

Silk Study Tour to Japan May 13-24 2013

Itinerary

May 13 (Monday)

Tour officially begins at Los Angeles Airport (LAX). A non-stop flight to Tokyo (Narita NRT) will depart approximately 2 PM. (Airline yet to be determined)

May 14 (Tuesday)

The ten hour flight means arrival in Japan later that same day, due to crossing the International Date Line. Following our arrival in the late afternoon, we will take a hotel shuttle to the nearby Narita Hilton Hotel for one night of R & R.

May 15 (Wednesday)

Early the next morning our magic chartered coach will whisk us away on a relaxing 2 hour trip heading towards Kiyru located in the Gunma Prefecture, the heartland of the Japanese silk industry. Our first day has us visiting Milano Rib, a modern silk apparel and accessory manufacturer who developed an ingenious method of production utilizing Gunma's famous silk. Sachiko Harumi, the CEO of her company Milano Rib is truly reinventing the past and making product for today while looking into the future of silk and sericulture in Gunma Prefecture. After lunch, we will visit a textile museum and head over for a visit with an obi weaver. The evening will find us at our old favorite, Isobe Gardens in the village of Annaka where we will have time to contemplate our days adventures. At Annaka we will stay for three nights at the charming and restful Isobe Gardens Japanese Inn complete with traditional hot spring baths and the surroundings of a lovely river and quiet village.

May 16 (Thursday)

You will have time for breakfast and even a trip to the baths before boarding the coach at 10 Am and heading for Usui Filature Mill. Here, you will see a working silk reeling mill and begin to see and understand the process of silk production. The Usui Mill is a fully mechanized filature mill and one of the few remaining filature mills in Japan located in the middle of a beautiful valley bursting with mulberry groves. The fascinating mill tour is conducted by the delightful mill manager and the mill's small store has some manufactured Gumma silk products to purchase, and where we have time to ask questions about the production of the silk filaments and their uses. Then, it's back to Anaka where you can slip into a yukata, visit the baths and have dinner. Free Wifi is available in the large downstairs public garden and relaxation space but don't stay up too late- tomorrow is another full day!

May 17 (Friday)

We will be heading out at 10 Am to the studio of Yamazaki *sensei* and his assistants where we will have a class on natural dyeing. I won't say too much here but be prepared for a very wonderful lesson and to gain an understanding of natural dyeing that is so very, very Japanese. On our way back to our last night at Isobe Gardens we will make a stop at a kimono, textile and antique shop we discovered last time. Be prepared! Upon returning to the Isobe Garden Inn we will have free time to wander along the river near our hotel and rest up for a traditional full course Japanese dinner- another highlight of the trip. There will be time, following the scrumptious Japanese meal, to soak in the amazing hot springs baths!

May 18 (Saturday)

Saturday has us traveling towards the famed Five Lakes region where we will stay for one night at Hotel Kukuna and enjoy spectacular views of both Mt Fuji and Lake Kawaguchi from the open air baths and balconies. This stop brings us in close proximity to Sunday's visits, but before we arrive we will stop for a wonderful regional lunch and a visit a renowned antique kimono shop.

May 19 (Sunday)

A quick trip in our "magic coach" will bring us to the first stop in this enchanting day when we arrive at the museum of Ichiku Kubota. This museum's collection of the famous kimonos by revered designer Ichiku Kubota is an exceptional experience for all of us silk and textile aficionados. The beauty here has brought many to tears. Following lunch, the coach will whisk us to our next adventure...this time to meet and explore the home and studio of Fumiko Satou, a master indigo dyer. This delightful artisan will demonstrate traditional indigo dyeing and stretch your textile mind to its limit by showing you her world of *ai*. She will have a display of her indigo textiles for your inspection and purchase- from wearables, accessories, home décor and more. Make sure you budget some shopping money for this stop! We head out for a one-night stay at Keio Plaza in Hachioji in a bustling urban center. The evening is for your exploration!

May 20 (Monday)

Our last stop out in the country will be the amazing sericulture farm of master sericulturist Koyota *san*. His farm is one of the few remaining sericulture farms in Japan. There we will witness the fascinating nurturing of the silkworms in a traditional Japanese cocoon house and meet the delightful Koyota *san* and his wife. This stop is rarely made by westerners and soon will be gone as Koyota *san* is in his 90's and will retire very, very soon! Other sericulture farms that exist are much more modern and this cocoonery is a must see for as long as it is available to us. The Tama group of silk traditional technique artists and preservationists will give us a lovely presentation and demonstration. We never know just what to expect except that it will be remarkable! Afterwards, we head to Tokyo and the Hotel Gracery on the Ginza.

May 21 (Tuesday)

Here in Tokyo we are in the center of things- the heart of the Ginza with so much to see. First though, we will travel by JR train to the Silk Science Research Institute for a morning workshop, visit and lecture. We will have lunch with our hosts and head back to the Ginza.

May 22 (Wednesday)

Finally! A day to relax if you like but with the Ginza, museums, shopping, and a nearby castle to explore I doubt you will do much of that! Be on your own to explore, wander and enjoy. We will be on hand to head you off in the right direction with plenty of ideas and information.

May 23 (Thursday)

We call this a free day and it can be- it's up to you! But we have two choices for you in addition- either a day trip to Kamakura (Hirata's hometown) where you can stroll, shop, and see the Daibutsu (Great Buddha) or a day trip to the port city of Yokohama (where I grew up) to visit a great little silk museum that wraps it all up and puts everything silk into perspective. Next to the Silk Center there is another museum called the Yokohama Archives of History which documents the opening of Japan to the west and the arrival of the "black ships" and Commodore Perry of the US Navy. This was the end of Japan's national isolation policy enforced by the Shogunate regime for more than 200 years. It also played a huge part in the silk industry and the ultimate industrialization of Japan. Either way, you end up back at the Ginza for the final night to pack for your trip home.

May 24 (Friday)

We grudgingly depart for Narita via airport shuttle bus from the Ginza hotel in mid morning for our flight back to the US arriving at LAX (or other pre-determined destinations) on the 24th of May (gain a day).