

**Japan October 2014**

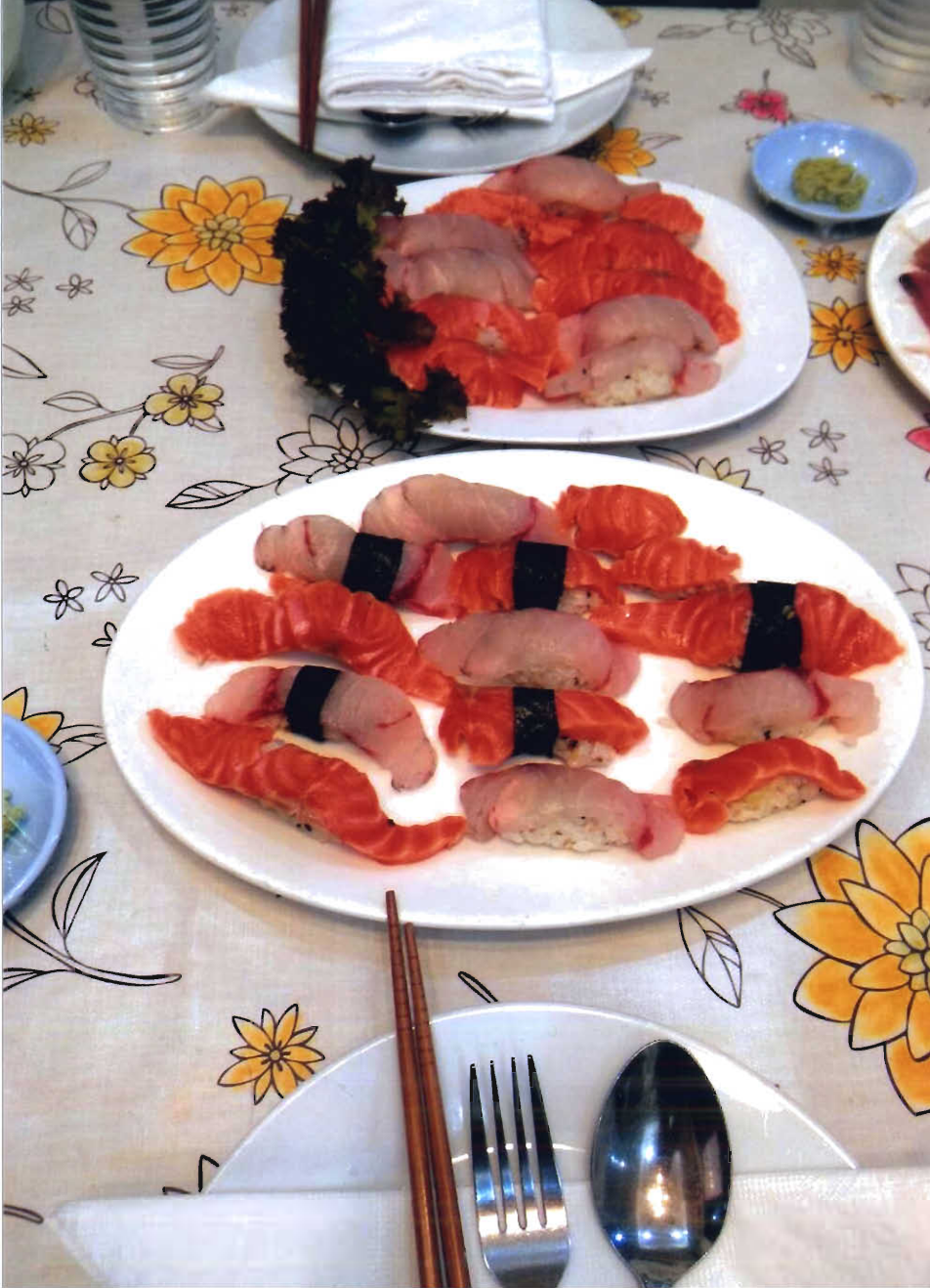


**DVD JAPAN 2014**



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JAPAN : Wonderful ,friendly

## VOLUNTEER GUIDES

by Manirat Pitarangsi

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When we travel we want to see and experience things which are different from those at home . We want to experience different sights, different foods , different thoughts , different trains, different dress. The more different, the better we like it.

In Japan we saw many interesting and different things but our most fascinating and marvelously pleasant experience were the VOLUNTEER GUIDES whose efficiency , knowledge, good humour and constant desire to help made our stay so interesting and so much more fun.

The system is simple : they don't charge for their time . It's a genuine free offer!! Ofcourse we pay for the meals and transport which we enjoy together.

I'm sure many foreign tourists to Canada and Thailand would get greater enjoyment from their visit if a friendly VOLUNTEER GUIDE showed them around.

It's a wonderful idea.

## VISAS

For Thai citizens with a Thai passport it's now easy to go to Japan. No need to go to an embassy in Bangkok. On arrival in Japan you show your return ticket and hotel reservations and you get the tourist visa right there at the Tokyo airport.

Japan is much more expensive than Thailand but it's not more expensive than Canada or Europe.

Our transport in Kyoto was a modern, clean Minibus owned by MK Group ( [www..mktaxi-japan.com](http://www..mktaxi-japan.com)) driven by DAI who spoke clear ,fluent English.

We stayed at the Palace Side hotel ([www.palacesidehotel.co.jp](http://www.palacesidehotel.co.jp)) .The room was small but clean and the staff pleasant.

In Kyoto VOLUNTER Guide MAMORU TAKAGI showed us temples and helped us arrange the printing of our photos which we use as postcards.

We had a most enjoyable week there.

On our return from Japan to Thailand we arrived at Suvarnabhumi airport at 01:30 a.m. .It was too late to get a flight to Krabi so we stayed at our favourite Bangkok hotel, the ASIA hotel, situated at Ratchatevi . We like this hotel for several reasons : The reservation

executives Khun Somsak Threerawitpreecha and Khun Sukanya Intraphom (Puky) and the front office reception staff are quick ,efficient and friendly .The location is unbeatable because it has direct access from the hotel 's 2<sup>nd</sup> floor exit by a short bridge to BTS Rachathevi Skytrain station . One stop to Pyathai and from there we get the Airlink to Suvarnabhumi airport. Travel from the hotel to the airport without using any street! Very Convenient.'The rooms are large, spotlessly, clean and the buffet breakfast features Thai and western food.

We're looking forward to returning there on our way to Myanmar.

Our trips from Krabi to Suvarnabhumi and a week later the return to Krabi were on Thai International whose friendly, helpful staff we always appreciate.

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1.Tokyo – Sensoji Temple has a five roofed Pagoda. Duangchan, Kasem, Wasana and Deah travelled with me and my husband Ajaan Paul to Japan.

Inside Senso – Ji temple is a golden image of Kannon ( the Buddhist goddess of mercy) which is 1400 years old! It has been there since 1171 ( AD628).

In Tokyo stayed at Sunroute Asakusa hotel ([www.sunroute-asakusa.co.jp](http://www.sunroute-asakusa.co.jp)).The room was small but clean, efficient and the location excellent –two minutes walk to the subway at Tawaramachi.

2.Tsukiji fish market is the largest fish market in the whole world. Each day 2400 TONS (2,400,000 kg!!) of fish and seafood are sold here.

We dive in many countries and we've seen lots of creatures in the sea but at Tsukiji we saw at least a dozen types that we've never seen before.

Surprise: we didn't see a single fly or other insect and no "fishy" smell at all . So clean! Our guide was Michi Tanaka who explained many interesting aspects and then accompanied us to SUSHIZANMAI Restaurant where we had unbelievably super –fresh Sushi and Sashimi for brunch.

3.TAKEO AIZAWA , a retired high school teacher, guided us around Tokyo and then to the Shinkansen Express train. He's 75 years of age and so fast and agile that most people age 50 would be envious of his good health and fitness.

We took the express train from Tokyo to Kyoto.

The Shinkansen (like the French TGV) travels at 300 km/hour without vibration and virtually silent. It's more convenient and from city center to city center it's faster than flying.

**4.** From Kyoto to Nara we took an ordinary express train for the 40 minute trip.

Just before we left we took this picture of university students Ayaka Uehara and Masashi Koumoto, our Kyoto Volunteer Guides, who had helped us buy Kimonos and Japanese sweets and brought us all the way to the train.

**5.** In Nara we ate a delicious Japanese meal (sushi, sashimi, broiled fish, broiled chicken livers, maki, avocado salad, miso soup, various pickles, a little local pilsner beer, shabu shabu and green tea) with retired high school teachers Masako Yamaguchi and Kiyomi Fujii. They also helped us order grilled eels (Unagi) which we'd never eaten before and which we found very tasty. This excellent very local restaurant was upstairs on a 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. Without Masako and Kiyomi we'd never have found it.

**6.** In Nara – Koen there's a big park where 1200 deer roam freely. In order not to cause the deers indigestion no strange foods are allowed. We bought "deer biscuits" (¥50.- for a big package) to feed them. They're very greedy and pushy. Look at them trying to grab the biscuit in Wasana's hand!

These deer are very smart. If you have no biscuits they don't bother to come near you. They also eat leaves but some bushes there have poisonous leaves. The deer know which ones are poison and never eat those leaves!!

In Nara we stayed at the Fujita Nara hotel ([www.fujita-nara.com](http://www.fujita-nara.com)). We appreciated the central city location only 5 minutes walk from Kintetsu railway station.

**7.** Dr. Tsutomu "Ton" Yamaguchi (Masako's husband) is a Ph.D engineer, now retired from his university professor job. He took us around Kofuku – ji and Todai – ji temples, explaining their centuries old history.

**8.** Ton showed us that the Volunteer Guides have an office in the city Tourist Dept where, once a month, each guide is available for tourist info.

**9.** At Todai – Ji temple in Nara my husband Ajaan Paul and I saw two huge Buddha statues, each weighing 570 tons, including 130 kg of gold.

**10.** We so much enjoyed the restaurant which Masako and Kiyomi had shown us that we returned the next day with university students VOLUNTEER GUIDES Hiroko and Momoka.

Delicious food and so many enjoyable explanations about how it's prepared.

**11.** In Thailand our highest coin is 10 Baht . Higher than 10 Baht is paper money .In Japan the coins go up tp 500 Yen which is about 170 Baht. They're easy to recognize 500 Yen, 100 Yen and the 50 Yen ( with a hole) are silver colored. The 10 Yen and 5 Yen ( with a hole) are bronze colour.

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