



MIA news

Miyakonojo International Association

Miyakonojo International Association
6-21 Himegi-cho, Miyakonojo-shi,
Miyazaki-ken, Japan 885-8555
TEL 0986-23-2295
FAX 0986-23-3223
<http://miyakonojo-mia.com>
E-mail mia@btvm.ne.jp

Memories of Mountain Bike Touring - Miura Takamichi (MIA Member)

There's a bicycle (more specifically, a mountain bike) sitting in our garage that hasn't been used for quite a while. Ever since reaching retirement age at my previous company, this bike, for quite some time, was my steadfast partner as I made my way touring across many a country. As I hadn't used it much recently, it was relegated to the unfortunate state of being left in the corner of my garage, awaiting its next run; around two years ago, the desire to go touring once more stirred within me and I set off to the bicycle store to get repairs, but owing to that plan being hampered by parts required being no longer in production, as well as the fact that I no longer have as much confidence in my leg strength after adding on a few years, my travel plans were cancelled, and I finally made the decision to dispose of the bike.

But before finally saying goodbye to this long-time partner of mine, I decided to take a look back at some of the wonderful memories we made across our many travels.



drinks consumed worldwide and advertisements no matter where you look, their notoriety is a point of pride to many Americans. Or so I hear.

Following its purchase and subsequent 3 years of being looked after in my daughter's apartment, it was gifted to me... In truth, perhaps it would be more accurate to say it was forcibly bestowed upon me? In any case, as I was already looking forward to doing some travelling after reaching retirement age and having time on my hands, it was the best present I could have ever asked for. Bikes are zero-emission, zero fuel cost modes of transport with unlimited freedom, and the exhilarating feeling of the wind blowing against your body as you use your legs to power you forward is irresistible! (Fortunately for me, I've got some pedal power through having trained my legs to run marathons...)

The first plan I made was to travel around my home town and Kansai (Kobe, Himeji, Ōsaka) for up to 10 days. The course I took was Miyakonojō → Miyazaki → Hyūga → Usuki, ferry passing through Shikoku via Yawatahama, travelling across Awaji island starting from Naruto, taking a ferry across to Akashi, stopping in Kobe (this leg taking 6 days and 7 nights, totalling 800km), then heading to Himeji and Osaka (another 200km), making for a trip total of 1000km. Wide tires (making pedalling heavier and gaining speed harder), heavy luggage, struggles to crest hills and many other factors made this trip not so simple, but strangely enough, I managed to complete the trip without ending up too fatigued. I reunited with my friends in Kobe, and we celebrated the successful completion of the journey, but I was truly surprised with myself at taking on such a reckless challenge (at the ripe age of 64). Even so, I had that sense of completion, and I was already planning my next trip as I made the return journey home on the ferry, where this trip finally came to a close.

The second time I went touring was the following year



A shot of Mr. Miura's steadfast partner, parked in front of the passenger ship Xin Jian Zhen.

First and foremost, this bike was a present from my daughter, who happened to spot it on display at an event hosted by the world-famous American maker of cool, refreshing drinks, that "C" company; while it wasn't on sale, we managed to purchase it after an excessive amount of begging and pleading. My daughter was actually studying abroad for a little over a year in an American high school, and was likely a little influenced by her host family, as she began making a collection of antique advertisements and pieces of furniture. Of course, this bike has the same red colour and logo as that "C" company, as well as being brand new rather than antique, but it was still something from that company that she wanted to add to the collection. It is often said that "The history of (C) is the history of America" given its many years in operation, and with their

in Hokkaidō, which aligned with my participation in the “Hokkaido Marathon” towards the end of August, after which I took a week to enjoy travelling around and into the heart of the prefecture (Otaru → Sapporo → Lake Shikotsu → Muroran → Toyako → Niseko → Otaru, etc.) over 6 days and 7 nights (700km) on my bike; sure enough, it was tiring to keep pedalling the day after the marathon, especially with such a hilly course and lingering fatigue! The grandeur of standing at the edge of the world in Muroran or the mystical feeling at Lake Shikotsu, the revitalising feeling of gazing upon mountains near Toyoko, Mount Yōtei and Nisekoi as I rode through, it was the best! The hardest part before I left was sorting out how I was going to get by bicycle delivered to Hokkaidō, since I was so used to departing from home on my bike whenever I began a trip; I honestly didn’t want to just send it as freight. On this trip, I pedalled my way to Miyazaki Port to board a ferry bound for Ōsaka, went from Ōsaka to Kyōto’s Maizuru Port in a friend’s car, and from there went on a ferry with my bike to Otaru, making for a memorable and enjoyable trip running a marathon and touring around Hokkaidō in early autumn.

With two successful long distance tours completed, I gained some confidence and decided I wanted to try an overseas tour next; to get me started, I made plans to visit our neighbouring country of China. Reason being that I have a lot of interest in the country in which I was born (Previously known as the State of Manchuria, Heilongjiang), I have a number of Chinese friends that I’ve made through international exchange, and throughout the country there is a saying: 上有天堂, 下有苏杭 (*shang you tian tang, xia you su hang*; Up above there is heaven; down below there are Suzhou and Hangzhou). I’ve always wanted to slowly ride through these areas, taking in the landscapes and scenery. The route this time went from Miyazaki Port to the Ōsaka Nankō by ferry, on to a Chinese passenger ship making port at Shanghai, to Suzhou, then to Hangzhou’s Jiangnan area, a trip totalling around 1000km. I wrote much of the details of this trip in the February through April editions of MIA News 2007, so I’ll omit the specifics this time around; what I will say, however, is that after all was said and done, this one month trip was full of valuable experiences, including reuniting with a student who came to Miyazaki to study, and even running into some acquaintances I’d met during my previous travels. Recalling it now after having returned home fills me with nostalgia, and I remember it all fondly.

There was one more place that I wanted to travel to on my bike in China, so the following year, I applied for a two month visa, and executed my plan. My destination was Sichuan’s Chengdu City, and the many natural and man-made world heritage sites the city is home to. The very first Chinese CIR to ever visit Miyakonojo, Li Biao (李彪), along with many former trainees who worked at a number of businesses in Miyakonojo, all lived around the same area in Chengdu, and I was looking forward to reuniting with all of them as I set off on my trip. What became a major driving force behind my decision to make this trip was the offer from one of the former trainees I had previously met to be my host family for a



Mr. Miura and his trusty companion at a number of famous sites across China. Top Left: Dujiangyan’s Nan Qiao Bridge, Top Right: Jin Li Street, Chengdu.

Bottom: Qingcheng Shan

whole month, for which I was truly grateful! With their home as my temporary base, I travelled to the nearby world heritage sites (Qingcheng Shan (青城山), Dujiangyan (都江堰), Leshan Giant Buddha (乐山大佛)) and historical heritage sites (Chengdu Wu Hou Shrine (武侯祠), Sanxingdui (三星堆), Qingyang Palace (青羊宫)), but amongst all the places I visited, I’ll never forget the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding and the 40 or so pandas I saw there.

Of course, I had plenty of opportunities to catch up with Li Biao and the many former trainees, renewing our old friendships; for all we reminisced, there was always more to talk about. Additionally, I rode a train though to Chongqing and Xi’an, observed the Xi’an City Walls, Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum and the many tourist attractions within Chongqing, and once more met with former trainees living in the Xi’an area, whereupon they held a welcome party, offered me sweet white sake, and we talked long into the night. After spending a full month in Chengdu, I returned to Suzhou by train, spent a week there catching up with some former exchange students, headed to my final destination of Shanghai (coinciding with my participation in the Shanghai Marathon), and after having spent 50 days in China, finally returned home to Japan. All in all, this trip included a 45 hour boat ride from Ōsaka to Shanghai, a 34 hour train ride from Shanghai to Chengdu, 3000km travelled on boats, 6500km on trains, and over 1000km on bike; it was a long trip of almost two months, but I managed to safely complete everything I set out to do and return home.

Compared to travels where you simply pass through your destination, staying a while and taking your time, coming into contact with the region with your own two legs (in various aspects!) will lead to a much deeper understanding. For this, my bicycle was a truly effective mode of transport, allowing me to freely travel around many places and experience many things. On top of this, my extended home stay provided me with valuable experience, trying first-hand and living a household's daily life, customs, food and entertainment in a way not usually possible on your regular travels. Finally, coming back into contact with previous exchange students, trainees and CIRs (and their families) who had all returned home to China gave me a sense that our exchange had deepened further.

Even after returning home back to Japan, I have continued to keep this exchange going.

To my mountain bike that allowed me to have all of these valuable experiences, thank you!



Throughout Mr. Miura's many travels, there have been a number of fortunate encounters and chances to reunite with old friends. Here's just some of the wonderful commemorative photos he sent to us!

Aussie Bites: Memories of Australia

This month's Aussie Bite comes from Saeki-san! Thank you for sending us your article!

① There was so much in the Sydney Natural History Museum, it was like a maze trying to find your way around! I loved it!

② There's a few places in Japan now that have under-water tunnels, but the one in the Syd-



ney Aquarium from almost 30 years ago was such a monumental thing for its time!

③ I got to hug a Koala, which got my heart racing!

④ There's a part of a theme park on the Gold Coast styled after the "Old Westerns" where you could try on clothing from the period, and the entire street was exactly as you'd expect from back in the day! It was like I'd gone back in time!

⑤ I was surprised when I ordered a single person serve, because the plate was stacked so high it was enough to feed 3!

⑥ When I rode in a hot air balloon, as we were landing, it felt like we were going to cause a traffic accident and have the police come; as it turns out, the people that were in the area just quickly packed up and made way for us, and I really felt that Australians had broad minds and big hearts!



⑦ Finally, while I was waiting at a traffic light, I decided to have a chat to someone I met there, and they invited me to dinner with them at their house! Not just that, I got to try their super-delicious home-made hamburgers! I was blown away by how welcoming they were, and really grateful for the opportunity!

◆ Articles For MIA News

Are you interested in writing a short article about international exchange or cooperation for MIA News? Some possible topics include travel journals, introductions to your home country, experiences staying with a host family, and activities with an international exchange or cooperation group. Articles should be about a page long and include a couple of relevant pictures. If you'd like to write more than that, please consult with MIA. If you'd like to write anonymously, that can be taken into consideration.

We are also looking for people interested in sharing their Australian experiences. Whether it's a rare location you found or some fascinating people you interacted with, we want to share your story with all of our MIA members!

Please contact us if you are interested!

Movies info	
C-Plaza Cine-port (Tel: 0986-24-2571) 17-9 Nakamachi, Miyakonojo, Miyazaki Map-Code (GPS): 117 488 540*55	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Tokyo Revengers (Japanese) ●Black Widow (Japanese Dub) ●Belle (Ryū to Sobakasu no Hime) (Japanese) ●Godzilla Vs. Kong (Japanese Sub or Dub) ●Anpanman: Fuwafuwa Fuwari to Kumo no Kuni (Japanese) ●Rurouni Kenshin Final Chapter: The Beginning (Japanese) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Rurouni Kenshin Final Chapter: The Final (Japanese) ●A Morning of Farewell (Inochi no Teishajo) (Japanese) *The 1st of every month is ¥1,100 for everyone. *Every Wednesday is 'Ladies' Day', all ladies ¥1,100. *The cinema is closed every Tuesday. *For session times visit: http://movie.walkerplus.com/th286/