

Riding the Storm Out

August 21, 2004

Hello to all,

Those of you who occasionally glance at the international weather may have noticed that we had a Typhoon come through Japan in the last few days.

While we were staying at a small hotel in the northern mountains on the shores of Japan's deepest lake, we noticed on the news in the bar that a Typhoon was tracking up the Sea of Japan (the area between Japan and the mainland of Asia) and headed directly for our area. There wasn't much we could do except batten down the hatches, so we finished our meals, had some excellent local sake (Japanese rice wine) and went to bed.

In the middle of the night we were woken by howling wind and pounding rain that continued unabated for the rest of the night. Having partaken of the onsen (hot mineral water bath) that evening, I was able to sleep through most of it, while Steph didn't fare as well in the sleep department.

The morning brought continued rain and high winds, with the slowly brightening sky revealing a few trees blown down around the hotel, but thankfully, no major damage to the property. The bike cover was blown off of the GS, but because I always lock it to the bike, it was still attached. The bike itself looked like it had been spray painted with leaf and bark bits, but didn't show any significant damage and it had stayed steady on the center stand, even while being oriented broadside to the winds.

By noon the rain and winds had let up enough that we ventured out to walk down the lake shore to a restaurant Steph had read about. We saw a boat that had broken its moorings and ended up far up the lee shore, high and dry, but not showing any major hull damage. The local gardens had survived fairly well, with only a few rows of tall, staked plants blown down. There were many trees that had blown down over the road, but the ultra efficient Japanese road crews had already cut and cleared them by the time we strolled by.

As the day drew to a close, the skies cleared and I was able to enjoy the warm glow of the sun setting over the mountains while I savored a cigar on the deck overlooking the lake. During those quiet moments, I pondered our track record with weather during our travels. In Africa, we brought the rains that ended a four year drought. In India, we brought an early roaring monsoon. In Jordan, we brought a un-seasonal massive dust storm. And now, in Japan, we brought the first Typhoon this area had seen in over 10 years. Perhaps we could start a new business centered around bringing bad weather on demand. Empires have been built on less...

Be well,
Doug

PS – A few pictures from our recent travels follow. You can follow our travels at: www.hackneys.com/travel.

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Steph, Doug and Yasu, ready for departure. Yasu rode with us the first day out of Tokyo. Ginza, Tokyo, Japan.



What the police on the Japanese expressways drive. It was the first time I've ever been pulled over by a car with a functioning hood scoop and a rear wing. ~ 50 Miles north of Tokyo, Japan.

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Japanese highway patrolman phoning in the information from my international drivers license. Riding two-up is illegal on the expressways, although a new law passed in June 2004 makes it legal. There is some confusion as to when the new law takes effect: June 2004, October 2004 or June 2005. These troopers were convinced it's June 2005, so Steph got to take a ride in the back of a patrol car to the next exit. ~ 50 miles north of Tokyo, Japan.



Convenience store snack foods. Dried squid & dried fish. I've had them and they are both quite good. Steph says the dried fish is excellent for teething children to chew on. Along the road in Japan.

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Child wafting purifying smoke over herself. Nikko, Japan.



Father shooting his wife and child. The average birth rate in Japan is about 1.4, precipitating a demographic crisis that threatens the economic and social future of the country. Nikko, Japan.

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Shinkyusha (sacred stable) detail. These are the original "hear no evil, speak no evil, see no evil" monkeys. They are part of a series of panels depicting the major decisions and challenges faced in life, from youth through old age. Nikko, Japan.



Panel detail. These panels are located on the wall surrounding the inner courtyard. Some 15,000 artisans worked for two years to build this temple complex. Nikko, Japan.

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Monk ringing Edo period bell. Nikko, Japan.



Stone lanterns and tourist. Nikko, Japan.

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Roof detail with mountains and mist. Ouchijuku, Japan.



Corner mirror. Even the tiniest back road, paved or unpaved, has a mirror in almost every tight corner. Just about every blind intersection in the country has one as well. Along the road in northern Japan. Photo by Stephanie Hackney.

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Radio Controlled (RC) helicopter used to spray crops. Along the road in northern Japan. Photo by Stephanie Hackney.



Snow monkey crossing sign. Along the road in northern Japan. Photo by Stephanie Hackney.