

## Day 16: Tuesday, March 9, 2010

### Izu Peninsula

#### *Overview of today:*

From a buffet breakfast with people in their blue and white yukata, I explore gold: as a mine, panned for, and drunk in coffee. Next is the brilliant red of the *beni hoppe* strawberry, soon staining my greedy fingertips. A farmers market adds the colors of winter veggies. I meet a fellow American in his yakimono pottery store, and then enjoy the greenery and water of three Mishima parks, to finish with chasers of dark brown and strong yellow beer handcrafted in by another American now living in Numazu. The trip back to Tokyo is brightened by the white of falling slush.



☪ Mt. Fuji again, in Mishima's water utility cover.

### Morning at Nishi Izu Crystal View Hotel



☪ Morning buffet.

Next time. Lots of coffee later and I am ready for the day. I like the Nishi Izu Crystal View Hotel lobby for its grandiose décor.

Morning starts early with a buffet breakfast featuring Japanese and Western choices. I enjoy watching men and women in their yukata and haori overcoats and those slippers. The mighty yukata-everyone looks great in them and it means breakfast is a casual affair. Like going to breakfast in your pajamas, only more flattering.

As for the food, I find I am starting to actually enjoy himono after my daring buy last month at Yaizu Fish Market. The fish cake and egg square are good but I cannot quite get past the texture of the red egg roe.



☪ Himono for breakfast.

### Toi Gold Mine

Toi Gold Mine	土肥金山
Address:	2726 Toi, Izu City, Shizuoka Prefecture
Telephone:	0558-98-0800
Hours:	9:00-5:00, 9:00-6:00 between August 7 and August 22
Admission:	840 yen adults, 420 yen children. 600 yen to pan for gold.
Japanese website:	<a href="http://www.toikinzan.com/">http://www.toikinzan.com/</a>



☪ Solid gold brick.



☪ Gold sheet up close.

Gold. Bring the family. Bring the date. See the mine. Motion activates the spooky models and sounds enactments of the hard mining life. Pan for gold. Shop for gold and cookies in the largest gift shop in Izu. The museum has the gold, the tools, the ghostly decapitated model hands raising the tools. Lay your hands on the largest gold bar in the world, and its little cousin. Retreat to the

small coffee bar for coffee in your gold. Run upstairs to the small room of photographs of the mine and miners. Admire the tools. Shop some more.

Slightly cheesy around the edges although fully sanctioned by the Tokugawa crest (since 1601), and now backed by Mitsubishi, Toi Gold Mine is an amusement theme park on a grand scale. In spite of hard working men and women hauling out 40 tons of gold and 400 tons of silver over 400 years, it is still out-shown by Sado Island, which produced twice as much. Gold maintained the Tokugawa for centuries, and I wonder what happened to the workers and the boomtown of Toi once the gold ran out. The statue of the gold miner by the pond may be wondering the same thing.



☺ Golden miner.



☺ Still working the mines.

On the plus side, panning for gold flakes in the huge troughs of water brings up good fortune and I now wear a necklace with my gold flakes trapped inside. There is precious little English throughout the park except for the signage at each station in the mine tunnel tour. The gold mining museum is full of memorabilia. This is a good place to bring the kids, or enjoy a romantic date, as there is plenty to do and remark about. The Toi Gold Mine reminds me, a San Franciscan, that the Tokugawa gold experience was not like the California '49ers Gold Rush.

## Strawberry Fields of Ema

Ema Strawberry Farmers Association

Address: 563-7, Kita Ema, Izunokuni City, Shizuoka Prefecture

Telephone: 055-948-1115

Hours: 9:00-4:00, December 12-May 6

Admission: 1,800-700 yen, changing by the month, for 30-minutes of strawberry picking.

Japanese web site: <http://www.izu.co.jp/~emaitigo/>

Nearest train station: Izu Hakone Railway, Nirayama Station



☺ Strawberry greenhouse.



☺ Jam making.



☺ Strawberry family.

What is it about strawberries that make one pleased to be out in the most miserable weather? Brightest red, cute little green caps, sweet with a tang, and ready to eat. That's the attraction of strawberries. The Ema Strawberry Farmers Association is one of the sponsors of the seasonal picking of the s'berries, and has attracted a steady stream of couples and families of like mind. We mill around the covered gift stores and buy our tickets for 30-minutes of all-we-can-eat greenhouse grazing.

Just inside the white vinyl covered greenhouses nearby, a country-style dressed woman hands me a plastic divided tray. The small section contains sugary syrup, the larger is for discarded green stems. Soon I am making juicy progress down my selected row. It's not difficult to be satisfied as numerous berries are ready. I later learn that it is best to start

eating a strawberry near the cap and work down to the sweeter tip. Ignorant, I am still in heaven. This special beni hoppe local variety is really good and at greenhouse perfect.

Half a happy hour later, I return to the shopping and ticket stands. Would I like to see the jam making operation? Is it a huge operation commanding an entire greenhouse? Not so! In a small room behind the gift stand, I meet the jam makers, all dressed in regulation kitchen aprons and white, hair covering hats. Three men watch one woman in pink rubber gloves running a ladel around a huge mixing vat. The rich aroma instantly abolishes the chill of the wintery air outside. The stand on the other side of the wall is the only place they sell the jars of strawberry jam. Their secret recipe includes loads of beni hoppe, sugar, citric acid, lemon, and a lot of mixing. They seem to be a happy crew. The jam label says: "Hand Made Jam. Specially selected, Izu healthy foods". I could not agree more.

Next, I happen upon a covered farmers market at the far end of the parking lot. For very little cash, I will have a very happy kitchen. The harvest: fresh and cheap carrots, yellow yuzu, greens, black rice, broccoli, tomatoes, onions, celery, potatoes, ginger, and an unknown crunchy tuber.

On the way out, I notice a wall of family portraits of the Ema Strawberry Farmers Association. Each extended family is standing in their strawberry field. It is a nice touch.



🍷 Farmers Market bounty.

## Robert Yellin's Yakimono Gallery

Robert Yellin Yakimono Gallery

Address: 3-2-18 Omiya-cho, Mishima City, Shizuoka Prefecture

Telephone: 055-991-5388

Hours: 9:00-5:00

English website: [www.japanesepottery.com](http://www.japanesepottery.com)

Japanese website: Coming soon

Nearest train station: JR Mishima station. South Exit and a short walk to the Gallery.

Map: <http://www.e-yakimono.net/html/contact-us.html>



🍷 Spectacular *yakimono*.

Yakimono means "fired things", in this case the Japanese ceramic art for sale in Robert Yellin's Yakimono Gallery. He is not a potter himself, but sells Japanese ceramic art from very old to the modern upstarts. His taste is deeply informed from long experience and research, and his mission is to share that information and encourage people to knowledgeably purchase the artwork. Robert is someone I admire. He has made Japan his home, raised a family, speaks fluent Japanese, and had the good sense to settle in Mishima, while retaining his West Coast American sensibility.

Most of the artwork is not in the gallery because they are viewable and buyable at the gallery website, "japanesepottery.com". He has buyers from all over world, and his English website success might be the key for many merchants in Shizuoka who want to expand their markets. The website generously includes links to the growing community

of English speakers with interests in Shizuoka and Japan. I wonder if this model is something the many Japanese enterprises I have encountered over the past several months might seriously consider as a way to attract English speaking travelers.

The Yakimono Gallery itself is just a few minutes walk from the JR Mishima station, next to Komoike Park, reviewed below. A small sign on the street guides me to the second floor. Combination office, display, greeting room and storage, the entire office will undergo extensive renovations in April which will allow a much larger display area. The office is jammed with bookshelves about ceramics, various artists, and art. Favorite pieces adorn every open space.



🍷 Robert's gallery and office.

When I ask about a possible teacup in a certain price range, he pulls out half a dozen pieces from concealed shelves. I am really beside myself trying to decide. I end up with something completely different, a plain yamahai style sake cup, very shallow and wide, that has somehow survived from the 11th or 12th century, the Kamakura Era. I will return later for a teacup. I leave with a piece of history in my hands.

Robert welcomes guests. I suggest calling ahead to confirm the gallery is open.



☺ Visitors area.

## Parks in Mishima

Parks in Mishima	Komoike Park 菰池公園, Rakujuen Park 楽寿園
Address:	Komoike Park: 3-20-1, Omiya-cho, Mishima City
Note:	Robert Yellin's Yakimono Gallery directly faces Rakujuen Park (19-3, Ichiban-cho, Mishima City)
Telephone:	055-971-5000 (Komoike Park: Mishima Tourist Association) 055-975-2570 (Rakujuen Park)
Hours:	Komoike Park is always open. Rakujuen Park: 9:00-5:00 (Apr.-Oct.), 9:00-4:30 (Nov.-Mar.)
Admission:	300 yen adults, 50 yen children for Rakujuen Park
English website:	<a href="http://tmo.mishima-cci.or.jp/uploads/mishimap_english.pdf">http://tmo.mishima-cci.or.jp/uploads/mishimap_english.pdf</a>
Japanese website:	<a href="http://www.mishima-kankou.com/play/index.html">http://www.mishima-kankou.com/play/index.html</a>
Nearest train station:	JR Mishima



☺ Rakujuen Park.



☺ Komoike Park.

Mishima City loves its water, and has developed the local parks around the theme of water. Komoike Park has a small pond and waterfall, a large statue of a bunny rabbit playing a cello, a granite statue of a music stand with a popular song, and very happy ducks commandeering the pond and walkways.

Shirataki Park is near an open-air zoo, with ponies for rides, goats and sheep. The park itself is formed from the last horrendous eruption of Mt. Fuji in 1708, and is rife with tossed black lava rocks. Lava flowed forth, cooling in the rumpled masses of wrinkled rock easily visible now through the roots of trees. It is no wonder that numerous shrines and

rock lanterns add a feeling of supplication to appease the fire gods. Today, all is tranquil and the numerous springs politely hold the Mt. Fuji water for the ducks and swans to enjoy.

Koike Park is a small pocket of greenery around a pond with a graceful granite block edging. Nearby, an old water well is in retirement. The inscription says it is a covered well, and the campaign theme of “*s eseragi*”, or “a little murmuring stream”.

There are many more *s eseragi* sites throughout Mishima. The city websites map them out.



☺ Covered well.

## Baird's Beer in Numazu

Baird's Beer, Numazu Fishmarket Taproom	
Address:	19-4 Senbon minato-machi, Numazu City, Shizuoka Prefecture
Hours:	Monday-Friday 5:00 pm-midnight. Weekends and national holidays noon-midnight.
Telephone:	055-963-2628
Website:	<a href="http://bairdbeer.com/en/">http://bairdbeer.com/en/</a> , <a href="http://bairdbeer.com/ja/">http://bairdbeer.com/ja/</a>
E-mail:	<a href="mailto:info@bairdbeer.com">info@bairdbeer.com</a>
Nearest train station:	Numazu on the Tokaido line, one stop from JR Mishima. South Exit.
Map:	<a href="http://bairdbeer.com/en/taproom/numazu-taproom">http://bairdbeer.com/en/taproom/numazu-taproom</a>
Bus:	From Terminal #1, ten-minutes to Numazu-ko bus stop by the Numazu Port
Taxi:	Five-minutes



☪ Bryan Baird in the brewery.



☪ Copper plated brewing vats.

Bryan Baird is another successful transplant from the United States to Shizuoka. He settled in Numazu because of the energetic fish market by the bay. Numazu is close enough to Tokyo that craft beer enthusiasts come down to his pub and return that night quite happy on the train. The local fishing community is slowly coming to understand his craft beer.

Of course, making small batches of beer is a combination of art and science. How does he do it? One factor is his hops, which he imports from the USA as whole buds instead of the usual ground hops. This adds extra dimension to the brew but also requires larger freezers. As he showed me through the towers of beer in various stages of fermenting or resting, he told me the stories of how he accumulated the machinery, of

the long hours, and the training of staff to take over more of the actual hands on work. His original taproom beer pub is in Numazu, not far from his home, and is named after the location by the bustling Fish Market. Delivery trucks pull up daily to his microbrewery down the street and deliver a range of freshly made beer to two other pubs in Nakameguro and Harujuku in Tokyo as well. His labels are interesting, too. A woman woodblock artist in Tokyo creates them and the names often reflect the Shizuoka characters and history.

From day one, his taprooms have supported his staff and patrons right to enjoy beer and snacks and good times without cigarette smoke (the usual reason I am rarely found in a pub anywhere in Japan). Are you listening, Ryogoku's Popeye Beer Club?

To his credit, Bryan keeps it a win-win situation by providing pleasant outdoor places to accommodate the smokers. I think this is the best solution for the tiresome problem of enjoying a night out in Japan. Make the place smoke free yet graciously accommodate the smokers' needs and many people will make it a point to patronize the ryokan, restaurant, and pub.

Another good point is his brewery and taprooms have beautiful, informative websites in English and Japanese. He confirms that they get a lot of interest and business online from both communities.

We finished the afternoon with a visit to his Numazu Taproom. Oh, and the beer? It is absolutely wonderful. The beers have character. I'm completely and happily impressed and will be looking for his other taprooms in Tokyo.



☪ Fishmarket Taproom. No smoking. Only great beer and good times.



☪ Baird's trademark label.

## Izu goodies



☼ Izu Goodies.

- Conical shell from the beach at Dogashima.
- Book of local folktales from the Chohachi Art Museum.
- Green tea dyed glasses case with *wasabi* on it, from Senoumi Ryokan.
- Three *tsurushi hina* on a red string from Senoumi Ryokan.

In the center:

- Red t-shirt from Baird's Beer, displaying their label for Kurofune Porter.
- *Tsurushi hina* of a baby, from Senoumi Ryokan.
- My panned gold flakes in a necklace from the Toi Gold Mine.
- *Yamahai* style sake cup, 11c or 12c Kamakura era, from the Rob Yellin Yakimono Gallery.

Not pictured:

- Shaker of sea salt from the Himono dried fish and sea products roadside stand.
- Calendar from Jokanji Temple.

Final thoughts: When I began "Shizuoka Travels With Patricia", I knew Shizuoka had Mt. Fuji (maybe) and green tea (probably). Thank you Shizuoka Prefecture Tourism Association for allowing this nascent travel writer behind the scenes throughout Shizuoka, and "thank you for the *himono*".

☼~Patricia Yarrow ☼

Comments: py52@yahoo.com

- *Beni hoppe* strawberries: red, luscious.
- Yellow packet of green tea.
- Gray rocks from the tidal shores of Sanshiro Island at Dogashima.
- *Omiyage* cookies with pickled cherry blossom in the middle from the Nishi Izu Crystal View Hotel.
- *Omiyage* cherry flavored sweet mochi from the Senoumi Ryokan.
- Edo-era traditional sweets in a basket from the "House of Dolls".
- A4 plastic folder with motif of plum trees from the MOA Museum of Art, Atami.
- Hand-woven basket with long onion from the Farmers Market.
- Towels from the Nishi Izu Crystal View Hotel and Senoumi ryokan, and from the Atami footbath vending machine.
- Packet of Izu bath salts from the Toi Gold Mine.
- Jar of strawberry jam, handmade, from the Strawberry Fields of Ema.
- Yellow yuzu from the Farmers Market.