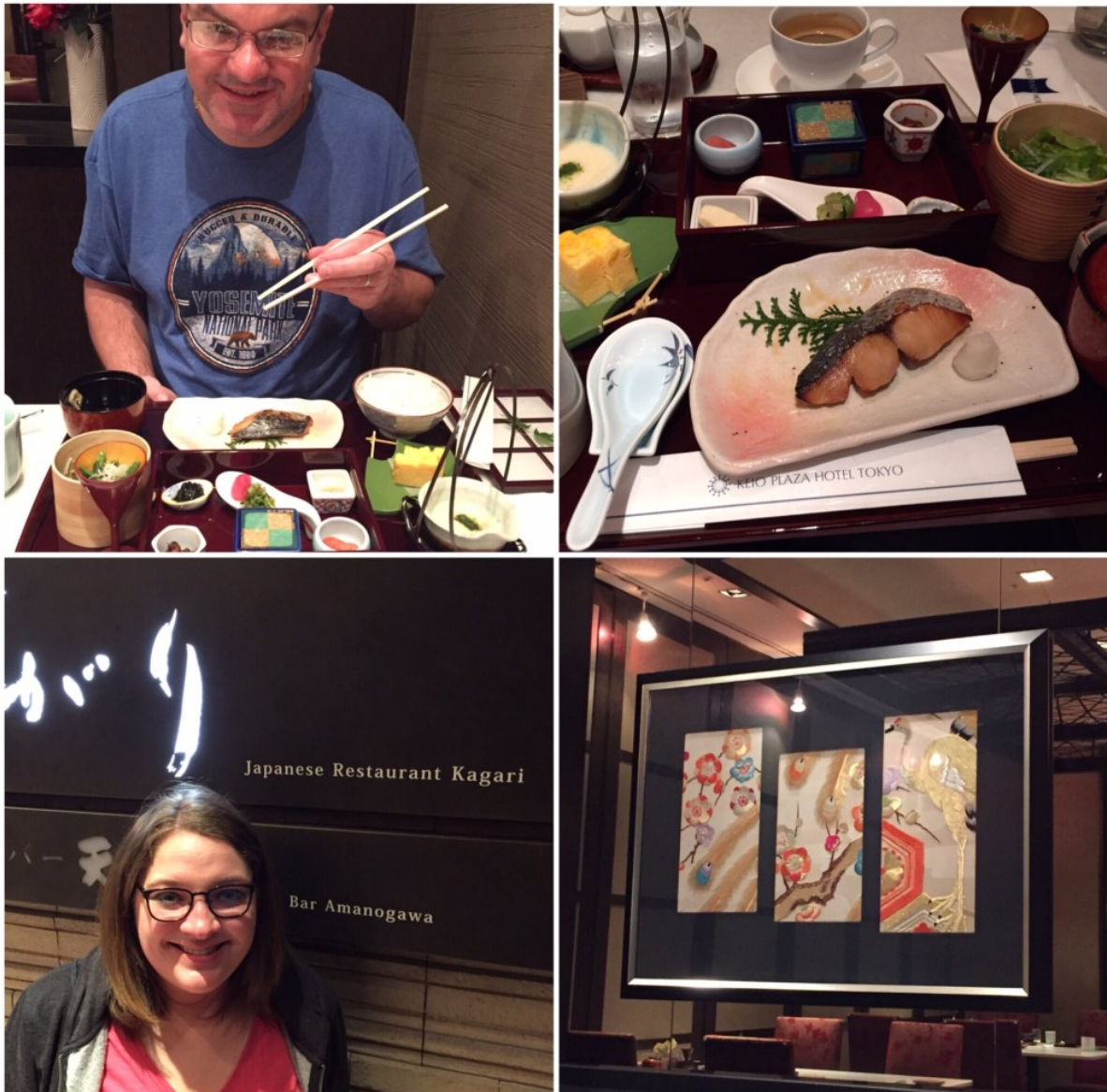


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After a fairly limited sleep (damn jet lag!) we were up and downstairs for breakfast pre 8:00- Great Rail had organised a full days sightseeing by coach, which departed at 09:00. Our hotel, the Keio Plaza, had a choice of 3 different restaurants that we could use for breakfast (included) and 11 restaurants for dinner. We chose the Japanese Restaurant for our breakfast, a set Japanese menu consisting of many delicious pieces, including fresh macerel, rice, salad, and egg and then lots of things we had no idea about, but were

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yummy! Interestingly, we were the only non
Japanese in there!



Japanese Breakfast

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Off we went at 09:00 on the dot, our first stop was the Meiji Jingu Shrine, which features the largest wooden gate in Japan. We were shown the entrance ritual by our Japanese guide, Kazoo-oh (not sure I've spelt that right!) which including washing our mouths out left hand first, right hand, then washing the cup out. We were lucky enough to witness a Japanese Wedding party about to have a ceremony there, the outfits were wonderful.

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Meiji Shrine

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Japanese Wedding

Next stop was the Senso-ji shrine area near

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to the Tokyo skytree, an area that's been attracting sight-seers for centuries. Cherry Blossom festival is at its peak here at the moment, causing the area to be absolutely heaving but that didn't ruin it, the cherry blossoms were breathtaking. Many locals take the opportunity of the cherry blossom festival to get out their glad rags, so to speak, and so we saw many Japanese ladies in their finest kimonos, many in pinks simulating the cherry blossom festival. There were also many street food stalls and we enjoyed sampling some of the foods available, including snow crab sticks and octopus filled dough balls.

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Senso-Ji Temple

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Cherry blossom at Senso-Ji Temple

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Ladieswear at Senso- Ji temple

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Japanese streetfood at Senso-Ji temple

After a fabulous 1.5 hours exploring we

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moved onto our next stop, Ueno Park, Tokyo's largest park, and one of the most popular areas to view Cherry Blossom. Again, it was jam packed with people, including plenty of tourists but mainly locals who have cherry blossom parties, underneath the blossom. They turn up first thing with huge tarpaulins and enjoy food, drinks underneath the canopy of cherry blossom.

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Ueno Park

Our next stop was the Imperial Palace of Japan, home to the Emperor of Japan, and the

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famous double bridge. By now, we were extremely knackered, but trying to keep our eyes open! Thankfully there were lots of vending machines so we kept grabbing bottles of Coca Cola to try and keep up awake!

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Imperial Palace

Our final stop of our guided tour was the Hamarikyu Gardens , which reminded us of a

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smaller Central Park, where we saw a 300 year old pine tree, and a pretty tea house situated on a large pond and lots of pretty trees and flowers.



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Gardens

I'm not going to lie, we both a micro sleep on the coach on the way back to the hotel, it seemed 6 hours sleep in 3 days was starting to catch up with us! We were keen to get out and see Tokyo by night though, so despite feeling horrific, after we arrived back at the hotel, we decided to push through, have a shower and head straight out again! The evening was our own free time, and we decided to take a wander through the the Shinjuku district where our hotel was based, to see the neon lights and onto Kabukicho, Toyko's red light district.

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Tokyo by night

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Tokyo by night

We had dinner in a locals joint, nearer our hotel and it was delicious. In Japanese culture,

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apparently it's considered a sign that you are enjoying your meal if you slurp. I can confirm everyone was slurping like billy-o, which was an unusual sound to say the least, but as they say, when in Rome, so Keith and I slurped to our hearts content and after an after-dinner sake retreated to our hotel for a long overdue sleep after a fantastic first days adventure in Japan!

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Tokyo meal- fried Gyoza to start, followed by Chicken and vegetable miso noodles for Keith and Pork Katsu curry on rice for me

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Japanese Bar Life, draft Japanese lagers and Cups of Sake

After a long and deep sleep, we woke feeling

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human again and had a couple of hours to recharge and also visit Tokyo Metropolitan Buildings, opposite our hotel and Home to a 200m free observatory floor. We enjoyed our visit, but sadly it was cloudy so the view wasn't brill. I'm sure on a clearer day however it would be fab!

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Tokyo Metropolitan Building

We joined the rest of our group and travelled to Tokyo Station to board our first Bullet

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Train of the trip, to Hiroshima. We were advised to stock up on lunch at the convenience store to take on board, so we got a bento box, full of rice, chicken, pickles etc and a couple of beers plus something which I have no idea what it is, but tastes like a mix of Fanta lemon with gin and sake!

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Bullet Train to Hiroshima

Until next time

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Lx

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