

TRAVELS NOW AND THEN

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JAPAN 1993

Sun. Apr.4, 1993

Flew United Airlines 897 from LAX to Narita, Tokyo, Japan.

Train to Ueno and Shinkansen to Sendai.



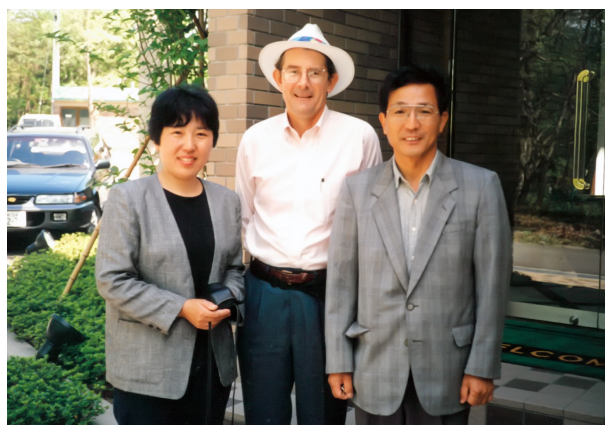
With Professor Shima at Tohoku University, Sendai



Poster of talk at Tohoku University



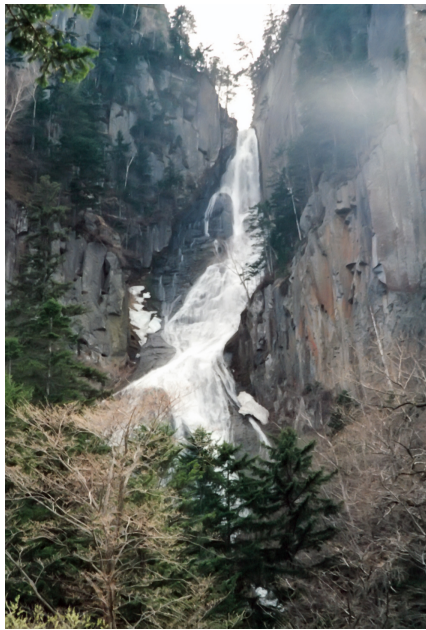
Summit of Mount Zao, near Sendai



With Sachie and Kenjiro Kamijo at Zao Mets



Hiking with Kenjiro Kamijo in Zao



Hiking With Sachie and Kenjiro Kamijo at Zao

Mon. Apr.5, 1993

Tues. Apr.6, 1993

Wed. Apr.7, 1993

Thurs. Apr.8, 1993

Fri. Apr.9, 1993

Lunch with Oki? at Prince Hotel, Shinagawa

Sat. Apr.10, 1993

Flew JAS651 from Itami (Osaka) to Kagoshima and JAC513 from Kagoshima to Tanegashima. Met by JAXA personel who drove us to the test and launch facility on Tanegashima Island.

Sun. Apr.11, 1993



Imperial Palace, Tokyo



Golden Temple, Kyoto

Mon. Apr.12, 1993

Tues. Apr.13, 1993

Flew JAC502 from Yakushima Island to Kagoshima and JAS810 from Kagoshima to Fukuoka.

Wed. Apr.14, 1993

Thurs. Apr.15, 1993

Fri. Apr.16, 1993

Flew JAS931 from Fukuoka to Sendai.

Sat. Apr.17, 1993

Sun. Apr.18, 1993

Mon. Apr.19, 1993

Tues. Apr.20, 1993

Wed. Apr.21, 1993

Flew JL845 from Sendai to Sapporo.

Thurs. Apr.22, 1993

Fri. Apr.23, 1993

Sat. Apr.24, 1993

Sun. Apr.25, 1993

Mon. Apr.26, 1993

Tues. Apr.27, 1993

Wed. Apr.28, 1993

Thurs. Apr.29, 1993

Fri. Apr.30, 1993

Sat. May 1, 1993

Sun. May 2, 1993

Flew JL512 from Sapporo to Haneda, Tokyo

Mon. May 3, 1993

Tues. May 4, 1993

Climbing Omine-san with Tsujimoto.



Omine-san prohibition!



Climbing on Ominesan trail.



Yamabushi pilgrims near summit.



Yamabushi rite of passage.



With Tsujimoto on Ominesan summit.

Wed. May 5, 1993

Flying gliders on Mr.Oba's hill outside Osaka.



Flying gliders with Tsujimoto on Mr.Oka's hill.

Thurs. May 6, 1993



Approximate date: Himeji Castle.

Fri. May 7, 1993

Sat. May 8, 1993



Approximate date: Hiroshima Peace Park.

Sun. May 9, 1993

Mon. May 10, 1993

Flew Japan Air Service 651 from Itami to Kagoshima and then JAC 502 from Kagoshima to Tanagashima.
Visit to and tour of NASDA Space Center in Tanagashima.



Tanagashima Space Center.



Tanagashima Space Center.



Tanagashima Space Center.

Tues. May 11, 1993

Ferry from Tanagashima to Yakushima.
Car tour of Yakushima.



Outdoor, seashore onsen on Yakushima.

Wed. May 12, 1993 Climbed ?? on Yakushima Island. Japanese macaques.



Japanese macaques on Yakushima.



Summit of Kuromi-dake on Yakushima.

Where Japan's mainland succumbs to the sea, and roads peter out into sad endings, the journey doesn't end. The archipelago stretches down in a chain of semi-tropical volcanic islands almost to Taiwan, extending Japan's influence and culture far beyond the shores of Kyushu. The very isolation that surrounds each of these islands creates an individuality, an inevitable feeling of separateness.

The island of Yakushima, a four-hour ferry trip south from the port of Kagoshima in southern Kyushu, is a pristine wilderness of lofty peaks and ancient rain forests, with a small population living around the coast. Part of the Yaku-Kirishima National

Park (Japan's first), the island is home to several endemic species of animals and plants including the *Yakuzaru* (Yaku monkey), the *Yakushika* (Yaku deer) and the symbol of Yakushima, the enormous *Yakusugi* cedar tree.

Ages-Old Roots

Most people visiting the quiet little port town of Miyanoura head straight for the forest. A road leads up to the trailhead at Shiradani Gorge and, after filling my water bottle at a mountain stream, I started up the trail. Right away, the forest seemed to speak to me. Magnificent trees, living for hundreds or thousands of years, stood in silence, but the forest was a living, breathing place. Water rushed by, birds sang out their cryptic songs, and tiny lizards scampered out of my path.

The grand cedars are splendid to behold. Their roots spread out across the forest floor like slithery serpents, and their gnarled trunks

rise upward toward the sky. Rocks, fallen branches and stumps are covered by a thick carpet of green moss, and a rich aroma of leaves and earth hangs in the air.

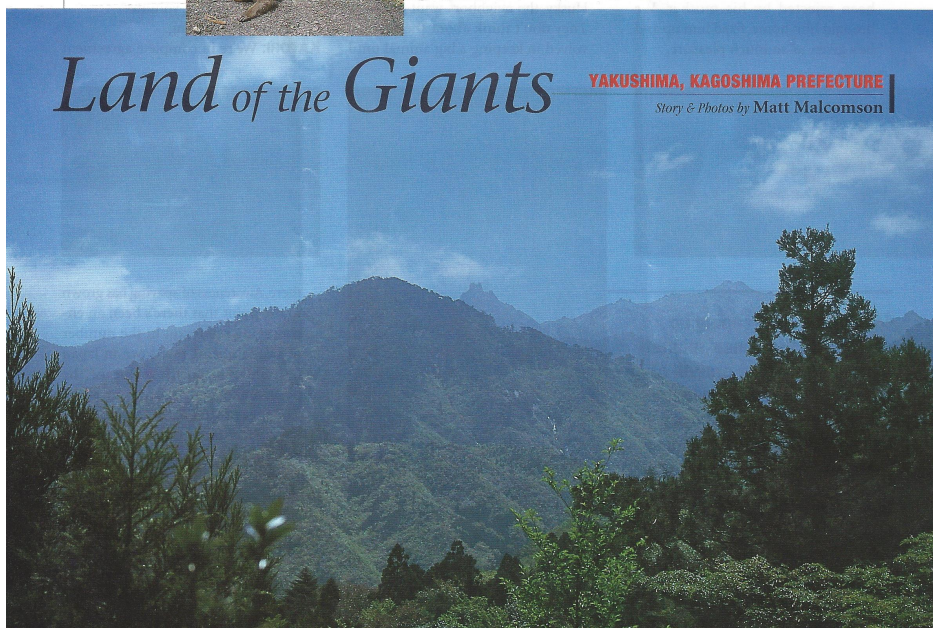
Even during a major national holiday, the trail was eerily deserted; the few souls I did meet were all going in the opposite direction. Most had started early, and were on their way back from visiting the two oldest and most famous trees. Wilson Kabu is an enormous stump of a Yakusugi that was cut down in 1586, and re-discovered in 1914 by American botanist Ernest Wilson. The stump sits in shadowy rain forest a strenuous few hours' hike up the trail; moss covers everything, and mist hangs in the air. The stump is hollow—with an area of ten tatami mats, it's big enough to accommodate a car!—and houses a shrine built for the tree's *kami*, or spirit. Further on up the steep trail is Jomon Sugi. This huge tree has a trunk 4.5 meters wide

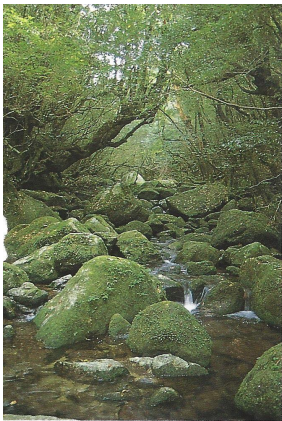


Land of the Giants

YAKUSHIMA, KAGOSHIMA PREFECTURE

Story & Photos by Matt Malcomson





and is named after the period when it first started growing—roughly 3,000 years ago. Branches and roots spread chaotically about, a process that must have begun before Japan was even a nation.

‘No Clothes Allowed’

For three days I hiked over the mountains, spending my nights in small mountain huts. These were simple, unmanned affairs with wooden floors where hikers could spread their sleeping bags. As the sun slid behind the mountains and the darkness consumed everything, people inside would light their lanterns and stoves. A short-wave radio buzzed with the following day’s weather forecast, while soft voices and the smell of sake drifted through the semi-darkness to where I lay.

I met civilization again at a forestry track above the somewhat touristy Yakusugi Land. Built for those wanting to see the cedars without the strain of the climbing, Yakusugi Land has some nice trails laid out through the forest lasting 30 minutes to an hour. Tour buses and taxis climb the gravel road that leads up to it from the town of Ambo on the east coast. For a ¥300 admission fee, you are free to wander along the different paths among the various marked trees. It’s rather less of an adventure, but beautiful all the same.

After a few days in the mountains, I headed for the south coast and the hot spring bath set into the rocks on the beach. Waves come right up to the edge of the *onsen*, making for a unique experience. A sign indicates that clothing is not allowed into the bath, and there are no separate places for men and women. Frazzled old men sit there unabashedly sunning themselves, contentedly looking on as countless women read the sign, look at the men, and make their exit.

beautiful coral formations as a hiding place. Crabs scurried away as soon as they saw me, and overhead two hawks danced in the sky.

Yakushima’s unique ecosystem, with its rare and endemic species, are luckily protected. Most of the island, except for the narrow inhabited strip around the coast, were put on UNESCO’s list of World Natural Heritage sites a few years back. It’s comforting to know that the island will stay much as it is for years to come. ■



Back to Nature

In the last year, a new resort-style hotel has opened on Yakushima. Otherwise, the accommodation is simple but adequate. My favorite was a campsite on the southwest coast in a field overlooking the sea. The ocean current called *Kuroshio* that comes up from Southeast Asia means the sea temperature here is warm, and enables a wide variety of marine life not normally found at this latitude to survive. Before breakfast one day I clambered over the rocks on the shore to see the various tide pools, and saw several varieties of coral growing beneath the water. Small multicolored fish darted back and forth using the

GETTING THERE

Although Yakushima’s coastal areas are warm and pleasant most of the year, the mountains are much wetter and colder. The best time for hiking here is in summer—but don’t forget your raingear. Yakushima is served by local flights from Kagoshima airport, or by ferry and hydrofoil from Kagoshima and Miyazaki. (Note: the hydrofoils have limited baggage space and do not transport bicycles or other large items.)

ANA Service to Kagoshima			
Tokyo		Kagoshima	Tokyo
9:30	—	11:10	8:25 — 10:05
11:30	—	13:10	12:30 — 14:10
13:00	—	14:40	14:30 — 16:10
15:30	—	17:10	16:30 — 18:10
19:00	—	20:40	18:40 — 20:20

Schedules are subject to change. Please call ANA Reservation (0120-029-222) in advance to confirm the flight time.

Thurs. May 13, 1993

Flew JAC 502 from Yakushima to Kagoshima and then JAS 931 from Kagoshima to Fukuoka. Visit to Kagoshima between flights?

Fri. May 14, 1993

Seminar in Kyushu University and dinner with Nakasake.

Sat. May 15, 1993

Sun. May 16, 1993

Flew JAS 931 from Fukuoka to Sendai.

Mon. May 17, 1993



At Kamijo's lab, NASDA (JAXA) Kakuda Space Propulsion Laboratory, Miyagi, Japan.

Tues. May 18, 1993

Wed. May 19, 1993

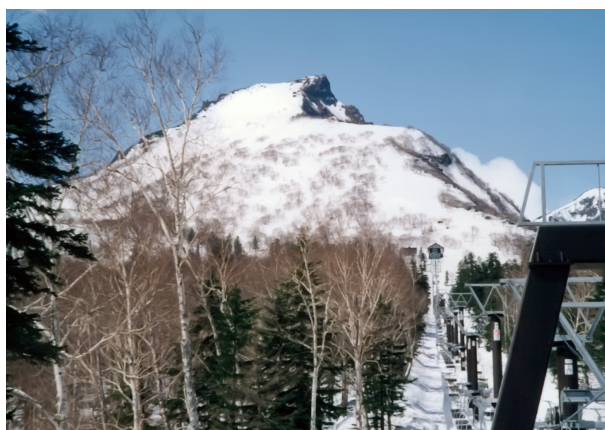
Thurs. May 20, 1993

Hiking in Zao with Kenjiro and Sachie.

Fri. May 21, 1993

Flew JAS 931 from Sendai to Sapporo, Hokkaido.

Sat. May 22, 1993



Approximate dates: Kurodake peak above Sounkyo.



Shirotoke peninsula, Hokkaido.

From "Fuji 1993" in "The Far Side of the Sky":

Most hikers have an unwritten list of mountains that they would like to climb. And Mount Fuji is on many of those lists because of the hallowed place it occupies in the Japanese culture and mythology. The Japanese regard the symmetry of its nearly perfect conical shape as implying a sacred origin and the number of paintings, view points and photographs that celebrate views of Fuji are numberless. Yet this same monotonous symmetry makes the hike up Mount Fuji somewhat boring. The Japanese have a saying that everyone should climb Fuji once but only a fool would climb it twice. What makes the hike even less enjoyable is that, for the few summer months when the snow is gone, there is an almost unbroken queue of people trudging up to the summit.

Yet, despite all this, when I went to Japan for a couple of months in the spring of 1993, one of my private objectives was to get to the top of Fuji-san. When I mentioned this plan in a letter to my principal host, Professor Akira Shima of Tohoku University, he replied that this would not be possible because "Mt. Fuji is closed". It seems that the Japanese, who love rules and usually obey them without question, had long ago established "a season" for climbing Fuji that begins on July 1. I, being singularly unimpressed by arbitrary rules, still thought I might be able to sneak away some weekend and attempt the climb. It seems, however, that my reputation had preceded me for it became clear that Shima and my other hosts had arranged a schedule that did not have the two successive free days which would be necessary for the attempt. And so my ambitions were thwarted. Of course, it must also be added that during the month of April when I would be within striking distance of the mountain, the depth of snow and the severity of the weather make it foolish for anyone to attempt the climb and particularly foolhardy to try to do it alone. Nevertheless, I felt some sense of frustration especially since I had come well-equipped for the snow. Early the previous winter I had purchased crampons (spiked frames you strap to your boots) and had practised snow climbing with them on the slopes of Mount Baldy in California.

During the first month and a half of my stay in Japan I did have the opportunity to climb a number of mountains in central and southern Japan. Almost always some fellow academic accompanied me. Thus I climbed To-no-dake (4892ft) in Tanzawa Quasi-National Park with my friend, Yoichiro Matsumoto, of Tokyo University. And with another friend, Yoshi Tsujimoto of Osaka University, I climbed two very interesting and very different mountains. One day during "Golden Week" we drove to the village of Dorogawa in the wilderness area south of Osaka and climbed the sacred mountain of Sanjo-go-take (5640ft) also commonly known as Omine-san. We encountered many shamanistic pilgrims or "Yamabushi" whose sect requires them to make the pilgrimage to this summit at least once a year. Near the summit the trail was lined with stone memorials and the air was filled with chanting and incense. Later, during a visit to the beautiful island of Yakushima south of Kyushu, we negotiated our way past a large group of Japanese macaques and through fantastic semi-tropical forest and meadows with crystal streams on our way to the magnificent 6007ft summit known as Kuromi-dake. These climbs were very enjoyable and interesting but not exceptionally challenging. I still harboured a desire to climb a really challenging mountain, to escape from my caperones and, perhaps, to demonstrate that I could have climbed Fuji anyway if I had been given a chance. Call it Irish stubbornness.

Then, in late May, I travelled to the relatively remote northern island of Hokkaido. Because of the severity of the winters this island was only settled about 150 years ago by the Japanese or "Yamato" who displaced the native inhabitants known as the Ainu. The island is still sparsely populated and that population is almost entirely confined to the flat valleys between the snow-covered mountain ranges. Consequently the government has been able to set aside large sections of the most beautiful mountains as National Parks. Moreover, the people of Hokkaido, descendants of frontiersmen, have a better developed sense of personal liberties. As a result I was allowed to travel to the outback on my own to visit the largest national park in Japan, the rugged wilderness known as Daisetsu-zan National Park. Specifically, I travelled first by train and then by bus to a small mountain village called Sounkyo that lies in a deep gorge in Daisetsuzan National Park. High above the rim of the gorge is a range of towering, snow-covered peaks and the most dramatic of these is the spectacular 6509ft peak known as Kurodake or "the black peak". The name was clearly motivated by the basalt cliffs that surround three sides of the summit and stand out in stark contrast to the snow-field on the fourth side. In its shape, Kurodake is often likened to the Matterhorn though, in all honesty, it is much less steep than that fabled alpine landmark. Kurodake and the other peaks of this range are inaccessible except for a brief period in the late summer when the snow dwindles to patches. Then, when most of the snow has melted, Kurodake is easy to climb. But in late May it is very clear that to all intents and purposes "Mt. Kurodake is closed".



Kurodake



Sounkyo from above

However, no one was there to stop me. Moreover, in an effort to draw tourists to this remote place, the local authorities had very recently constructed a cable car that climbs from Sounkyo up to the rim of the gorge and provides a substantial start in climbing Kurodake. So early in the morning, I took the first cable car to the top station and sneaked off onto the surrounding snowfield. No one kept any special watch for no one would dream of doing such a thing since "Mt. Kurodake was closed". After about a quarter of a mile I was out of sight of the top station and turned toward the mountain. The first hour and a half of the climb was fairly straightforward. My crampons made climbing in the snow quite easy and I made steady progress up the snowfield that led toward the summit. But toward the end of the second hour, the slope began to get quite steep. I progressed by digging in the toe spikes of my crampons and using my gloved hands to maintain my stance. Only occasionally did I encounter snow into which I sank to my waist. But as I neared the summit, the snow began to get very deep and the mist began to thicken. I began to fear an inadvertent encounter with the edge of the black cliffs. Eventually, despite my stubbornness, I had to conclude that it was too dangerous to continue. Though I felt that the summit might be only a few yards further, it would have been extremely foolhardy to continue. And so I turned around.

It was only then that I realized the true precariousness of my position. Climbing a steep, snow-covered slope is one matter. Trying to descend is quite another matter entirely. It was much more difficult to secure a firm foothold when descending than when ascending. I barely inched my way down the slope. There were several moments when only the slimmest margin separated me from a life-threatening slide down the mountain. And it took many minutes to recover my nerve after those moments. I would breathe very deeply to regain my composure and then take another small step. It also occurred to me that I definitely did not want to die on that mountain and that I very much wanted to see my wife and children again. Eventually, I made it to the lower slopes where I could have confidence in my ability to stop any slide. Then I made rapid progress walking down the snowfield, retracing my steps in the snow. The hours of daylight were rapidly dwindling as I sneaked back into the cable car station. I half-expected an official "unwelcoming" reception party. But no one seemed to have noted my long absence and I caught the last descending cable car to the base station.

An odd sort of euphoria came over me once I reached the safety of the cable car. Perhaps it was the oft-described, heightened appreciation of life that seems to follow any brush with death. Perhaps the accumulated adrenalin provides a natural narcotic. I know I thought especially of Doreen and my children. And, for the moment, I lost that sense of purpose that usually governs my travels. At the base station, I lingered somewhat aimlessly amid the souvenir stands. It occurred to me that I had bought very little for my wife and children. Yet, like most souvenir stands, there was little here that was worth buying and I would normally have passed straight on. But, for reasons I still do not fully understand, my attention was transfixed by one particular object, a bright pink baseball cap proclaiming "Hokkaido". Acting on impulse, I bought this garish hat, imagining that I would give it to my eldest daughter. Perhaps it was that the cap reflected the fluorescence of my life at that moment.

And so I still had not overcome the kind of challenge I had sought. I had failed to climb Mt. Kurodake; I had discovered that indeed "Mt. Kurodake was closed". And yet I now understood why I felt such resentment when I heard that phrase. Mountains are wild and free and dangerous and beautiful. They are never conquered; one merely trespasses upon them for a brief moment in time. For anyone to arbitrarily declare that a mountain is closed seemed an insult to that spirit and to its reflection in my soul. I felt some measure of satisfaction that I was stopped by my own frailty and not by some arbitrary rule. Some measure of joy for having experienced the wild beauty of that mountain at that particular moment in time. And some measure of pride that the moment was mine alone.

Moreover, I was to find out just how close I did, in fact, come to conquering Kurodake. I stayed the night in Sounkyo and the next morning dawned bright and beautiful, sunny and clear. I had a couple of hours before my bus left and so I decided to ride the cable car again in order to take some photographs of Kurodake from that vantage point. I was rewarded with a magnificent view from the observation deck on the roof of the top station. Kurodake and the other neighbouring peaks rose majestically above me, shining in the morning sun. The observation deck was also equipped with the standard telescopes one often finds in such locations and so I idly focussed one of these on the summit of Kurodake. And there, clear as day, were my tracks in the snow in the otherwise pristine snowfield. They led directly up toward the summit and came to a halt only a few yards from the peak. Though I did not know it at the time, a small effort would have placed me at the top. There were no other tracks in the snow near the summit. Clearly I had been the first person to attempt to climb Kurodake that year.

Someday I will return to Japan during late July or August. I will catch the bus from Tokyo to the Fifth Station more than half-way up Fuji and I will follow hundreds of others as they make their way up the well-worn trail to the summit of that symbolic mountain. Maybe, like many others, I will climb in the dark in order to enjoy the beauty of the sunrise. No doubt I shall feel some sense of accomplishment. But it will not come close to the raw power of my experience on Kurodake and my elation at seeing my footprints reach toward the summit of that mountain. Perhaps I am crazy.

Sun. May 23, 1993



Approximate date: Ainu village, Hokkaido.

Mon. May 24, 1993

Tues. May 25, 1993

Wed. May 26, 1993



Approximate date: On Mount Usu volcano near Sobetsu, Hokkaido.



Showa-shinzan near Sobetsu, Hokkaido.

Thurs. May 27, 1993

Fri. May 28, 1993



Approximate date: Wielding traditional Japanese sword at Japan Steel Works, Muroran.

Sat. May 29, 1993

Sun. May 30, 1993

Mon. May 31, 1993

Tues. Jun. 1, 1993

Wed. Jun. 2, 1993

Leaving Muroran Institute of Technology.

Flew Japan Airline 512 from Sapporo to Haneda, Tokyo.

Thurs. Jun. 3, 1993

Sixth Int. Workshop on Multiphase Flow, Tokyo, June 1993.

Brennen, C.E. (1993). Cavitation bubble dynamics and noise production. Proc. 6th Int. Workshop on Multiphase Flow, Tokyo, 1-28.

Fri. Jun. 4, 1993

Sat. Jun. 5, 1993

Flew United Airline 890 from Narita to Los Angeles.

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Last updated 7/30/99.

Christopher E. Brennen