for our visit to Hiroshima where they would be offered in memory of victims of war. So much to take in and reflect on at the end of such a full and stimulating day on our adventure through the islands of Japan.



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



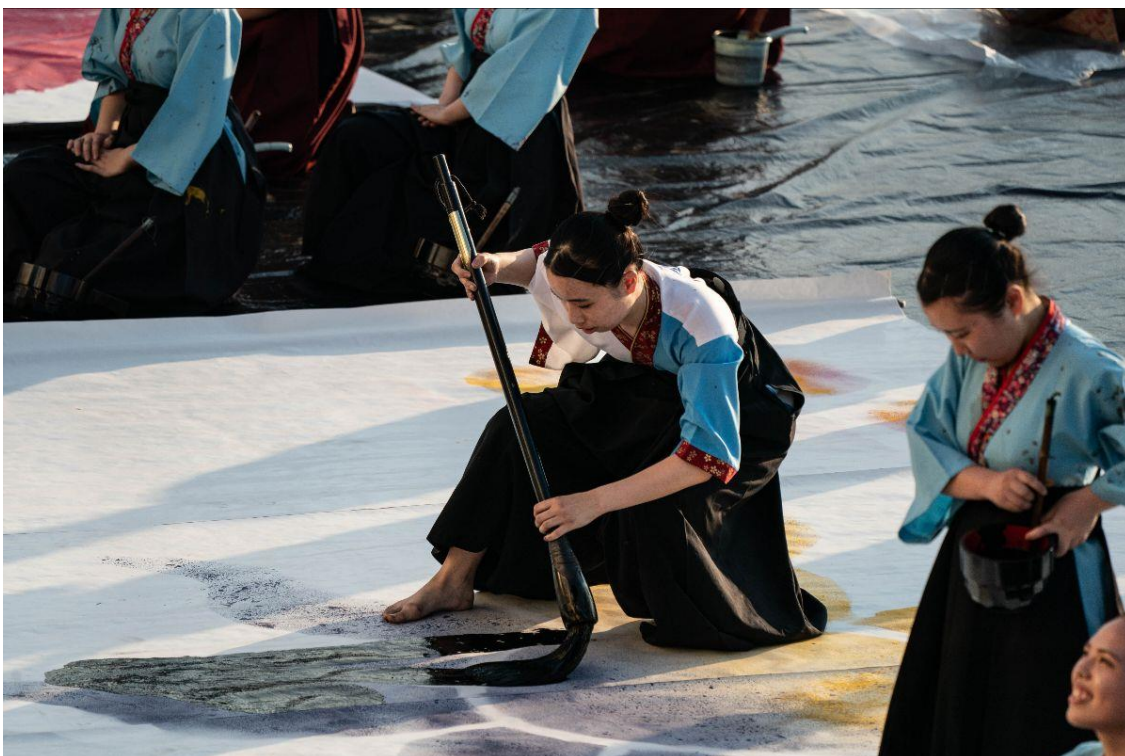
© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions

Day 4
Saturday 17 June
Hiroshima and Miyajima

The journey from *Heritage Adventurer* to Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park and Museum showed the city to be modern, busy, and pleasant as we followed wide rivers on wide boulevards to reach our destination.

The museum is intentionally confronting – showing the horror inflicted on the people of Hiroshima and warnings of the dangers of atomic weapons. At the Peace Park, a cenotaph was placed to commemorate the lives lost as a result of the blast: 40,000 in the first instance, another 100,000 in the following months, and a total of over 220,000 by the end. The walk along the Reflection Pool and Eternal Flame brought us to the memorial to Sadako Sasaki – a young girl who started the campaign to fold origami cranes as a totem of peace. Hiroshima receives more than 10 million cranes per year, including our contribution. Our walk continued to the Atomic Bomb Dome. The building, being very close to where the bomb exploded on August 6, 1945, had been left as a visible reminder of that terrible day.

After a sombre morning it was nice to have a light afternoon. We landed by Zodiac on Miyajima Island to visit Itsukushima Shrine and the other shrines, temples, and entertainment opportunities that shared the island. The tide was just coming in through the famous 'floating' torii gate as we arrived. From there we roamed at our own pace to visit the shrine, Daishoin Temple with 500 small statues of Jizo, the Five-Storeyed Pagoda, restaurants, shops, and more. The local coffee ice cream was a crowd favourite – just watch out for the deer! This was a sacred place, but the steady flow of happy families made it an enjoyable place too.

After a day full of photo opportunities, it was timely that Fiona helped us do better with the camera in our phones in her Introduction to Smartphone Photography. Dinner remained a good time to spoil our taste buds and, in the spirit of more-is-better, Happy Hour returned after dinner with Thijs giving us a Welcome to Japan presentation. Sleep came quickly and deeply soon after to end a very active day.



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions

Day 5
Sunday, June 18
Uwajima

Today we were back on the island of Shikoku, but now on the far western end at the port of Uwajima, set inside a deep bay surrounded by green hills. Famous for being the largest centre of pearl cultivation in Japan, our first visit of the morning was to a family run pearl farm. We were treated to a detailed demonstration of how one-year-old oysters are prepared to grow

cultured pearls. In a delicate surgical procedure, a tiny fragment of mantle from another oyster was inserted along with a round nucleus, around which the cultured pearl would form. The oysters were then left to grow for another year, on racks hanging in the sea, before the pearls would be harvested. As the owner of the farm pulled some oysters from the water and opened them up for us we were astonished to see, right before our eyes, shiny new pearls emerge. How amazing! Our visit concluded with a visit to the shop to view the dazzling pearl jewellery that had been created.

Apart from pearl farming and fishing, the other mainstay of the rural economy was growing potatoes and other crops. Because of the steep hills, which rose almost straight out of the sea, they were grown on impressive steep stone-built terraces which we explored on foot. We learnt that because of a declining rural population there was now insufficient labour to grow more than one crop of potatoes each year, instead of the three that are possible. Having enjoyed views of the beautiful bay from the top of the terraces we descended to a café on the quayside. Here, delicious local potatoes had been prepared for us to sample, and washed down with some fiery but smooth tasting potato spirit – the perfect accompaniment!

After a brief spell back on board for lunch, we climbed a large hill in town to explore Uwajima Castle. Surrounded by high stone walls, it was built by the local feudal lord in 1601 to ward off enemies during the Samurai period. Originally it had been constructed on the seashore but as new land was required for reclamation it was moved to its present position overlooking the city. Steep wooden steps led us up through the tower to the top floor where we enjoyed panoramic views of Uwajima city and the forested hills surrounding it.

Our final visit of the day was a brief stop at Tensha-en Gardens, which had originally been created for the enjoyment of the 7th feudal lord of Uwajima during his retirement. Near the entrance was a lovely iris garden, while deeper in a large pond was surrounded by trees, ferns and other plants, giving the manicured landscape a feeling of tranquillity.

Once back on board we were treated to lectures on the Floral Zones of Japan by Moshe and Japanese History by John, before another delicious dinner.



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions

Day 6
Monday, June 19
Yakushima Island

Overnight we made our first foray out of the Inland Sea and into the open ocean. The motion of the ocean was slightly increased but, for most, it was like rocking in the cradle and we slept soundly. Yakushima is the rainiest place in Japan, so it

was no surprise that the island's hills were hidden in the mist as we entered the port. Still, it was no more than a light to moderate drizzle as we made our way around the rugged coast and then up into the mountains to Yakusugi Land. Yakushima was granted UNESCO World Heritage status primarily due to its huge biodiversity including thousands of different plants, insects, and several mammals, many of which are endemic, in the island's climate zones. For all this, it was the impressive and ancient Sugi trees (*Cryptomeria japonica* – and remember that our botanist, Moshe, would be appalled if you called them Japanese Cedar) that featured most.

Our morning walk was through the dripping forest of Sugi, along a well-constructed walkway, with many steps taking us down to the creekside and up and over ridges. Everywhere we looked we saw evidence of past logging to make roof shingles. But, likewise, everywhere was also the evidence of recovery from the logging. The Sugi themselves, and the mossy, ferny undergrowth, glistened in the wet. The ride down was interrupted by troops of endemic Macaques warming themselves, and grooming each other, on the roadside. It was remarkable how little attention they paid to us. We made a stop at the excellent and informative Yakusugi Museum on our way back to *Heritage Adventurer* for a nice surprise lunch that featured a ramen station.

As we dined, the sun emerged and we had warm clear skies for the afternoon. This gave us extra choices on what to do next. Either stay aboard and enjoy a relaxing time by the pool, or walk into town, or travel back into the hills to the Shiratani-unsuikyo Ravine for a hike. Those who chose the walk were treated to a much different environment from the morning. The Sugi were still there with wet moss and ferns covered in raindrops, but the rushing stream with many large rapids and cascades over the granite boulders, and crossed by many bridges, added another dimension.

Before we weighed anchor we received a top notch farewell performance from a local schoolgirl brass band. Then Karen and Neil gave us their impressions of Japan: Nature and Culture. As always, the lounge was lively as we reviewed our adventures of the day and prepared for the next – including notice of a very early start. We continued to be spoiled with great food and service while the sea remained gentle before it was time to retire early in preparation for the morning.



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© C.Rayes, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions

Day 7
Tuesday, June 20
Amami Island

Our second night at sea was as gentle as the first, which was well and good because we had a shortened sleep before our earliest start of the voyage. We quickly learned that travel on Amami was on narrow roads, sometimes with open cityscapes or seascapes, but often in tunnels. We passed through green tunnels of dense forest cover and through numerous concrete

tunnels under the mountainous landscape.

We arrived at the Amami Nature Observation Forest early to have the best chance of finding wildlife during the active morning hours. The call of the Ryukyu Robin told us that they were around, but they remained hidden. Our local guides Tsuneda and John were very valuable knowing where to look for all the best amphibian encounters. We spotted Sword-tail Newts both male and female, along with giant frogs in the very clean pond, and plenty of tadpoles or maybe newt-poles which was a welcomed insight to the healthy ecosystem. We meandered our way through the tracks spotting spider webs covered in dew and epiphyte orchids flowering high up in the trees. Treading lightly, we took photographs with long lasting memories of the hazy mist, damp underfoot, and the smell of the bush as it came alive with the rain.

Residents at the Oshima Tsumugi Kimono Village have been creating fine silk kimonos for more than 1300 years. We were fortunate to watch the dyeing process as skilled workers manipulated the fabric within the iron rich muddy rice paddy. The fabric was then unwoven to create a thread for the warp and weft of the fabric. We were able to watch the ladies' hard at work by their looms, creating 7 centimetres of fabric per hour, as they meticulously aligned the warp and weft strands to create the desired pattern. In the past the kimono was believed to protect the wearer's soul with a supernatural power. Even with these enticements, we resisted. The shop was filled with silk pieces of varying designs. After marvelling at such history, art and beauty, it was back to nature with a walk on Ose Beach. We split into 2 parties – some went bird watching and fossicking in the tidepools while others chose to refresh themselves with a quick dip in the warm sea and even a beer.

After lunch aboard, we visited Kuroshio-no-Mori Mangrove Park and the Amami-Oshima World Heritage Center. The mangrove forests served as a critical habitat for many species enabling us to spot Mudskippers, Soldier Crabs, and more. We had warm rain with occasional thunder during our visit but, luckily, we were all prepared with either umbrellas, raincoats, or just prepared to enjoy the warm and wet sandy mud.

The ever-generous hospitality teams had been busy while we were away. Our return to *Heritage Adventurer* was met with ice cream being served on the aft deck as another lively music and dance performance from the dock bid us farewell. Moshe then continued our education with his talk on Mangroves – How Do They Survive in the Salty Sea? We had been up early, so it was nice that the lounge sessions and dinner were pushed forward a bit. We enjoyed them, and dinner, as always and a few even made it to Happy Hour. The sea promised to provide a bit more motion as the swell increased, so we secured our cabins before we drifted off.





© R.Morris, Heritage Expeditions



© R.Morris, Heritage Expeditions



© R.Morris, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions

Day 8
Wednesday, June 21
Okinawa

We passed through a storm overnight, so our arrival at Okinawa provided heat and humidity but no rain. The morning excursion began with a visit to Shuri Castle, which was reconstructed after being levelled during the Battle of Okinawa. We knew that the impressive limestone walls were not original, but they were impressive nonetheless. Despite the fact that the main building is still under construction after a fire in 2019, we enjoyed the view over the city and marvelled at the ability to build such a structure in the 14th Century. From there we had something completely different – a walk through the caves and along the river through subtropical forest at the Valley of Gangala. Our local guide, and Moshe, kept us well informed as we encountered a variety of plant species. The explanation of human remains found in the cave showed how people have migrated from other parts the globe.

From there things became even more interesting. We had options to visit the Former Japanese Navy Underground Headquarters, the Mashiki Market, or both, and to have lunch in the market or back aboard. Add in coach and taxi logistics, sometimes with guides and sometimes on our own, we made the most of our opportunities. The former headquarters, now museum, is housed in tunnels dug by the Japanese Navy to support their last defence. It was here where the high command took their own life, and where more than 1,000 remains were collected during re-opening. Most of all it was a monument to the suffering of the 120,000 Okinawans who lost their lives in battle – more than a third of the population. The market was lively and interesting, and those that stayed on for lunch were well satisfied – as were those that returned to *Heritage Adventurer*.

The Pool Bar opened after lunch, and shortly after departure Courtney and Fi prepared us for fish spotting and underwater photography as we were briefed on snorkelling operations and issued our gear. Practice in the pool was a useful option for first-timers. John continued our education and understanding of Religion in Japan. As always, plenty of chatter at recap and dinner. Neil and Karen made the Happy Hour drinks an entertaining event by showing us how to improve our Creative Photography.



© S.Noakes, Heritage Expeditions



© S.Noakes, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions

Day 9
Thursday, June 22
Miyakojima

As the shuttle bus dropped us at the cruise terminal our welcoming committee commented that it was going to be a hot day, and if it was hot for the locals then we knew we were in for some sweat. Pity for the poor person bouncing up-and-down in the foam-covered mascot costume. The journey to Ikema Island past sugar cane and white sand beaches re-enforced the

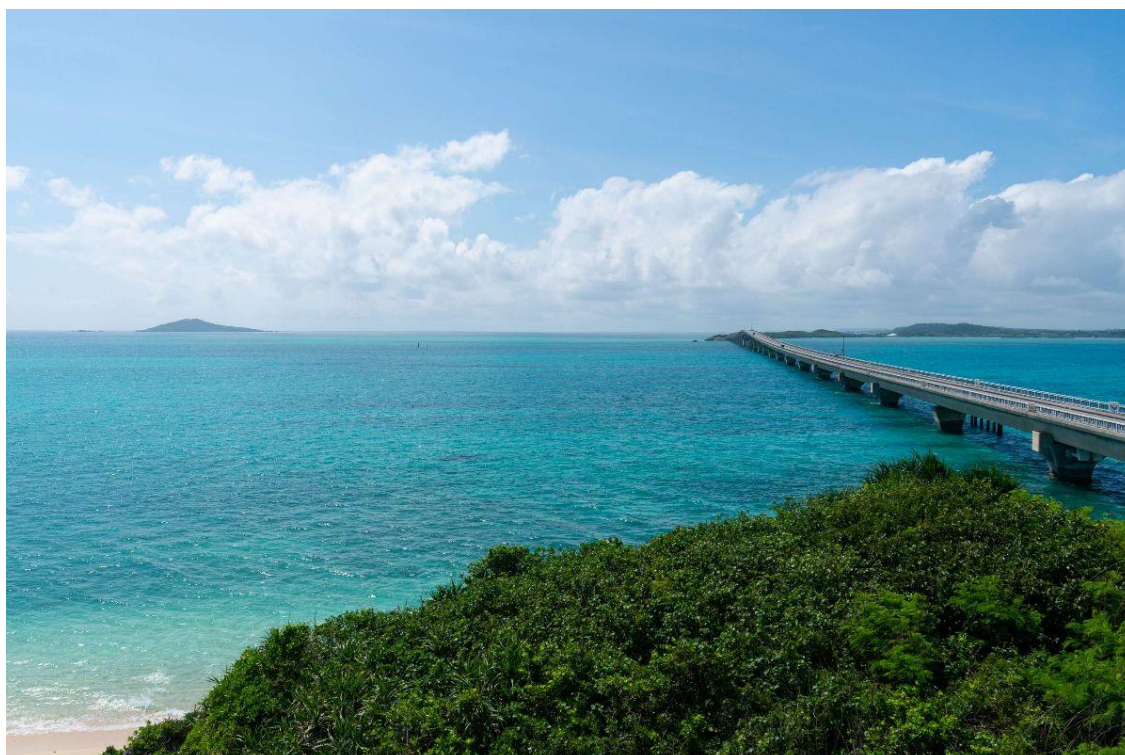
knowledge that we were heading to the tropics and leaving Japan behind.

The walk into the wetlands was through dense bush including *pandanus*, *hibiscus*, and sugar cane fields. Many insects were busy, notably many butterflies and the Flutterer Dragonflies, while the nearby viewing platform gave us sightings of Purple Heron, Little Egret, Bridled Tern and diving ducks. From there we stopped to admire the view of the bridge connecting Ikema Island to the main island – the azure blue water set it off beautifully. The Miyakojima Marine Park allowed us to descend below sea level and use special windows to view the fish with our clothes on. Great fun!

We made our way to the south coast of Miyakojima to visit the Ingya Marine Garden. This was a place with something for everyone. A group set off to the trails with our naturalists Moshe and Rod where they summited the small hill to get a full panorama of the coral-filled bay. Others paddled out into the sheltered bay, or beyond, for a swim. Most opted to try out our snorkels. From the beach the warm shallow water welcomed us. With optional extra flotation for beginners, or access under the bridge into the outer bay for the more experienced, we all had fun. The fish and the coral were easily found, and one lucky group were able to observe a friendly turtle as it swam along the limestone cliffs.

Back to the cruise terminal we had our passports checked as we exited Japan. Sadly this meant saying goodbye to Roy-san, The Best Guide In Japan. He had been a wonderful contributor to our group and our voyage, and will be missed. Nonetheless, we carried on. A cool beverage went down nicely at lunch, then Courtney showed some images taken earlier at Ingya Beach and explained aspects of marine symbiosis in her talk Relationships on the Reef. Ever vigilant that we not die of thirst or hunger, the hospitality team had the bar opened and afternoon tea served as we did the online paperwork to prepare ahead of time for our arrival to The Philippines.

At the briefing, Tropical Gannet were feeding around the ship and we learned that we would get one extra hour sleep overnight due to changing to Taiwan time. The precap prepared us for our first day in Taiwan at Keelung. Dinner and Happy Hour completed another fabulous day on this wonderful adventure.



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© C.Rayes, Heritage Expeditions



© C.Rayes, Heritage Expeditions



© S.Noakes, Heritage Expeditions

Day 10
Friday, June 23
Taipei, Taiwan

We cleared immigration and customs into Taiwan and were met by a contingent of drummers, two very swanky coaches, and our local guides. First stop was a shop and factory for pineapple cakes. We were each given dough, pineapple jam, a mould and instructions. In no time our kitten cakes were in the oven and we were in the shop sampling the varieties available. Ten minutes later we were trying to find and sample our own creations. Warm handmade pineapple cakes – a yummy way to stay the excursion.

Our stop at the large and impressive Martyrs' Shrine was touching as we arrived just in time for the changing of the guard. Their precision and dignified manoeuvres made clear the respect in which the dead are held. Then something completely different as we trundled off to the riverside to watch a couple of heats of the Dragon Boat Festival. We happened to be in Taipei for the holiday that marks these races. It was very clear that real effort and skill were required to make these large heavy boats go. We might stick to our Zodiacs.

We had a sumptuous nine-course lunch at a very stylish restaurant on the grounds of the National Palace Museum which held three floors full of amazing treasures. We picked our favourites from the jade, books, bronze, paintings, porcelain and more. So many truly beautiful works of art and antiquity. Then another transition to something completely different as we stopped at the Taipei 101 high-rise tower. The downpour made our approach a bit tricky, but we all managed it. Some chose to visit the 89th floor Observatory while the rest window shopped in the up-scale arcade. So many modern treasures on display with names like Tiffany, Gucci, Dior, De Beers, and all the other luxury brands.

Having returned to *Heritage Adventurer*, some stayed to relax on board, but a hearty contingent made the 15-minute walk to the Keelung Miaokou Night Market to experience a full-on sensory assault in the press of the huge crowd. It was a great opportunity to sample the remarkable assortment of exotic treats; and to enjoy a bit of people watching. A yummy way to end an altogether yummy day.



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions

Day 11
Saturday, June 24
Hualien, Taiwan

Our arrival dockside was greeted with singing and dancing, then it was through the terminal to reconnect with our guides from Taipei who had travelled south by train. Their claim that Taiwan was the most mountainous island on earth was supported by the view to the west where huge peaks followed us on our journey north. We turned west into Taroko National

Park where we learned the story of its construction in the late 1950s by thousands of labourers. It was virtually hand-hewn out of the marble cliffs. Walking through Swallow Grotto Trail and the Tunnel of Nine Turns Trail gave us some appreciation for their efforts. More than that, it gave us stunning views up and down the canyons. The gorges were remarkable for their rugged natural beauty, and complemented by the dramatic tunnels. During the road construction 226 men lost their lives. Our last stop in the park was at a shrine to their memory – Changchun Shrine, also known as the Eternal Spring Shrine. There, a huge natural spring roared out of the hillside, into a river and past three golden images of Buddha.

For lunch, a restaurant ran by indigenous people was chosen. It was a great choice with many unusual and tasty dishes including sticky rice in a bamboo container that required smashing the bamboo on the rocks to get the rice. There was a whole grilled fish, spicy peppers, deep fried tofu, greens in fish sauce, and more. The restaurant also served as a factory and shop for weaving and wood carving.

We rode back into town and stopped at the beach at Qixingtang Scenic Area. The locals were out in numbers on this holiday weekend – walking, shopping, eating ice cream and building stone towers on the gravelly beach, so we joined in. The hospitality team must have missed us because, as usual, we came aboard to be greeted with cool towels and iced tea. Aren't we spoiled? Another very full outing came to a close as we cleared immigration out of Taiwan, set course for the Philippines, and enjoyed afternoon tea in the lounge. What a remarkable two days of contrasts in Taiwan we have had.

As always, there was more to come. Moshe helped us to understand A Journey Between Two Worlds - The Origin and Distribution of Tropical Edible Plants. Later we had our recap and precap, including Sarah on Taiwanese bubble tea, and we chatted over dinner about the adventure. Happy Hour finished the day for those who were not already dreaming about tomorrow.



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions

Day 12
Sunday, June 25
Batan Island, Philippines

With the rather longer transit, we did not arrive at Batan Island until late morning which meant we could enjoy a sleep-in and leisurely breakfast. The Philippine officials were aboard, so we were able to pass our health check and complete the remaining formalities in the bistro. The lounge was our next stop for Karen and Neil's presentation on The Ring of Fire. An early lunch on arrival meant that we were ready for the next chapter of our expedition at midday.

We then boarded into our Zodiacs for the transfer to Basco Port. From there we transferred onto a caravan of minivans which followed a concrete ribbon of road along seaside cliffs, past falling rock warnings, up twisty hills, down steep hills, and around countless hairpin bends – all while getting great views of the lush green hills.

Everywhere we went was delightful. Batan's Basco Lighthouse was clean and cheerful with a great view of our trusty *Heritage Adventurer* in the deepest of deep blue seas. Our adventures through the Dipnaysupuan Japanese Tunnel was followed by time spent admiring breadfruit trees and a nearby Asian Water Buffalo. We then navigated through the traditional thatched cottages of a nearby fishing village to see the local fisherman using a cast net, and colourful boats, for their daily catch.

The next stop was the refreshment stand at the ridgeline with the four 'Gorgeous Girls' in the 'G' tops serving cool drinks and snacks while we wandered out among the cows to enjoy the view. The walk through the village of fortified stone houses showed that some of them were derelict, but it also showed the gardens and home lives of the residents – and the children were, you guessed it, delightful!

We were then surprised with two options for our time – to go for a swim or go for a walk in Basco Port. Those of us who chose to swim descended into a rocky cove to cool off, while the rest of us found the port to be decorated in preparation for the Batanes Day celebration to be celebrated the following day.

Soon after we were back at sea in our Zodiacs, and it was good to get a taste of the tropical pleasures to come – especially for those continuing past Manila. Our briefing back at *Heritage Adventurer* showed us what to expect next, and dinner was delightful as always!



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions

Day 13
Monday, June 26
Vigan

When our Expedition Leader Nathan told us at our introduction that we were going to need a holiday when we returned home from our expedition, he might have had today in mind. After breakfast we rode our Zodiacs across a glassy sea to Currimao Port - over there behind the tugboat. Then it was over the bow box with the sailor's grip, and onto the dock for a greeting of local music and dancers with paddles, fish and cooking pots.

The Basilica of John the Baptist was quite a change from the Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples of Japan and Taiwan. We

were able to get right up and around the beautiful and extravagant altar. At the Luna House we learned of the two brothers who were key figures in Philippine art and revolution.

We then visited a local furniture factory that was all chainsaws and sawdust on the outside, and smooth finished furniture in the showroom with rocking recliners that were a hit. Walking past the three stories of school children hanging out the windows to wave to us was also good fun.

At the Pagburnayan Pottery Factory we lucked into being there on the one day every two months when they run the kiln. We were kept plenty busy admiring the skills of the potters at their wheels and their wonderful products kept in the storeroom.

We then ventured to The Hidden Garden Restaurant for cooking lessons, dancing lessons, and excellent local food – not to mention a lovely garden. It was a pleasant, fun, shady, tasty, entertaining interlude to our day. Horse-drawn carriages gave us an opportunity to tour through the streets full of scooters and sidecars on our way to the museum. In this modern, stylish and informative museum we were presented with the long and varied history of how the city's architecture had been influenced by history and climate.

Our arrival at the preserved colonial district of Calle Crisologo overlapped with the rainy season showing us that it often rains in the afternoon. Always prepared, we had our umbrellas, raincoats, and selection of cafes and shops to keep dry and get a good view of this amazing area. A police escort sped our return to the *Heritage Adventurer* for a quick change and shower. We then gathered in the lounge for a preview of the corals and 100+ islands that awaited the next day. It was hard to imagine that we were headed into the last full day of the voyage, and we were excited to make the most of it.



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions

Day 14
Tuesday, June 27
Hundred Islands National Park

Our run of hot, humid, windless days continued as our Zodiacs made their way to the landing beach on Quezon Island in the Hundred Islands National Park. Here we received a very energetic song and dance welcome on the beach. Colourful outrigger motor boats provided our transport around the park's many islands, with a local guide to help us interpret this

incredible new world. The cruise took us very close to many of the limestone islands – often mushroom shaped by the sea, and sometimes with caves. The bird life was in evidence including Grey and White Herons and Terns.

First we visited Pilgrimage Island to climb the 185 steps to the base of Christ the Saviour, a giant statue of Jesus, and enjoyed the view. We then arrived at Mayor's Island for a chance to swim and snorkel. The water was just the perfect temperature, the beach was sandy and gentle, and those who went snorkelling saw a variety of corals and reef fish. Our final stop at the Giant Clam Garden was the best snorkelling of the visit, featuring some striking blue staghorn coral and a large number of giant clams. The clams were indeed huge and dappled with lovely colourful spots along their openings.

Our lunch was well-earned, and then we had the rest of the day aboard to enjoy whatever activity took our fancy. Some of us attended Rob's presentation on The Vanishing Treasures of the Philippine Rainforest, while others visited the Pool Bar for a swim and a beverage. Some gathered in the Observation Lounge for some reading or a game; and the rest of us took the relaxing opportunity for a snooze in the afternoon.

Nathan shared the incredible history of his family business with Heritage Expeditions: The Story so Far and tempted us with the wide variety of destinations on offer. A bit later in the evening we joined together in the lounge for the Captain's Farewell Cocktails and a review of the expedition with a viewing of our slide show. It was fantastic to view all that we have seen and experienced in such a short time. Smiles all round. The Captain's Farewell Dinner excelled the normal excellent fare and service as we carried on well into the evening.

Then it was a quick pack of the bags for those leaving the ship, a chance to think about Manila for those travelling back to back on Undiscovered Philippines & Indonesia, and a final Happy Hour drink for all.



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions

Day 15
Wednesday, June 28,
Manila

We arrived in the capital city of Manila and, for those disembarking, the bags were out at 0700 as we came down for breakfast. Then the morning went far too quickly as we said farewell to our new-found friends and wished them well for their

onward travels. Those who stayed aboard had a chance to visit Manila or have a rest day. As always, there were no bad options as those disembarking set for on new adventures.



© F.Wardle, Heritage Expeditions