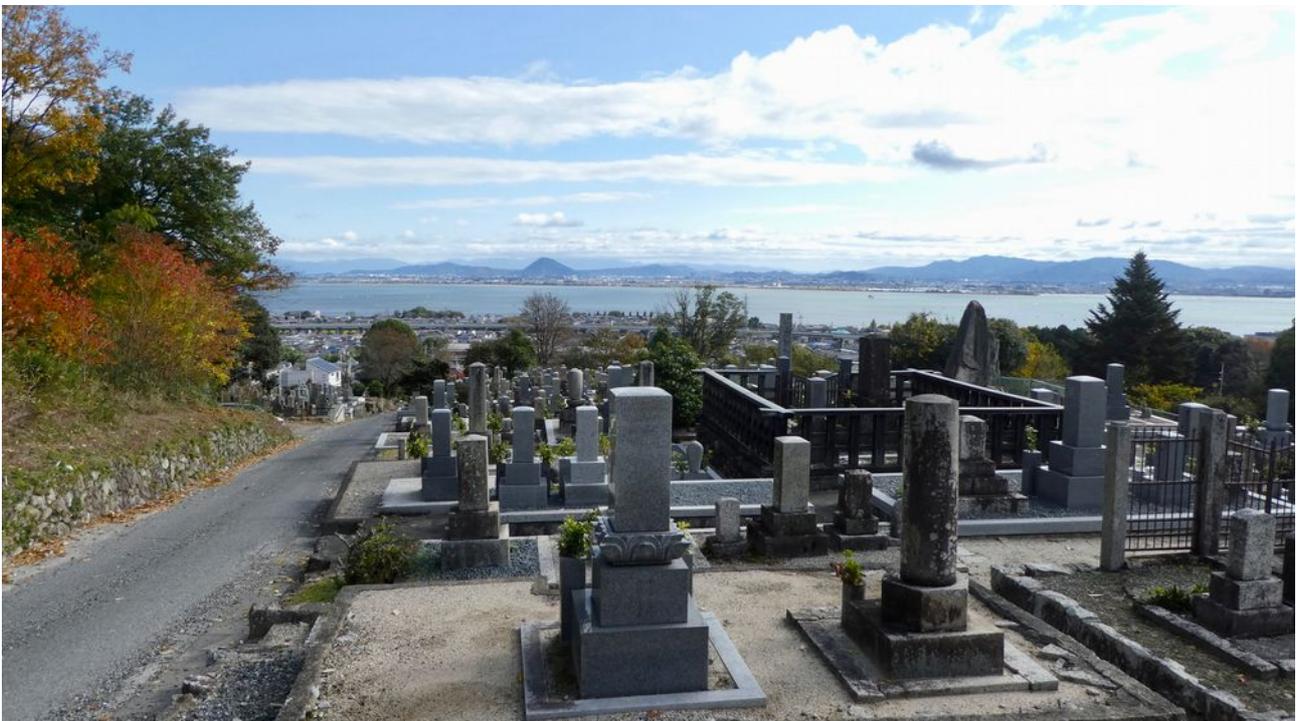


## Wednesday 23rd November 2016 Kyoto Day 6

In such a short space of time we have really settled into our way of life and little house. Today is Labour Thanksgiving Day (formerly Harvest Festival) National Holiday, so we hatched a plan to try and avoid the crowds!

We left around 9 am and took three different train lines to get us to the other side of the Eastern mountains on the western edge of Lake Biwa. The train headed north along the western shore of the lake, and we got off at Ano-O. From here we started our hike up and over the mountains back to Kyoto. We started hiking around 10:30, and got back to a train station on the other side at 2:30. In between times, we climbed really high up and then descended. This seemed to be a good plan because for the first three hours, we never met a soul.



Today the wind has switched to the north, so although it was bright, it was considerably colder, and I wondered as we set off if the shorts would be warm enough, but walking uphill and exercising I soon got warm. The fact that for the first couple of hours we were following a river valley in an east-west direction really protected us from that wind. After a picnic near the top, we still had some very steep steps upwards to hit the ridge leading to Mount Hiei. We were not going there today, so began our descent on the other side. Although the forest is mainly tsugi (Japanese cedar), there were more deciduous trees on the western side, and we were walking through leaves much of the way, enjoying the rustling sound as we kicked our way through them. At one point we joined another part of the main Eastern Kyoto Trail, and from here on in we encountered people heading in the opposite direction to us.



The descent became very steep and awkward as it was an ancient way through the mountains to Shugakuin, and was very narrow and steep as the land had been eroded away through rain and footfall. I suddenly made the connection that this was the same Shugakuin Imperial Villa which I had visited in Thanksgiving in 1977 when I was staying at the Sacred Heart Convent here. There was tight security on the perimeter with signs indicating 'no drones'.



We had passed through the station at the end of the walk on our trip yesterday, so easily found our way back to the terminus, and picked up a bus back home. The only difference was that everywhere was very crowded in the city. People are making the most of their day off to view the autumn leaves at all the local temples and shrines. Before coming home we shopped for dinner in the local supermarket. We bumped into Midori on her bike so stopped for a chat - feeling even more at home. We did a clothes and hair wash before planning on a relaxing evening.

Before supper Jacoba popped in with some persimmon and bread from the market. She had been away for an overnight stay in Shiga Prefecture, so we talked about the pottery up there and a special museum which we may visit.

John added to the nabe pot with pork filet and a naga negi (Welsh onion) grown by Misa's neighbour, so it was all very tasty. We needed heat as it was quite chilly, it with the shoji screens closed we managed to make it very comfortable. The hot bath before bed makes it very cosy in the futon.

### **Thursday 24th November 2016 Kyoto Day 7**

'...every child is a born adventurer and every traveller a born again child'  
This quote I found in the Pico Iyer book 'the Lady and The Monk' Four Seasons in Kyoto which I am reading at the moment.

A word about bicycles. Here in Kyoto everyone rides a bike, no crash helmets, and all whether male or female are the sort with a basket on the front and no cross bar. Children are transported to and from kindergarten on the back and front, and they all ride quite fast on the pavements and down the narrow streets - I am amazed we have not seen any accidents between pedestrians and cyclists, I am constantly getting caught out as to which way to move!



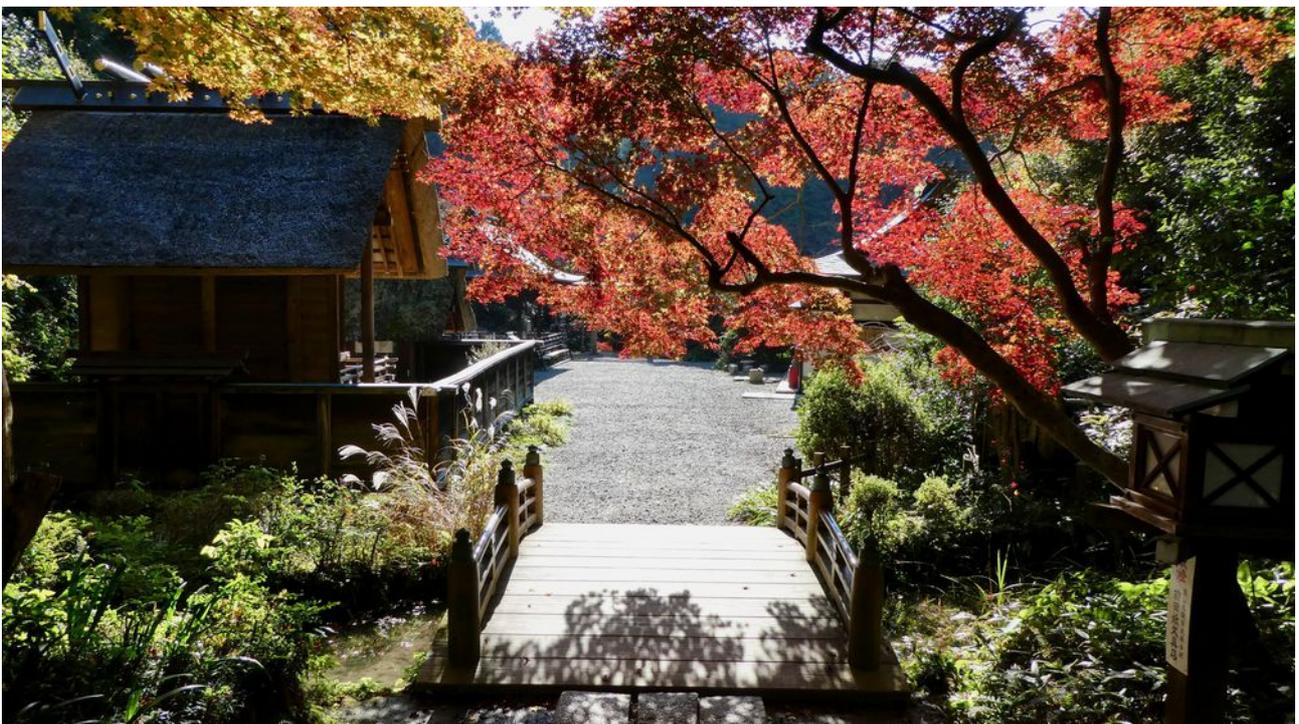
This morning we left around 8:20 and witnessed the kindergarten drop off moment on our way to Ginkakuji Temple. We walked through Kurodani and Shinyo where we had walked on our first afternoon. This time there were no other people around and the leaves were still magnificent. Following the backstreets we came out at just the right place to begin the Philosopher's Walk which runs from Ginkakuji southwards along a canal under the Eastern hills. We did not stay on this long as we were heading up into the mountains, but my memory of the walk is that it is fabulous at cherry blossom time.

We had a steep climb uphill for two hours to Yotsutsuji - again we encountered almost no-one on this section. The trail was quite steep in places with a rope

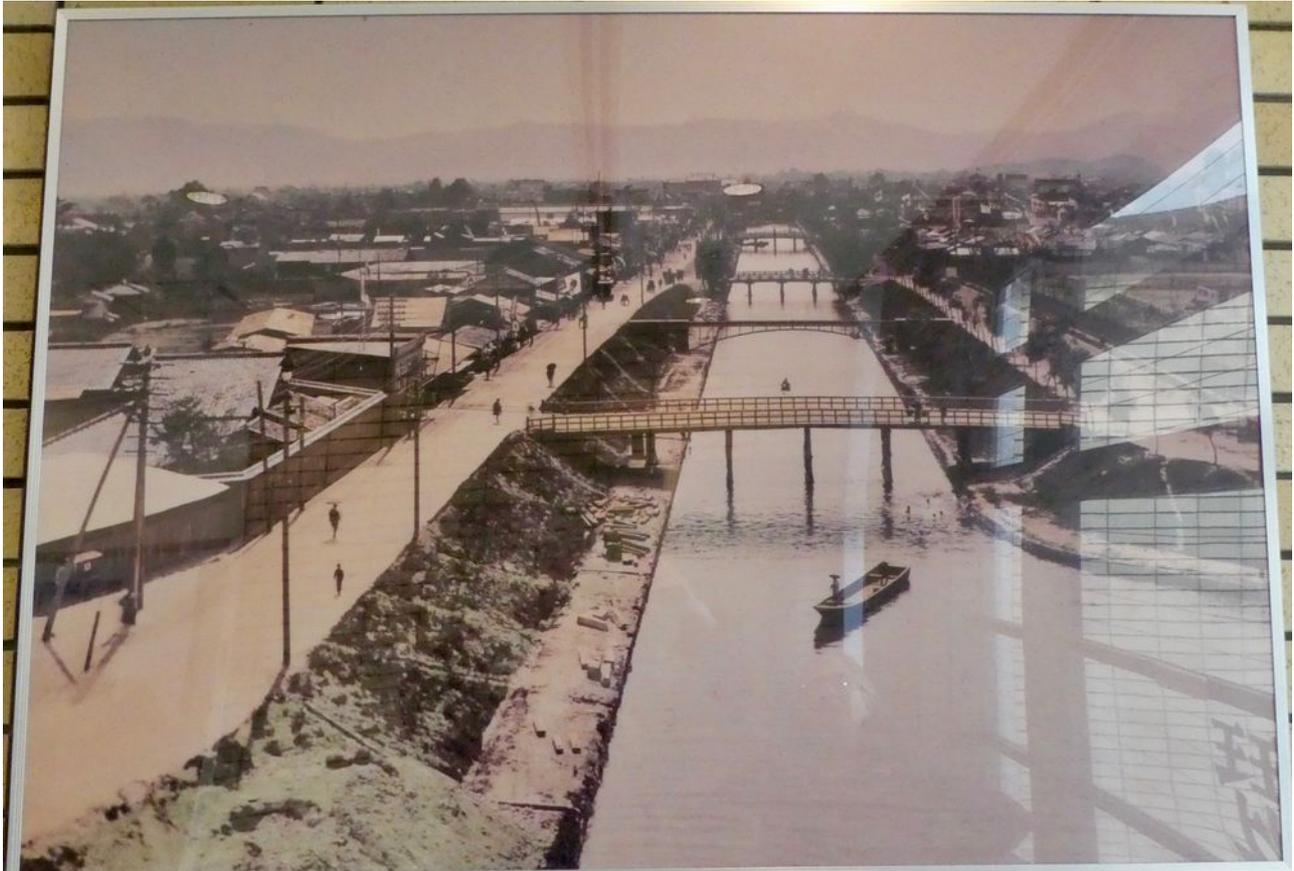
at one point, and a waterfall at one of those false tops we walkers know about. We did however reach the ridge and a crossroads where several trails meet and close to the top of Mt Daimonji (465m). We celebrated with a persimmon before heading along the ridge in a southerly direction getting occasional glimpses of Kyoto well down below us on the right.



The sun was shining, although it is now considerably cooler, but we found a great spot in the sun for our picnic lunch. Onwards and downwards (much less steep than our ascent), we reached the charming Himukai Dajingu Shrine where the momiji was just perfect.



We ended up at a canal tunnel where the waters of Lake Biwa are brought into Kyoto. This was completed in 1890 and brought drinking water and hydroelectric power to Kyoto, bringing trams and prosperity to the city. We had seen the incline the day before where boats were hauled up and down from the canal, but it helped understand the process. The steel was brought from Barrow in the U.K. At the bottom of the incline by the canal was the Lake Biwa Canal Museum of Kyoto which was very informative and full of old photographs.



We were right next to the Zoo, so knew our way home from there, and had a little time to catch up before heading out to meet Misa at 4:30 on the platform of the Keihan Marutamachi Station.

The three of us took the train to Chusojima way down in the south east of the city in the Fushimi area. There are 37 Sake breweries here mainly due to the river Uji-Gawa which provided easy transport by boat for the rice from neighbouring Shiga Prefecture, and then to take the finished product to Kyoto, Osaka and beyond. We arrived around dusk, and first went to the canal to see some boats, with the sake factories on the opposite bank - beautiful traditional buildings; we then visited the inn of choice of the famous Samurai Sakamoto Ryoma (1834-1867). Misa said if it was not for him, the Meiji era (the time of the modernisation of Japan from the mid-1800s) would not have happened.



There is a traditional street to walk from here with old shops and eating houses to get to our destination which was the Kizakura Kappa Country. This is both a sake and beer brewery, and they use the sake products in some of the beers. Kappa is a famous mythological creature who has a plate on his head (because they need to keep their head dry, and is loved by all Japanese. Apparently at Bon-odori time in August children are told that if they swim in the river Kappa will take them ...

The building was charming, there was a small museum, but then we entered the restaurant, and were able to have samplers of beer and sake which we all rated. There was a group of beers called Nile which were made from ancient wheat brought back by professors from Waseda and Kyoto universities. We chose interesting food to go with the beer, and a favourite for us all was octopus with wasabi!

It was a very pleasant evening, and we were able to go partway. Back together on the train then we walked on home for after 9 pm. Later Jacoba called with some more hiking maps and we chatted for half an hour or so which was all very pleasant. Another grand and glorious day.



As usual, there were many photos that we couldn't use in the blog. They can now be found in the second Kyoto Flickr album: <https://flic.kr/s/aHskPe7sDL>

The first 300+ photos are in the first Kyoto album here: <https://flic.kr/s/aHskNVX2Yy>

**John & Stephanie**