



# MIA news

Miyakonojo International Association

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## 2018 Soccer World Cup - Iihoshi Kazuhiro (MIA Member)

As I stood upon the precipice of achieving my lifelong dream of watching the Soccer World Cup, a mixture of uncertainty and anticipation washed over me. Uncertainty about travel to which I was not accustomed, and moreover my dislike of aeroplanes, became draining after 10 connecting flights, with my days spent in anguish over Russia's information control and security, vastly different to that of America or Western Europe. Those concerns were swiftly wiped away by the elation of seeing first-hand the world's greatest superstars on the playing field, mixing with other supporters, touring Russia and tasting its cuisine, and being thoroughly satiated by vodka.



At last, after 15 days of extensive travel, my humble self, often "forgetting" a number of things, and having effectively no knowledge of overseas travel, was concerned that my life was to come to an end in Russia; As painful as the experience was, the decisiveness of my inseparable friends and colleagues "Y" & "T" led me to being able to partake in a spectator's tour, whilst simultaneously keeping my spirits high and further adding to the fun over this most rare journey together. And so, we three together, collectively known as the "Three Brave Warriors", were present for all three of the consecutive matches Japan played in. Our navigator, "M" from the travel company, led us safely through our journey; I will leave out the events until praying for our safety at the Narita Shinshōji Temple.

Take a JAL flight from Miyazaki to Haneda, ending in Narita. Exchange money from Yen to Roubles and Euro. Fly on Finnair to Helsinki. 10 hours later, beautiful forests and lakes will appear before your very eyes: You are now arriving in Helsinki airport.

While considering the thought of exploring Finland, after a two hour break, we now arrive in Moscow (Sheremetyevo Airport). There is an immediate sense of having arrived in another country alongside the overarching feeling of relief, with expectations set for the "Nishino Japan" team as we looked out upon the outer suburbs from our dedicated bus, taking in the modern high-rises, expensive cars and beautiful streets as we went; Russia's image as a firm and dark country quickly became a thing of the past. After staying in the Aviator hotel, we once more set off on our bus. The abundant and verdant birch and poplar trees were a beautiful green, and I couldn't help but admire the scenery. As with the Old Town hotel, the outer suburbs were elegant, bearing a distinct personality. I spent about an

hour renewing myself from the long journey thus far by wandering amongst the colourful yet subdued buildings. During the public viewing of the Tunisia vs. England match, I joined with the Tunisian supporters, and as we cheered the team on together, I finally felt that World Cup feeling begin to rise.

The following morning at 4AM, the Japanese supporters gathered together, and we set off for Saransk on our dedicated bus, and the apple we enjoyed for breakfast on the bus was delicious. We had an opportunity to talk to a wonderfully kind couple of farmers during our break. Along the way, we were inspected by the police twice, as their anti-terrorism policies were strictly enforced. After all of this, we made our way to the Moldova Arena, where the first and final matches would be held. Enthusiastic Colombian supporters were out in full stride, with face paint, flags and scarves, dancing down the street and along to the rhythm of their flutes and drums. Boisterous as a festival yet very friendly, I quickly took some shots with my smartphone. After arriving at the arena, it took 30 minutes to complete the entry inspection. They scoured through our bags, and security was strict. With a beer in one hand, I excitedly entered the arena.

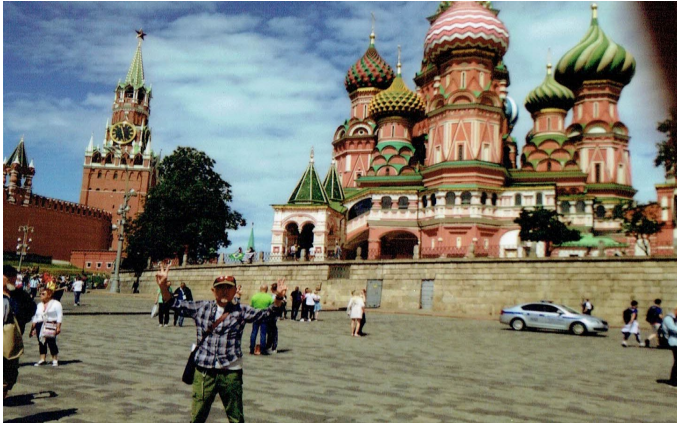
We were completely outnumbered and surrounded by Colombian supporters; we were clearly the "away" team. The match ceremony began, and as they played "Kimi Ga Yo", I was moved to tears. Certain critics suggested that Japan's chances of winning were slim, but we had faith. I will leave the match details out.

Following Japan's victory, we felt as though we needed to make a quick retreat from the spectator stands before the Colombian supporters began bashing us, but such concern was unnecessary. They soon applauded Japan's victory, and gave a hug. We made a request to swap one of our scarves for one of their Colombian uniforms. They exchanged without hesitation. Even though they lost the match, the sportsmanship they showed was exceptionally praiseworthy. We all hoped that Japan and Colombia would win their remaining two matches so that we might meet once more in the playoff tournament.

Following the match, we set off on our bus for Moscow, a 10 hour long journey.

We bought some bananas and tomatoes at the local supermarket, and found some very fresh vegetable produce. On the bus, even though Japan had won, everyone was very quiet; was this just characteristic of the country? Or was this due to exhaustion from a long journey? Early in the morning, we arrived at our hotel in Moscow, and slept lightly. We then checked in to the "Izmailovo Gamma" hotel next to us. There was no AC, which we accepted as simply being standard for Russia. Power to the TV, as well as our bath facilities were

broken, which we wrote off as balancing out Japan's victory. We raised a toast with vodka at dinner, which included a filling portion of Borscht and steamed Cod.



Kazuhiro at the Red Square

The following day, we made our way to the "Red Square" via the subway. Alighting at Partizanskaya Station, we marvelled at the throng of tourists. Our viewing of the illumination of Nikolskaya street was followed by a visit to Vokresenskiye Vorota (Resurrection Gate), the National Natural History Museum, Lenin's Mausoleum, and the wonderfully vibrant Saint Basil's Cathedral (this one costing 350 Roubles). Walking along the coast of the Moscow River, we wandered a distance of around 5 kilometres. From the bridge, we headed to the statue of Peter the Great (the Bronze Horseman), followed by the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour and Dostoevsky Statue, before having lunch at a nearby restaurant; after waiting an hour, our pizza finally arrived at our table...

We cheered alongside the Polish supporters. We ate dinner as we watched the Argentina vs. Croatia match, and as Argentina suffered their total defeat, the Uruguayan supporters were filled with delight. Is it because they neighbour each other that they so fiercely oppose each other? The next morning, our guides, "Y" & "B", with their incredibly fluent Japanese, came with us as we moved through the subway system that was completed in 1937. The magnificent yet dignified interior, along with the splendourous carvings and ornaments were the very image of an "underground palace". At 55 Roubles plus transport costs, it was very affordable. We continue riding through on the Moscow Central Circle. This train was more modern, with all systems controlled by computers. We alight at Luzhniki station and observe the world heritage Ensemble of the Novodevichy Convent, before paying a visit to the graves of various historically important figures such as Nikita Khrushchev, Nikolai Gogol and Boris Yeltsin. We enjoyed lunch at the "Golbi"\*, where we had stout beer and Pirozhki (similar to Gyōza), and the Beef Stroganoff was exquisite.

The following day, we took the Aeroexpress (500 Roubles) to Domodedovo Airport in Moscow. Following the two hour delay due to computer systems going down during our boarding procedures, we arrived in Yekaterinburg, which has a two hour time difference. We checked in to our Marins Park Hotel reservation, which came with three meals attached. We went to see the

Yekaterinburg-Passazhirsky central passenger railway station at night, a melancholic scene. I remarked that the next time I travelled across Russia I would take the Siberian railway and cross through Eurasia. As daylight broke, I took a walk to the Ascension (Voznesensky) Cathedral and prayed for Japan's victory over Senegal in the match to come.

We took our dedicated bus to the Yekaterinburg Arena, and along the way, we saw the statue of Vladimir Lenin out of our windows; intending to take some photos with our phones, we alighted and then proceeded to sprint down the beautiful tree and flower-lined streets. In the midst of this, we were overwhelmed by the procession of Senegal supporters. Once we finally managed to arrive at the statue, I was overcome with emotion. We hurried over to the arena. The brand new arena had a beautiful design, and we sat in our reserved box seats, experiencing the perfect atmosphere and ambiance for watching the match. The fans were encamped behind the goal on the left side of the field, and amidst that perfect atmosphere, the heated match concluded in a draw. A result most worthy of special mention. With a spring in our step, we headed home to our hotel.

The following day, a standard bus (free for those with Fan IDs) took us to the airport. Once again, we took a flight to Moscow. While waiting to board, we met and greeted a number of famous people from Japan. We checked in at the Aerootel Hotel.

The next day, I was delighted when I received a CD from a Mexican singer in the lobby of our hotel. We headed to our next tourist destination via the underground subway. There we met with the "Merrymaking" Danish supporter. Even on the train, they continued to dance so wildly that we thought the bottom of the train might fall out. "Good grief"... The heart of politics, culture and religion, surrounded by castle walls on all sides; we had arrived at the long-awaited Kremlin. It was absolutely swarming with tourists, and we were informed that there was a two hour wait for entry. Yet thanks to the ever-clever compatriots that comprised the Three Brave Warriors, entry tickets were somehow acquired. Dashing past the Troitskaya tower, we found ourselves breathing in a peaceful garden area. After seeing the Kremlin, the Cathedral of the Annunciation, the Dormition Cathedral, the Ivan the Great Bell Tower and other landmarks, we had both completed and had our fill of the main attractions of Moscow.



The Ascension (Voznesensky) Cathedral



The Danish supporter in question, dressed from head to toe in Denmark red and white!





Mamayev Kurgan,  
also known as  
"The Motherland Calls"

The following day, we arrived where the third preliminary match against Poland was to be held: Volgograd. A town that stretches north-south along the great Volga River, seeing the day's weather gave us expectations of a climate akin to Japan on a mid-summer's day; we were greatly mistaken, once more making us painfully aware of Russia's enormity. We went to see Mamayev Kurgan (The Motherland Calls), and were taken aback by its sheer

size.

Boarding a tourist vessel along the Volga River, we could see the soccer stadium and The Motherland Calls from the top of the boat. Having lost the match against Poland, discussion about how the match played out became heated. We were to enter into the playoffs tournament alongside Colombia, which gave us a small case to rejoice. There was a small incident where we missed our dedicated bus, instead getting on to a tram headed in the wrong direction, from which we alighted. Having lost ourselves along the road, we moved about in confusion; a Russian couple tried to explain the way very politely, but we couldn't understand them, and as patience waned, they decided to take us to the hotel by car. After around 30 minutes, we arrived. Overwhelmed by their sincerity and kindness, we were brought to tears. It became a most treasured memory, and we presented them with some of our supporter goods. Interacting with people from around the world, the Russian World Cup is full of many wonderful memories. To our tour guide and planner "M", my "Brave Warrior" companions, and to my close friend "T", I once more offer my sincerest gratitude.

\*We believe the store in question is the Gorodskoye Kafe "Stolovuzhki", but have unfortunately been unable to confirm this with certainty.

### ◆ Aussie Bites!

Today's 'Bite' comes from Ms. Kodama! Thank you!

No matter where you are from, being surrounded by photo's, TV shows and movies that fully embrace foreign countries and cultures is the easiest way to make someone long to travel there.

For me, it's the people from Australia that I met that planted that feeling within me, gave me that interest, and made me feel that charm.

At Tim's wedding ceremony, a beachside wedding that I was certain I would never get to experience the likes of again, I met a number of Australians who, like those who I had met before, were extremely kind and sensitive. Australia's a nice place, isn't it?



### ◆ 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!

### Message from the editor:

Congratulations to all of the athletes who performed in the recent Tokyo Olympics, and best of luck to all of the athletes who are about to perform in the upcoming Paralympics!



### Movies info

C-Plaza Cine-port (Tel: 0986-24-2571)

17-9 Nakamachi, Miyakonojo, Miyazaki Map-Code (GPS): 117 488 540\*55



- The Suicide Squad (2021) (Japanese Sub)
- F9 (JP Title: Wild Speed Jet Break) (Japanese Dub)
- Belle (Ryū to Sobakasu no Hime) (Japanese)
- Godzilla Vs. Kong (Japanese Sub or Dub)
- Anpanman: Fuwafuwa Fuwari to Kumo no Kuni (Japanese)

- Jungle Cruise (Japanese Dub)
- \*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/schedule.html> (Japanese)