

Thursday 23 February 2012 - Nagasaki 14° sunny GMT +9

Met a nice Australian lady at “Legs, Tums & Bums” whose son is working at a Marriott Hotel in southern China where they are building lots of holiday resorts. She said it is a fantastic place, maybe we will soon all be off to China for our beach holiday – where will it all end. Another Australian really wants to visit England to see the palace. She is a real royalist and got married the same week as Charles and Diana and has named her sons William and Harry. Sat next to Englishman and an Australian who were both looking out to sea and contemplating life, what a couple of grumpy old men. Turns out the Englishman was the comedian Lee Wilson. The Australian said that the best thing the Brits ever did was to send all the convicts to Aussie, it's a great life there. I keep bumping into the Italian Navigator, I think he's lonely as he eats alone.



We didn't arrive in Nagasaki until after lunch and we were then subjected a temperature check and had our two index finger prints taken and an eye scan. The Chinese were a bit slow setting up their temperature check as it didn't happen until we were going back onboard. One chap set the alarm off but it turned out he was holding his laptop under his coat. Funny thing about that Chinese port was it was massive but the shipping lane was only big enough for traffic to go one way. Anyway, back to Nagasaki, it was a pretty port surrounded by undulating green mountains. Everything seemed bit small after China and I expected the houses to be more attractive. It was too early in the year for the blossom to be out but there were a few camellias in bloom. We visited the Nagasaki Peace Memorial Park and museum and the Atomic Bomb Hypocentre and also had a panoramic view of the city and harbour from the Mount Inasa cable car. Many people are very moved by the Peace Park but perhaps we have been influenced by all the lectures and films where we have seen onboard about the Japanese war atrocities. Because of our late arrival the tour was a bit rushed and it started to get dark towards the end. However, we were blessed with a dry and bright afternoon after rain and strong winds in the morning. The locals were very polite and the ship was a tourist attraction for them, although some did say that it was so big they couldn't fit it all in the camera viewer. I am surprised how bad the internet facilities are at the ports. We have been very lucky as we are still using the ship's internet with our Vodafone internet package as it thinks we are in Norway. Rick has also discovered that he can use my 3G Kindle to search the internet although it's a bit slow. Surprisingly, Japan prohibits the use of the ship's internet whilst we are in Japanese waters.



Peace Statue Clock that survived the atomic bomb when it was dropped on Nagasaki on 9 August 1945

Nagasaki has an interesting history as Christianity was banned in Japan in 1587 and in 1597 twenty-six Christians were crucified there. Christianity continued to spread but was ruthlessly suppressed in 1638. This led to Japan being isolated from the rest of world for more than 200 years, the only exception being a small Dutch trading community on Dejima Island in Nagasaki.

Back on the ship Rick got waylaid by Hilly and Stu in one of the bars where I joined them later and we ended up drinking far too much. Meanwhile, Lisa and David were living it up in the disco by invitation of the Cruise Director who had told them there were actually some people in there tonight.

Friday 24 February 2012 - At sea on way to Osaka 14° sunny GMT +9

Not a good start to the day as we both woke up with headaches and in a panic as I was convinced we should have put our clocks forward another hour. We swapped seats at Bridge with Rick sitting in my place. He turned into me forgetting what was trumps, overtrumping, miscounting the cards and generally being very forgetful. Celia and Clive don't want to sit in that seat either in case it's catching. It's such a shame but we have both been sea-sick again and had to take a pill and lie down. We watched a recording of the Welcome Ceremony from the Nagasaki Mayor, giving and receiving of presents and a speech from the Captain. This was followed by a performance of the highlights from Madam Butterfly by three beautifully traditionally dressed ladies. The opera is said to have been set in Nagasaki.



Nagasaki to Osaka 472 nm

Saturday 25 February 2012 - Osaka, Japan 9° sunny GMT +9

Arcadia berthed at the port of Osaka which was totally different to the port at Nagasaki as it was very industrial and a big and busy city. Most of the original canals and traditional wooden buildings were destroyed during World War II. The city is now a maze of motorways but there is also plenty to see like the enormous Ferris Wheel, Universal Studio's, an Aquarium, the Osaka Castle and much more.



We had booked a trip to the beautiful former capital, Kyoto. First stop was the brightly painted Shinto Heian Shrine with its wonderful gardens. It is here that the Japanese pray for good luck, success in business, good health and such like. The Japanese Shinto religion is devoted to life in this world and emphasises man's essential goodness and they don't believe in the afterlife. It was a shame that we weren't a month later when all the blossom would be out but nevertheless it was still quite something. Also, the weather wasn't so kind to us today as it was raining at times and quite cold. We then wasted an hour in a handicraft shop where everything was quite expensive but this was followed by a good lunch at an International Hotel. Just opposite the hotel was the Nijo Castle that was completed in 1626 by the third Tokugawa Shogun, Iemitsu. To enter the castle we had to take off our shoes and then we walked along the squeaky floor that made the sounds of a nightingale that was to warn of intruders. The gardens here weren't so extensive as those at the Heian Shrine but just as interesting.



The best was saved until last and that was the stunning Kinkakuji Temple known as the Golden Pavilion that has three storeys and was covered in gold leaf. This garden was the best of all with a huge lake that reflected the temple and trees.

Our guide was terrific and plied us with non stop information all day. He had an amazing head for figures quoting percentage for all types of manufacturing, dogs, cats, students, religions, ages and so on. He was very broadminded, saying that it is difficult these days to find virgins to serve in the temples; boys and

girls or boys and boys (if you are that way inclined) like to sit on the river banks in the summer; the Shogun's were usually bi-sexual and would take young boys into battle with them. He went into details on how the Shogun's decided which lady from their concubine they would sleep with that night. He kept pointing out the Love Hotels and said you had to get it all over within the hour otherwise you were charged extra and he knew how much everything cost. He went through the history of Japan and could answer any questions we asked. Like most Japanese though he has trouble pronouncing his "r's" i.e. Madam Butterfry.



Shortly after leaving the port the ship had to stop and wait for a pilot boat to pick up a sick crew member to take them to hospital, 5 passengers have died already. Rick is getting a dab hand in the laundry department and tonight he fought off a lady who thought he was monopolising the machines. He has washing hanging up on every available space in our room but he did manage to do his ironing while he was waiting. We had a big discussion about the Japanese toilets. As you enter the cubicle the lid goes up and then you press male or female, the seat is warmed, you do your business then water washes your bits, sometimes music plays and then it flushes and cleans itself. Unfortunately, I never got to have this experience as every toilet I encountered today, and it was at least six, was the old fashioned squat sort. We now have five days at sea on the way to Papua New Guinea.