

CSA's 2014 tour took 22 CSA members and other fiber enthusiasts to Okayama, Kyoto, and Tokyo areas of Japan. Participants from throughout the United States and Turkey experienced Japan's famous cherry blossoms as the countryside transitioned from winter into spring. By the end of the tour we were fortunate to enjoy *hanami*, flower viewing, along with Japanese families as they partied under and around the *sakura* and *ume* blossoms.



During the pre-tour, the tour leaders Carol and Jerry Saber led day trips from Okayama to Hiroshima and Miyajima, then Takahashi and Kurashiki. With visits to gardens, reconstructed castles, preserved samurai homes, and religious sites, we gained an appreciation of a classic Japan convergent with a postmodern world. As with any society, culture endures, and we experienced this in diverse ways. We were

especially fortunate to happen upon two moments of the traditional wedding: a young bride wearing kimono having wedding photos taken in Hiroshima's Shukeien Garden and a bridal party being entertained by Gagaku dancer at the Miyajima Itsukushima Shrine. A light rain seem appropriate for a somber visit to the Hiroshima Peace Park and Museum. The group

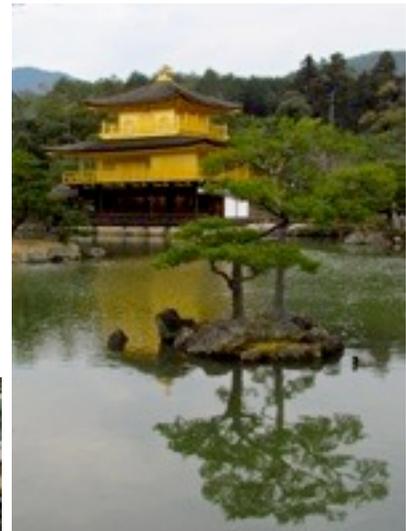


especially fortunate to happen upon two moments of the traditional wedding: a young bride wearing kimono having wedding photos taken in Hiroshima's Shukeien Garden and a bridal party being entertained by Gagaku dancer at the Miyajima Itsukushima Shrine. A light rain seem appropriate for a somber visit to the Hiroshima Peace Park and Museum. The group

returned to Kyoto via Arimatsu, a Nagoya suburb know for its shibori kimono yardage. At the Shibori Museum, women demonstrated the traditional techniques of tying the varied shibori patterns.

The tour officially began in Kyoto; side trips featured the historic Nara temples and the Miho Museum, designed by IM Pei to fit within a rural hillside. Typically mornings began early and ended in the late afternoon. Two flea market shopping trips had us arriving at the shrines before sunrise. As the dealers unpacked, we search for treasures that reflected our respective interests, whether as collectors or fiber artists. Our fireman husband went home with antique padded, indigo fireman gloves and hood. Others found vintage kimono either to wear or to pick apart for fabric to be used in future projects.

Visits to iconic Kyoto sites, including the Kiyomizdera Temple (with a stage built over the hillside), Nijo Castle (with its nightingale floors), Kinkakuji Temple (the Golden Pavilion), and the Ryoanji Temple (with its rock garden) complemented tours of textile studios, museums, and stores. One museum exhibition featured historic dress from the Kyoto Costume Institute. Within the Kiyomizdera Temple grounds is the Jishu Shrine. Here, several participants were able to walk between a pair of love stones with their eyes closed; success meant that each would find true love.





We observed textile processes at Aizenkobo, an indigo dyeing house; Nishijin Textile Center, showcasing tapestry-woven obi; Yuzen Cultural Hall; the Kyoto Shibori Museum; Kyoto Museum of Traditional Crafts; and Orinasukan Handmade Fabrics Museum, with looms still producing high-end obi and kimono fabrics. Many purchased souvenirs, including yardage, at the various shops.



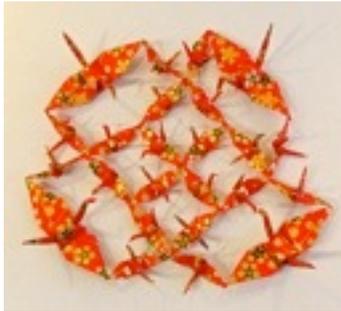
A two-night layover in Hakone, a resort in the mountains surrounding Mt. Fuji, highlighted our trip on the Shinkansen to Tokyo. During our stay in the historic Fujiya Hotel, we made day trips to the Glass Forest and Lalique Museum. Unfortunately, the rain and heavy fog prevented us from making the boat and ropeway trips that would have given postcard views of Mt. Fuji. Yet the hot springs-fed swimming pool and baths in the hotel offered warm, relaxing refreshment in the evenings.



Tokyo brought a more modern vision of Japan. With so much to see, the first part of each day was scheduled; while latter part was free to allow participants to explore. By this time we had become familiar with negotiating the subways, so many were able to see museums and other sites of particular interest. As a group we walked along the length of Omotesando; one end adjacent to Harajuku train station offers trendy youth styles while the other, more sophisticated designer boutiques, including Issey Miyake and Commes des Garçon. Western designers compete with their Asian counterparts not only in luxury apparel but in avant garde architectural design. A visit to the Costume Museum, affiliated with Bunka Gakuen University, allowed us to view some of its



European costume pieces from the Eighteenth through Twentieth Centuries. Other highlights included a third flea market, the Nuno shop in Roppongi district, Nippori Textile Town, the Tsukiji Fish Market, and a boat trip up the Sumida River to the Asakusa district, the Sensuji Temple, and its shopping arcade. At the Origami Museum, the master artist demonstrated his craft, much to our enjoyment.



Day trips took us to Nikko Shrine, famous for its carving of the Sleeping Cat and Three Monkeys (“see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil”); Kamakura, with its giant Buddha and distinctive temples; and the Kubota Museum, with its display of contemporary tsujigahana kimono. Kubota-san’s Symphony of Light series represents a continuous mountain landscape transitioning through the four seasons, on thirty kimono placed side-by-side.



We finally caught our postcard view of Mt. Fuji, this time across one of several lakes that surround the mountain. On our return to Tokyo we toured the Edo Outdoor Museum, featuring period homes and businesses, including a restored kimono shop.



The tour ended with a group dinner at the New Sanno Hotel. Participants sat around Teppanyaki grill as the chef prepared the meal. It was sad to say good-bye to new friends, but fond memories will remain.

