

The Yamanashi Grapevine

山梨グレープヴァイン

Fall 2008



Editor's note:

As our most devoted readers may have noticed, the 2008 summer edition of The Grapevine is running really late, so late it had to be renamed "the fall edition". But it doesn't mean we were slacking off, it's just that we took our time to upgrade the Grapevine for your reading pleasure offering you, a more professional design, a compact format packed with useful information for those traveling to the prefecture and a detailed map to locate the topics at a glance. From now on, this magazine will cover a wider range of subjects, not only about the public sectors in Yamanashi but also private institutions. But to keep improving we need to hear from you, so send over your feedback or drop us an email at the address on the back and **get some free Yamanashi goodies!**

Mathieu Bellier

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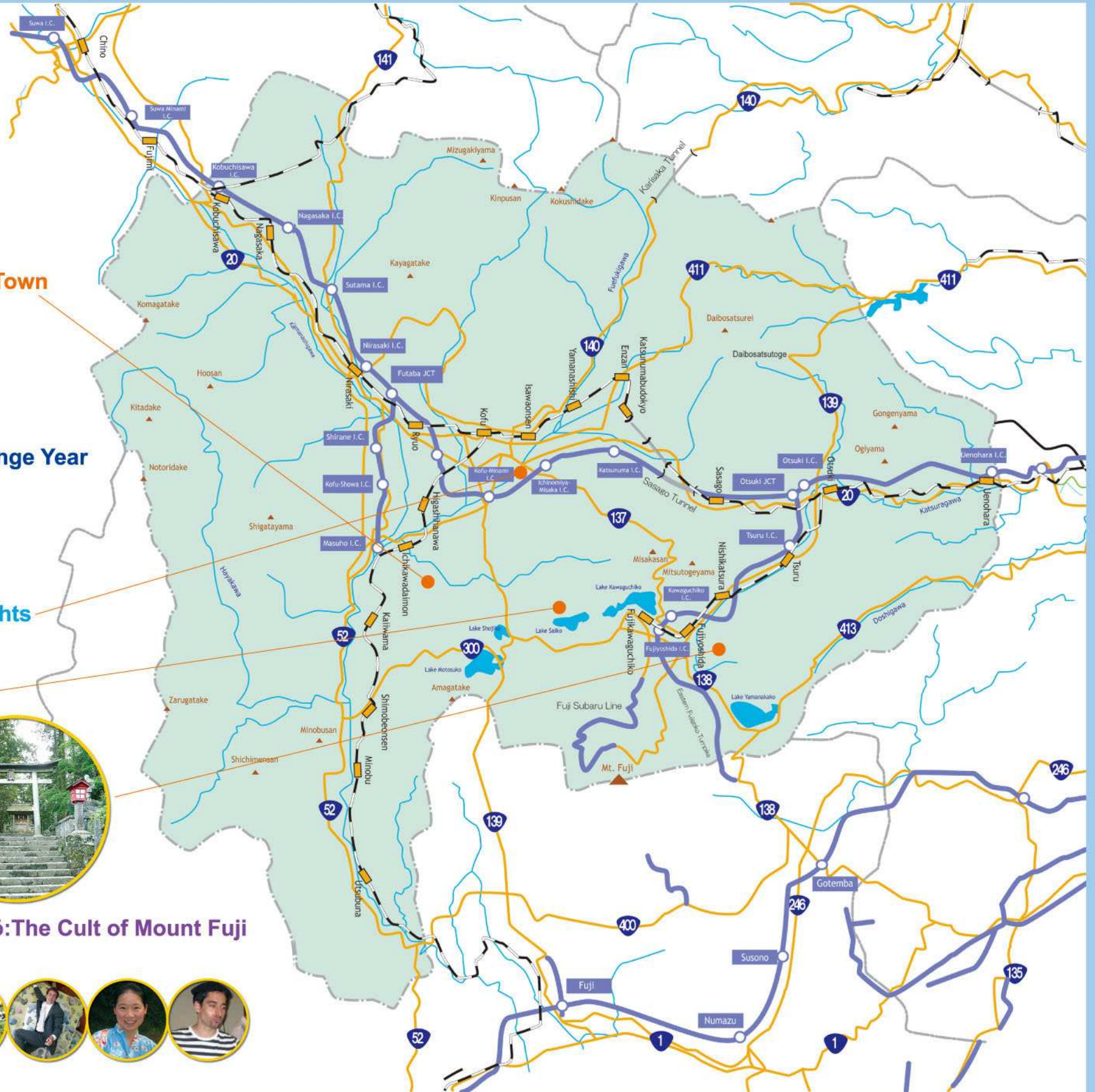


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Ichikawa-Misato Town

Special Topic

市川三郷町



A Promenade through Parks imbued with the Past

by Jonathan Smith

Ichikawa Misato is a town located in the southern Kofu Basin with centuries of traditions and culture. The town was formed during a nationwide boom of municipality mergers, when Ichikawa-Daimon (市川大門), Mitama (三珠), and Rokugo (六郷) combined in 2005 under the new name of Ichikawa-Misato (市川三郷) -an ingenious name that not only uses at least one Chinese character from each of its three constituent towns' names, but also incorporates the word "Misato," which appropriately enough means "three towns" in Japanese.

The town is renowned for its local industries-from hanko personal seal and washi paper production, to fireworks-because local craftspeople have been refining their art for hundreds of years. It's no wonder that the fireworks of Ichikawa Daimon have such renown that 200,000 spectators-many from outside Yamanashi-come here every August 7th for the spectacular Shinmei Fireworks Festival. Word is also spreading about the relaxing waters and stunning views from the Mitama-no-Yu Hot Springs Facility (showcased in the Winter 2006 edition of the Grapevine), with 20% of the 270,000 annual visitors coming from outside of Yamanashi.

Aside from housing the popular hot springs, Mitama is also known as the "Hometown of Kabuki" because of the many ties that the legendary Ichikawa Family of Kabuki actors have with the area, and with Yamanashi in general. The Ichikawa Family itself goes back 12 generations, with Ichikawa Danjuro 1 having created the representative "aragoto" style of dynamic and exaggerated acting and speech, Ichikawa Danjuro VII having established the set of 18 best Kabuki plays, and the "God of Kabuki" Ichikawa Danjuro IX (whose statue can be seen near Asakusa Temple in Tokyo) being credited with having elevated the Kabuki style of theater to high art. Danjuro 1 is said to have been a descendent of a retainer of Yamanashi warlord Takeda Shingen, and as such was given a plot of land in the Ichikawa-Misato area. The three-squared "Mimasu" Ichikawa family crest is said to have derived from the "Shingen-Masu," a specific size of masu container common in Yamanashi. The family's trademark "persimmon

brown" color can also be traced back to the many persimmons grown in Yamanashi (see the Winter 2008 edition of the Grapevine for information about Yamanashi's dried persimmons).

You can find out more about the Ichikawa Family and Kabuki in General at the Kabuki Culture Park in Mitama. The centerpiece of the park is the Furusato Hall, which houses both an archeological exhibit and a 470-seat theater, in which Ichikawa Danjuro 12 and other Kabuki actors have performed. The architecture of the Hall itself is modeled after the prestigious Kabuki-Za Theater in Ginza, Tokyo. A separate Cultural Museum houses an exhibit of Kabuki costumes, props, and related materials, a 3D theater, and a replica of a scene from "Sukeroku," one of Danjuro VII's 18 best plays. The adjacent garden comes alive every spring when the many peony flowers bloom-peony being yet another symbol of the Ichikawa Family.

The charms of a culture even more distant and ancient await you just down the road at another unique park in Ichikawa-Misato, the Daimon Hirin Park, which is located at the foot of the Mt. Hirugatake Climbing Trail. "Hirin" roughly translates into Stele Forest-where tall engraved stones, or "steles," stand in the open air much like trees in a forest. Daimon Hirin Park was inspired by the Shaanxi Stele Forest Museum in Xi'an and the Stele Forest at the Temple of Confucius in Qufu, China; and Chinese artisans were commissioned

to create the 15 replicas of famous Han and Tang Era Chinese steles found inside the Daimon Park. Though the original steles have been damaged over their thousand-plus years of existence, the replicas in the Daimon Hirin Park stand stately and intact as the sun reflects a subdued sheen off of their obsidian surface.

With its collection of ancient engravings, the park attracts many calligraphy practitioners from all over Japan, who come to study these precise carvings that clearly show the development of the different styles of Chinese characters over the first millennium CE. Visitors can also sign up to create their own rubbed ink impressions of display engravings, and a shop also sells locally-made washi paper and other calligraphy implements; the Ichikawa-Misato area has been a leader of high-quality washi paper production for over a thousand years, and is the number one domestic producer of paper used in screen doors. But those with little knowledge of calligraphy can still enjoy a taste of Chinese architecture and landscaping by a visit to the park. Still more tastes await those who try the dim sum and over 100 types of Chinese tea at the park's Teahouse.

So on your next visit to Ichikawa-Misato, make sure you take a stroll through some of the town's culturally-enriching parks-and don't forget to follow it with a dip at a local hot spring to rejuvenate your strolling feet.



Kabuki Culture Hall
 (3158 Ueno, Ichikawa-Misato Town)
 Open 9:00 to 17:00, Tuesday-Sunday
 Admission is 500 yen for adults, 250 yen for children
 10-minute walk from Kai-Ueno Station on the JR Minobu Line
 15-minute drive from the Kofu-Minami Interchange on the Chuo Expressway
 Tel:+81(0)55-272-5500 Fax:+81(0)55-272-5510

Daimon Hirin Park
 (4930 Ichikawa-Daimon, Ichikawa-Misato Town)
 Open 9:30 to 17:00, Tuesday-Sunday
 Admission is 600 yen for adults, 500 for high school students, 250 for children
 Ink Rubbings are 1,000 yen (500 yen for children)
 15-minute walk from the Ichikawa Honmachi Station on the JR Minobu Line
 20-minute drive from the Kofu-Minami Interchange on the Chuo Expressway
 Tel:+81(0)55-272-7100 Fax:+81(0)55-272-0499



The Japan-Brazil Exchange Year

by Erica Tanaka



People of Yamanashi in Brazil

When the first Japanese started to settle down in Brazil, associations of citizens from the same home prefecture - the "*kenjinkai*" - began to form as a means of mutual help, integration and as a way to perpetuate Japanese cultural roots.

There were many people from Yamanashi Prefecture who journeyed to Brazil, following the footsteps of those who came before them in order to create better lives for themselves and to play out their dreams.

Nowadays, there are very few first generation immigrants in these associations and the management responsibilities are executed, in most of the groups, by their second or third generation descendants.

Within the city of São Paulo exists the largest Yamanashi Association overseas, composed of approximately 450 families and 1500 members. Year after year, Yamanashi culture is perpetuated by its descendants through cuisine and artistic performance.

Nowadays, the second and third generation Yamanashi descendants preserve and spread the traditions of their ancestors by preparing *hoto* - a traditional dish of noodles soaked in miso soup and vegetables - and serving it during São Paulo's annual Japan Festival, which attracts more than 100,000 visitors yearly.

Mr. Yamaguchi, the Association vice-president and a Yamanashi native from the town of Nanbu, is the main attraction of the Yamanashi food stall. Making allusions to famous Japanese feudal lord, Takeda Shingen, he appeals to the passing crowd by shouting, "Try samurai food and get stronger!"



Once upon a time...

In Brazil, after the declaration of the Aurea Law in 1888 which abolished African slavery, the demand for a new source of labor arose in the coffee plantations. As a result, a low-cost working force was being recruited, mainly composed of Italians. With the growth of coffee production and the job opportunities it offered, the Japanese government considered Brazil to be an appropriate destination for citizens searching out better living conditions.

In 1895 a commerce treaty between Brazil and Japan was established, and in 1905 the Japanese government was informed of the increased Brazilian demand for labor. From that point on, emigration companies would portray Brazil as a utopian destination, advertising promises of fast and easy wealth. "Coffee is the tree from which gold is harvested by hand," one slogan proclaimed.

In 1908, the first 781 Japanese migrants sailed off from Brazil's Santos Harbor. In their luggage, they carried only a few personal belongings, but their hearts were filled with tons of dreams. *Kasato Maru* was the name of the vessel that transported these first migrants, tying the two nations through labor and high hopes.

It was the beginning of a modern epic, the story of people leaving behind their familiar homes to make a life for themselves in a distant land inhabited by different people with distinct habits and language.

As time passed, the Japanese migrants workers would transition from the status of immigrants to being permanent residents; the future generations - known as the Nikkei - not only became Brazilians, but have been contributing enormously to the development and formation of Brazilian society.

Yamanashi Prefecture and the State of Minas Gerais

The reverse migration

In the beginning of the 1980s, the outlook of the Brazilian economy was one of inflation and unemployment, while on the other side of the planet, Japan was experiencing unprecedented economic growth.

Due to a labor shortage, there was a rapid increase of illegal workers in Japanese factories, mainly from other Asian countries. In 1990, Japan's Immigration Control Law was renewed to be more restrictive and selective. It also facilitated the hiring and immigration of Japanese descendants up to the third generation, who the government considered to be better fit at adapting to the Japanese lifestyle. And since then it has attracted many Nikkeis from South American countries such as Bolivia, Paraguay, Peru and mainly Brazil.

Nowadays, it is estimated that there are more than 310,000 Japanese Brazilians - *nipo-brasileiros* and their families - who are settling down in Japan, and from temporary migrants are becoming permanent residents.

These migrants are not only settling down, but are also raising their children in Japan, sending them to Japanese schools and taking part in the formation of a new Japanese society where many cultures coexist.



Brazilians in Yamanashi

In Yamanashi prefecture, there are approximately 5000 Brazilian residents who work mainly in the local factories. The town of Chuo has a concentration of approximately 1,500 Brazilian residents and Tatomi Minami Elementary School has 45 Brazilian students enrolled.

Many Japanese Brazilian children in the country attend Japanese schools, but some of them find it difficult to get used to the educational system, which differs from the Brazilian one. In order to overcome problems relating to cultural and institutional adjustment, local authorities have been hiring nationals who can communicate in both languages. These nationals then provide support to the children until they adapt to the new cultural environment.

On the other hand, there has been a growing amount of Brazilian schools around Japan. These schools provide lessons in Portuguese following the Brazilian school curriculum. Most of them are private schools and parents, foreseeing a future in Brazil for their children, enroll them in these schools.

At Yamanashi's Colégio Pitágoras, located in the town of Minami Alps, there are approximately 100 students from kindergarten to high school. They attend lessons following the Brazilian school system. A particular characteristic of Pitágoras is its active participation in community events as a tool to promote cultural exchange, understanding, and integration among the local residents and community.

Last July, Pitágoras School, in partnership with the Yamanashi International Association and local authorities, held a festival to celebrate the centennial anniversary of Japanese emigration to Brazil, and to commemorate the Japan-Brazil Exchange Year. More than a thousand participants had the opportunity to learn a bit about Brazilian art and culture, and for the Brazilian children, it was a unique opportunity to get in touch with Japanese society, its people and culture.



The Japan-Brazil Exchange Year was an opportunity to raise awareness among Japanese and Brazilians, who rarely know about the *nipo-brasileiro* relationship and its history.

The celebrations all over Japan are a way to reinforce and mark the beginning of a new chapter in a history based on mutual understanding and exchange- important elements in the formation of a more globalized Yamanashi where the differences are respected.

Reaching New Heights

by Lee Sands

It's safe to say that climbing has been around since the beginning of man-kind, when people would climb out of necessity rather than enjoyment. However, in the modern era climbing is rapidly becoming one of the most popular sports around, with the improvement of equipment and the opening of many indoor climbing gyms. It's a sport that has become available to almost anyone willing to give it a try.

With Yamanashi being one of the most beautiful and mountainous areas in Japan, we spoke to renowned climber Tokio Muroi and climbing gym owner Yamamori Masayuki in his Yamanashi climbing gym called Pirania about life as a climber and climbing in Yamanashi.



Background

Q. Where are you originally from?

Tokio: Nakano-ku, Tokyo
Yamamori: Shiga Prefecture, the home of Lake Biwa

Q. When did you decide to move to Yamanashi?

Tokio: Three years ago.
Yamamori: 16 years ago. I moved here with my company as an engineer.

Q. From what age did you start climbing?

Tokio: My parents were both climbers so I started from a young age, but my first real climbing experience was when I was around 14 years old.
Yamamori: I was 22 when I started.

Q. Why did you start to climb?

Tokio: My parents were climbers.
Yamamori: Because Yamanashi has many mountains my work supervisor invited me to join him climbing one day. After that he kind of forced me keep going, even though I didn't really want to (laughs). Then after a while I grew to really enjoy it.

Q. Have you ever competed in a climbing contest? How was it?

Tokio: A few, I remember in my first competition I wasn't very good. Recently I haven't competed in any competitions, but about five years ago in an outside festival like contest I won first place.

Yamamori: Yes I have. I've had some mixed results coming first and last several times. In my first competition I came last. More recently I competed in the Japan Cup, but I didn't do very well. Yamanashi has some competitions too such as the Green Cup at Minami-Alps, an outdoor competition held in May, the Yamanashi Inhabitants Competition at Kose Sports Park in September and the Bouldering Yamanashi Cup at this gym (Pirania) held in April.

Q. Can you do any other sports?

Tokio: Not at all. Especially sports that use a ball; they're beyond me.

Yamamori: Absolutely nothing (laughs). I can't do anything but climbing, even though I played baseball at junior high school and high school. There was no climbing club at my school. But even if there was I don't think I would have joined (laughs).

Q. Do you have a special diet?

Tokio: Not really, but I'm the type of person who burns fat easily so I don't need to worry so much about what I eat. I do take some vitamins and occasionally I take protein too, but I don't really have a special diet.

Yamamori: No. I have no special diet, although, I don't really drink alcohol and I don't smoke tobacco.

Q. Is there anyone you respect as a climber?

Tokio: My parents.
Yamamori: Of course. The first would have to be Tokio-san, but only as a climber (laughs). Another is Kusano Toshimichi.

Q. Have you ever climbed Mount Fuji?

Tokio: Yes, but only when I was younger as a high school student.
Yamamori: Yes, two times, but only from the fifth stage. Although I prefer places where there are less people when I climb, I think Fuji is better for a climber in winter.

Q. Before you established Pirania climbing gym what did you do?

Yamamori: I designed and made climbing goods, such as mats, climbing blocks and original clothing for two or three years in Yamanashi.

Q. Why did you start Pirania?

Yamamori: There were not enough places to practice in Yamanashi and without a lot of variation climbing isn't as fun. Now this gym (Pirania) has over 100 members.

Pirania Climbing Gym

Website: <http://www.pirania.jp/>
Open from 9:00 to 17:00 from Monday to Friday (closed on Mondays during winter) and from 10:00 to 20:00 on weekends and holidays (open until 21:00 on Saturdays).
Address: 336-2 Ido, Isawacho, Fuefuki-shi, Yamanashi-ken, 406-0045 Japan.
Tel: +81(0)55-261-7621 Mail: info@pirania.jp

About Climbing

Q. Recently it seems climbing has become very popular. Why do you think this is? Do you think it has anything to do with the X-Games?

Tokio: I don't think it has much to do with the X-Games but in previous years climbing has had a dangerous image like when you fall off you might injure yourself or die. But recently since the starting of climbing gyms people have been introduced to a safer climbing experience, and it's given climbing a safer image.
Yamamori: I think it has something to do with the X-Games, well perhaps not the X-Games directly but the way in which the media has portrayed climbing recently. They like to show the "cool" side of climbing and make the people who climb seem "cool" too. But I don't think that is what climbing really is.

Q. Compared to other prefectures how is the climbing in Yamanashi?

Tokio: Yamanashi is a great place to climb. I mean in terms of all Japan the most famous place could be considered to be Nagano which is located directly above Yamanashi, and from Kofu you can get there within an hour or so. But if you ask any climber they're jealous of anyone living in Yamanashi.

Yamamori: The best! For climbing, Yamanashi is amazing. I haven't been to many other prefectures, but Yamanashi is a great place for climbing.

Q. Does Yamanashi have any cool climbing locations?

Tokio: Zuikakisan, this is a great place with a great variation of rocks for all levels, even beginners. Also Hayakawa is a fun place to climb.
Yamamori: Of course. For me Hayakawa is the best. I go there often. Around Nishiyama Onsen is good too. I also recommend Shosenkyou, even though it's a place for sightseeing there are a lot of good places to climb that people don't know about. Around the Hakushu Suntory Winery are some beautiful and sacred places you can climb too.

Q. What is better, climbing in a gym or outside?

Yamamori: For me outside it better, even though I run a climbing gym (laughs).

Q. What's the worst climbing injury you've had?

Tokio: About 10 years ago while cleaning a boulder to climb I was holding a tree above and it snapped leaving me to fall and break my leg. Of course it's easy to climb without getting an injury if you climb in a dangerous place you are more likely to put yourself at risk.
Yamamori: I've had a few cartilage injuries that even now still cause me problems.

Q. You've appeared in several climbing DVD's. Do you ever get nervous when they are filming you?

Tokio: I've been in about four or five climbing DVD's and of course I get nervous. But generally when climbing outside it's a bit nerve racking.

Q. I've heard you don't use a mat when climbing outside, is



this true? Isn't it dangerous?

Tokio: That is true (smiles), I almost never use a mat. Of course it's dangerous and because I'm confident and go to places where sometimes a mat is difficult to use I can do it. That doesn't mean that because climbing gyms have mats that they are boring for me though.

Q. Do you have any advice for anyone who wants to try climbing?

Tokio: Go to a climbing gym and try it out. Climbing can be fun for all levels.
Yamamori: Many people start climbing but give up quickly. My advice would be to persevere for at least three to five years. If you go just a few times I don't think you can be fully satisfied and the more you go the better you can get, and more you can enjoy climbing.

Q. Do you think you could climb a building faster than Spiderman?

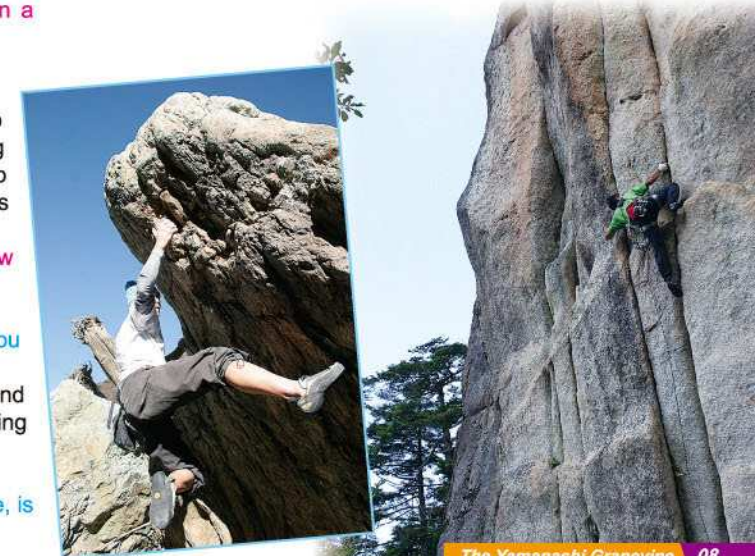
Tokio: Spiderman is very fast! Spiderman is definitely faster, it would be impossible for me to beat him (laughs).
Yamamori: I don't think so (laughs). Spiderman is amazingly fast!

Q. Is there anyone at Pirania who you think will become a famous climber?

Yamamori: Yasuda Atori. But she's already quite famous.

Q. Have you ever experienced a fear of heights?

Tokio: High places are of course scary, on the other hand if you don't think it's high then it could become dangerous.
Yamamori: Yes. Sometimes when I'm climbing in really high places it gets quite scary. I think as humans we all have that kind of fear.



A Village of Thatched Roofs: Saiko Iyashi no Sato NENBA

by Yi-Mei Lee



From Africa to the United Kingdom, from Mexico to Asia, thatched roofing has been used for centuries in many countries around the world. In Japan, thatched roof houses are most common in rural areas. Houses made of thatched roofing feature a unique architectural style designed in response to differences in climate, particularly for the rainy season and winter in Japan. In Yamanashi prefecture, near the mysterious Lake Saiko and with a breathtaking view of Mt. Fuji, there exists a village full of turn-of-the-century thatched roof houses. This time, the grapevine team is taking you to discover the charm of this recovered village, which had long been considered to be Japan's most beautiful: the Iyashi no Sato Nenba.

Iyashi no Sato Nenba is a village on the shores of Lake Saiko, one of the Fuji Five Lakes. Entering the village is like stepping out of a time machine. You'd experience that mental double-take, because surely time has not touched this place, not with its breathtaking natural landscape and tranquil atmosphere. My kindly guide was one of the village craftsmen, who explained to me that Iyashi no Sato Nenba was largely a restoration effort which took place after a strong typhoon had swept through the area, destroying a majority of the local houses and claiming nearly a hundred lives. After 40 years, an opportunity had opened up in the form of district mergers, and the locals decided to restore the original beauty of the village. Now, each restored house is devoted to a different Japanese art or craft. Visitors can experience a variety of hands-on-activities, such as the making of Japanese paper, silk and cloth. They also have the option of learning about the village's history by visiting the mudslide museum and historical resource centre.



The Nenba thatched roof houses utilize Japanese silver grass as one of their main components, mirroring the architectural methods of old times when farmers would produce an abundance of silver grass in order to provide inexpensive roofing materials. The layer of thatch covering a roof goes from 40cm to 80cm thick and the steep angle at which they are constructed allows the rain and snow to run off rapidly, giving the material a longer lifespan. The thatched roof offers a thick mat of insulation that keeps houses cool in summer and warm in winter. They say a roof of this kind should be repaired or re-thatched every 10~12 years. Back in the old days, villagers worked collaboratively in groups, but it is getting harder to gather participants for this project and the re-thatching now relies primarily on the craftsmen. One might think that to re-thatch is to dismantle the entire roof and replace all the grass. On the contrary, approximately 30% of the original thatch can be reused to complete the work. However, as there are only a few skilled craftsmen and no modern technologies which can be applied to replace the old tools, the building process takes longer than before.



Each restored house still consists of two levels. Under the triangular ceiling, the first floor reveals a spacious living area; the verandas that function as transitional spaces cleverly link the inside and outside of the house, providing a comfortable area to work, chat and welcome visitors. Even though people no longer raise silkworms on the second floor, the existence of the room represents a major part local history.

Iyashi no Sato Nenba is not only a major area landmark, it also holds its share of Japanese architectural history. Next time when you are in the Fuji Five Lakes area, remember to pay a visit. Breathe in the clean air, stroll into the past and experience the sights and sounds of the Nenba thatched village.

Iyashi no Sato Nenba is surrounded by lush forests and a stunning mountain landscape. Nenba is a place that makes one to feel at home.

*Walk into Nenba
A world of nature awaits
Walk into Nenba
Slowly, the river of time
Passes through this tranquil place*

For more information, please visit:
Tel: +81(0)55-520-4677 <http://fujisan.ne.jp/iyashi/>
Open: 9:00 to 17:00, Monday-Sunday. Admission is 200yen for adults, 100yen for children.
Address: 2710, Saiko Nenba, Fujikawaguchiko-cho, Minami Tsuru-gun, Yamanashi-ken, Japan.
Access: Take the train from Shinjuku Station to Kawaguchiko Station by Chuo Line and Fuji-kyuko Line. Then take the Retro Bus and get off at "Saiko Iyashino Sato Nenba".



Fujishinkō: The Cult of Mount Fuji

by Mathieu Bellier

Mount Fuji. Yamanashi's Yoshida trail. Fifth station. At 2305 meters above sea level, the fifth station is the highest point accessible to vehicles and where the vast majority of people taking on Japan's most famous mountain start their climb. During the two months of Mt. Fuji's official climbing season, the fifth station is bustling with travelers of all ages, busy making last-minute preparations, fluttering around the numerous souvenir shops, and taking photographs of the landscape stretching out around them. If hiking and climbing are now popular outdoor activities (clearly shown by this year's record-breaking number of 247,066 climbers from the Yamanashi side) there was a time when Mt. Fuji was not only a tourist destination but also a source of spirituality for many Japanese.

While Mt. Fuji has always been praised for its startling beauty, it was also feared as an active volcano whose summit was inhabited by the goddess *Konohanasakuya-hime*. To implore protection against eruptions, Mt. Fuji was worshipped, initially from the foot of the mountain and then during the 9th century from a closer distance as practitioners of the *shugendō* religion began to journey up the mountain for ascetic training. The practice spread to the general population three centuries later, and Mt. Fuji soon became a new pilgrimage destination. When the popularity of the *Fujishinkō* (Fuji cult) reached its peak during the second period of the Edo area (1603-1867), it is said that all of Edo's (now Tokyo) 808 wards had its own *Fujikō*, or Fuji worshipping society.

Those societies were composed of people from the same local community or guild, gathering together and saving enough money every year to send a few of their members on a journey up Mt. Fuji. The pilgrims, coming mainly from the Kanto area, would walk along the *Kōshūkaidō* route (connecting Tokyo to Yamanashi), and rest at Otsuki city before heading towards the northern side of Mt. Fuji. From there, some of them would tour the Fuji Five Lakes area or the eight ponds of Oshino Hakkai, purifying themselves with snow water from the sacred mountain. On the night before climbing, pilgrims would stay in Fujiyoshida, a city nestled at the very bottom of the mountain which also served as an accommodation center where special guides called *oshi* transformed their houses into inns. The *oshi* did not only cater to these pilgrims, but also played the role of intermediary between the spirit of Mt. Fuji and the worshippers. Like shamans or temple priests, they would perform ritual prayers, purifications, spells and even divinations according to the requests of their guests. Early in the morning the pilgrims, wearing white kimonos, straw sandals and with a walking stick in hand, would leave the *oshi's* house for the nearby *Kitaguchi Hongu Fuji Sengen Jinja*, a shrine marking the starting point of the Yoshida trail. After praying for a safe climb, they would pass through the *torii* gate and enter the forest. This marks the first part of their long and spiritual journey to the summit.

As the oldest symbol of Japan, Mt. Fuji did not only influence art, literature and poetry, but also had a profound impact on the Japanese psyche. If you can take the time to learn about its fascinating history and climb it from the first station, you too can transform your Yamanashi journey into an enlightening experience!

For more information about the cult of Mt. Fuji, please check out the newly opened **Kyūtogawa Pilgrim's Inn**, an annex of the Fujiyoshida Museum of Local History. Open from 9:00 to 17:00 (closed on Tuesdays), the entrance fee is 100 yen for adults. Address: 3-14-8 Kamiyoshida, Fujiyoshida-shi, Yamanashi-ken, 403-0005 Japan, Contact: Tel/Fax +81(0)555-22-1101.
Don't miss the beautiful **Fuji Sengen Jinja**, the shrine worshipping Mt. Fuji's goddess and marking the beginning of the Yoshida climbing trail. Address: 5558 Kamiyoshida, Fujiyoshida-shi, Yamanashi-ken, 403-0005 Japan, Contact: Tel +81(0)555-22-1111 Fax +81(0)555-24-5221 (English pamphlets available).



富士山、吉田口登山道、五合目。標高2305メートルに位置する五合目は、自家用車やバスなどでアクセスできる一番高い場所であり、日本一有名な山岳登山に挑戦する大方の人の出発点でもある。夏の登山シーズンの二ヶ月間は、特に目の前に広がる絶景を眺めて撮影したり、数多くのお土産屋で買い物したり、最後の登山準備をするあらゆる年齢層の人で賑わっている。今年、過去最高を更新した山梨県側からの登山者数24万7千66人が示すように、現在ハイキングとクライミングは主流のアウトドア・スポーツになっている。しかし、その富士山はかつて、観光地のみならず、日本人の信仰の対象とみなされていた。

富士山は、その優美な風貌が古代から絶賛される一方、山頂に神仏の木花開耶姫命が住まう活火山として恐れられていた。当初は噴火を鎮めるために山麓から崇められていたが、平安時代以降に修業を目的とした修験者が登り始めたことにより、近くから拝む山へと変化した。そして中世になると庶民の間にも広がり、参詣地というかたちに移行した。江戸時代後半の富士信仰は、江戸(東京の旧称)の八百八町に八百八講(信心者の集団)があったと言われるほどの隆盛を極めた。

富士講は同じ地域出身または同じ職業の人で構成されていたのだが、毎年数人の講員が登拝できるよう、協力しあってお金を貯めていた。主に関東から来た参詣者は甲州街道(山梨県へつながる道)を辿って、大月市に宿泊し、富士山の北面に向かった。そこから富士五湖、忍野八海などを巡り、富士山から湧き出た雪水で心身を清めた。登山日の前夜には、麓にある宿坊拠点として発展した富士吉田市にやって来て、自宅を宿坊として提供していた御師住宅に泊まった。御師は参詣者の案内や宿泊などの世話をするだけでなく、彼らと富士山の神仏の仲立ちをする役割を持ち、依頼に応じて祈禱、祓い、呪い、占いなどを行う宗教者でもあった。翌日は、白の衣、菅笠、草鞋を身にまとい、金剛杖を手にした参詣者らが朝早く御師の家を出て、近くの吉田口登山道の起点である北口本宮富士浅間神社に向かう。そこで安全な登山を祈願し登山門をくぐった後、やっと森に足を踏み入れることができる。山頂目指し、長い信仰の旅の始まりである。

古くから日本国を最も代表している富士山は、文学、芸術、和歌においてその名を馳せたと共に、日本人の精神に深い影響を与えた。富士山の興味深い歴史を学び、一目から登山することにより、あなたの山梨県への旅を一段と味わい深いものにしてくれるでしょう！

富士講についてもっと知りたい方は今年開館した富士吉田市歴史民族博物館付属施設の旧外川家住宅をぜひ訪れてください。開館時間は午前9時30分～午後5時、入館料は大人100円。
住所：〒403-0005 山梨県富士吉田市上吉田3-14-8、電話/FAX：+81(0)555-22-1101

吉田口登山道の起点であり、富士山の神仏を祀っている富士浅間神社を見逃さずに！
住所：〒403-0005 山梨県富士吉田市上吉田5558
電話：+81(0)555-22-0221 FAX：+81(0)555-24-5221 (英語版のパンフレットあり)

富士信仰

Meet the authors



After three years contributing to The Grapevine, Coordinator for International Relations **Jonathan Smith** leaves the swelteringly warm embrace of the Yamanashi mountainside to return to the United States. He will never forget the good friends made and the good times had in Yamanashi. But just in case, he hopes to snatch the end of a grapevine from a nearby grape field, and-if he can get it through customs-hold onto it until he arrives stateside, so that he can grape bungee his way back to Yamanashi one day, and relive the memories made here.

Erica Tanaka is a 4th year JET Coordinator for International Relations in Yamanashi Prefecture. She has been working hard throughout the summer, planning activities which involve the promotion and understanding of Brazilian culture in the prefecture. This year is especially significant because it celebrates the Centennial of Japanese Emigration to Brazil and the Brazil-Japan Exchange Year. During her breaks, she never misses the chance to savor the best and sweetest Kyoho grapes of the Haga family's grapevines!



Unlike Spiderman, British ALT **Lee Sands** found it difficult to maneuver in his work clothing; luckily his job isn't to save people from a great height. He has enjoyed his time in the beautiful prefecture of Yamanashi and after three years of rigorous training Lee will go to some other place to start the long climb up the corporate ladder, first stop London.

SHE FINALLY DID IT!!! To celebrate her 3rd year in Yamanashi, **Yi-Mei Lee** climbed Mt. Fuji and wore a yukata to the fireworks display. It's not a big deal, really. But since this may be her last year in Yamanashi, she wanted to pull out all the stops and give everything a go. Mt. Fuji is not technically difficult to climb, but coming down is definitely the hardest part. However, the sunrise at the summit made the whole trip worthwhile. In Japan they say that if you don't climb Mt. Fuji you are stupid, and if you climb it twice you are also stupid. Well, I think we all know which one she is!



Mathieu Bellier, third year CIR from France, dusted off his typical French outfit - striped shirt, beret, wine and baguette included- to celebrate this last September the 150th anniversary of Franco-Japanese diplomatic relations. After almost two years and a half in Yamanashi, where he met wonderful people and gained precious experience, it's time for him to pass the torch and fly to Tokyo to take on new challenges. He hopes that Yamanashi will keep fostering international exchanges and wishes the best of luck to the new Grapevine team to come.



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