

# NIPPON NEWS

10 Day Tour of Japan | March 2023 | Heather and Blayze

## Blayze's Impressions

Today we took a tour with a personal guide to Tsukiji markets, and Asakusa including Sensou-ji, and a relatively small Shinto shrine next to it. At the Tsukiji market we bought sweet beans, umeboshi sesame seeds, mango, and traditional Japanese Yakitori which is chicken on a skewer.

After that we hopped on a few more trains where I accidentally left my phone on a train. I realised that my phone wasn't in my pocket but somebody grabbed it, and took it up to the window, where I saw it, but the train had left! The guide went to the conductor, and told the conductor our troubles in Japanese. Eventually we went to the next station and the phone was there.

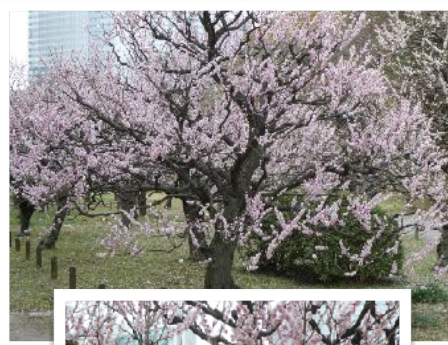
We then managed to get to Asakusa. At the temple I put a one hundred yen coin which is 1 AUD in a coin hole. I shook a box full of sticks and took a stick with a symbol on it. I opened a drawer according to which symbol was on the stick, and found a piece of paper saying our fortune. After that we entered a shrine in which we prayed to the Kami of the shrine.

After finishing our visit to Sensou-ji I purchased a Yukata which is similar to a Kimono, a Maori which is the jacket like top that goes over the Yukata, and an Obi which is the belt to hold up your Yukata. I asked the guide where I can get Taiyaki. Taiyaki is a waffle like dessert which is made in a fish mould with red bean paste inside. Delicious.

## Long Day in Tokyo

Eight hours of walking and train hopping with a Japanese private guide — Chie, was our fun today. We could have gone on another tour with the group but I thought that itinerary was too limited.

The Outer Fish Market was first. It sells a lot more than fish however. There are lots of dried and shrink wrapped goodies and fresh vegetables also.





The saga of Blayze leaving his phone on the train was an interesting one in that it demonstrated what our guide said to us yesterday. Honesty and efficiency apparently abound in this place. If a lost item is not found and returned it is because a non Japanese person was involved — apparently. Everywhere you go it is exceptionally clean. No rubbish bins are found around the town in general. People are expected to take their rubbish with them and dispose of it properly.

My highlight today was probably the Hama-rikyu Gardens developed about 300 years ago. They were originally a sea side residence of some of the Shogun's family. It later became a favourite place for the samurai to hunt ducks. Chie showed us a little channel that was cleverly arranged to lure ducks into the main pond by using decoys. The pond (that is connected to the sea via a lock) has a lovely little tea house that juts out into the water. Chie sat with us on the tatami mats and explained how to correctly consume the green tea and lovely little sweets — mine was filled with bean paste. I could not sit correctly (because of the infirmity of old age) but Blayze managed it. We were even able to walk amongst some early blooming cherry blossom. It is a little oasis with the backdrop of steel and glass.

The next really fun thing was our late afternoon visit to a ramen noodle place. We all slurped up the contents. Even I managed the chop sticks. Food eating and sampling was a great part of the fun today.

The other great fun for the day was watching Blayze getting measured up for the kimono he wanted. Our guide and the shop lady were fussing over him, talking in Japanese and deciding what was best. The shop attendant told him he was going to be a very handsome man. That was even AFTER he had paid for the kimono (a cotton one which only cost about \$20). The prices here have been amazingly cheap. After that adventure, we passed by a second hand kimono shop, so of course we went in and another purchase of a over jacket for the kimono was made. It cost \$11!!

The temple area near the old town was quite crowded and frequented by many young girls and couples dressed beautifully in kimonos. The temple complex is over 1000 years old — the oldest in Tokyo. Chie showed Blayze how to get a fortune reading. What I loved about that is that they are very clever about getting their donations by telling folk that if their fortune is not a favourable one, they can leave it tied to a rack and their misfortune will float away. If the fortune is a good one, they take it with them.



