



Citizen of the Planet

Avner peled

# Citizen of the Planet

A Travelogue

By

**Avner Peled**

אבנרט'ז'וק,

כמצרת למסע שלר במצרים הרחוק מיי - אוקטובר 2008, קיבצתי את שלל

באהבה רבה,

אבא

## תחילת מסע

### STUFF TO DO

**Posted: April 26th, 2008**

Well...I have a trip blog, yet I'm still here.

So why not use it to make a list of my trip tasks! yay. I will update this post once I complete shit.

- ~~Get a trip blog.~~
- ~~Finish vaccinating.~~
- ~~Get India medication prescriptions.~~
- ~~Get India medications.~~
- ~~Get refund for vaccine. (Only when I come back..)~~
- ~~Order India Visa.~~
- ~~Order Tokyo→Okinawa one way ticket.~~
- ~~Order Japan Rail pass.~~
- ~~Prepare iPod for trip.~~
- ~~Get other accessories for trip.~~
- ~~Send my arrival details to Ilan.~~
- ~~Order Traveler's Checks from the bank.~~
- ~~Close all apartment related issues.~~
- ~~Find a place to stay at Okinawa.~~
- ~~Prepare University papers/appeal for Mom.~~
- ~~Sign up at Bnei Dan International hostel association~~
- ~~Get Insured.~~
- ~~Have a goodbye mini get together.~~
- ~~Pack.~~

Wow...more than I expected

## COMMENTS

### **Comment from Fluffy**

**Time:** May 13, 2008, 7:44 pm

If only I saw this blog earlier, I would've added "הLER LEGN"!

## HERE GOES NOTHING

### **Posted: May 13th, 2008**

Well,

I'm already wearing my money belt and ready to leave in 30 minutes.

Next post will be from another country!

### **Avner**

## COMMENTS

### **Comment from Lior**

**Time:** May 13, 2008, 8:56 pm

Good luck Avner!

\* envy \* 😊

## KOKUSAI DORI, NAHA

**Posted: May 18th, 2008**

I really like this pic



**I AM A ROCK.**

**I AM AN ISLAND.**

**Posted: May 15th, 2008**

The previous post was an attempt to post from the iphone in Natbag.

Didn't really work, which adds to the list of iphone disappointments but I'll get to that later.

My trip started with annoying news, the flight was delayed almost 2 hours. I started worrying it'll cause me to miss my connection flights but was later re-assured that no one stays in Tashkent no matter what. Which is good because I started visualizing myself milking cows with my new Uzbek friends. Reut was there and was big help throughout the process and made me a bit less terrified of the whole going away thing (Arigatou Gozimas!!).

After some more delay inside the plane we took off and the flight crowd was actually mostly Japanese people and only a few Uzbeks (and they weren't loud old ladies) so it went smooth and I got some sleep.

after a 4 hour flight I found myself landing into somebody's farm. aka Tashkent Airport.

The Uzbeks led me and the Japanese to some room and no one really understood what to do until we heard the Uzbek form of a public speaker announcement, some guy walked down the hall and yelled "Tokyo! Osaka!" and everybody followed him.

In the plane we were introduced to our pilot "Ahmed Nidinijad" (I swear it was something like that) and took off. In the plane there was some girl

reading a Japanese book with the letters from top to bottom which was the second time I felt that "cool...Japan.." feeling. The first was hearing all the Japanese people around me speak which is like living in an anime! no to mention the sound effects of Japan are like living in a video game but I'll get to that later.

In Tokyo Narita airport I got a visa for 90 days (wouldn't give me more, maybe I'll try to extend it) without asking me to show anything.

Arriving at the airport I found out the bus to Haneda airport isn't working that late at night (around 23:00). Some cool looking guy at the airport said he'll take me to Haneda in his cab for , get this, 20,000 yen special discount. (that's 200\$). after gracefully saying no I asked the girl working at the airport what to do and she advised me to take a bus to Tokyo City Airport which was still



available and then a cab to Haneda. The total would cost around 100\$ (30 bus + 70 cab) which is still about 50-60\$ more than it would have cost with the bus I missed but the Japanese saleswoman was so nice and pretty I didn't care!

At the bus was the first time I noticed how they take a bow before providing service when the bus driver came in, took a bow and introduced himself. The Nintendo style music started and off we went. From there I took a cab using the note the girl at the airport wrote me because cab drivers hardly speak English.

When I got to the airport it was only around 0:00 and I asked to stay overnight. They closed me, 2 other Japanese girls and one black English woman in an area designated for overnight stay. I hardly managed to

sleep because it wasn't very comfortable and one of the girls made the loudest teeth crunching noise I've ever heard while she was sleeping!

At the airport I noticed another nice fact that the Japanese crew liked to run from place to place without looking too much in a hurry as it's just for fun. I also got a first chance to try the so called "Buttocks Cleansing" feature of the toilet. Sugoi! At 5am the airport opened and I went on the plane using the barcode I printed at home, very efficient. Also the barcode reader makes a cool Mario-style sound when you present the barcode which once again makes you feel like in a video game. Also the stewardesses take a bow towards the open air before they announce the flight is now boarding.

After landing in Naha, Okinawa I was totally exhausted and just wanted to get some sleep so I immediately proceeded to the monorail to get to the main area and from there took a cab to a guest house I read about in lonely planet. It was not easy to find, but this place is heaven! Mostly Japanese from all over Japan and they are so nice!

First let's say I found a good time to leave Israel because just when the iphone in Israel became a commodity the iphone in here makes me once again look like a prophet from the future. So many "Sugoi" shouts and funny how the Japanese "Wow" is this "Ohhh" sound which most closely resembles a cynical sigh in Israel. But sadly the iphone doesn't work here because Japan's cellular network is 3G only with some kind of advanced protocol that the iphone doesn't support. That's why they don't have it yet. but the wireless works. and here are some of their stuff I get here for 10\$ a day:

1. A bunk bed in a room with 3 other people with bathroom and shower.
2. Free internet.
3. Free laundry.
4. Free bicycle.
5. Kitchen, hangout rooms and great hospitality.

And there are cool hangouts here where people are playing guitars (Some guy here behind me was just playing and he's pretty good. songs sound American but he sings part in Japanese part in English). and even there is a guy here with the Okinawa Sanshin and I got to play it. It's very cool. I might get one.

Anyway after meeting everyone I went to sleep for like 7 hours and I'll probably get back to sleep soon. For now I'm eating all kinds of sushi/sushi like sandwiches I buy in the nearby 24/7 "Family Mart" which is in one word "Fresh". In some more words it's really good and a bit scary because I don't recognize everything I eat in there, but it's good.

Tomorrow I'll go visit the place Ilan sensei told me about where there is a woman teaching Japanese. I probably won't ask her about accommodation because for now I really like it here. then I'll go to the dojo.

Osayume!

Avneru-San



## COMMENTS

### **Comment from Fluffy**

**Time:** May 16, 2008, 3:48 am

It's funny how you wrote "Free internet" before laundry and kitchen.

### **Comment from Jigor**

**Time:** May 17, 2008, 12:49 am

I think we both know a person who simply (red.. double meaning right here :P) runs without being so much in a hurry. Don't know if it's for fun though...



### **Comment from Itamar**

**Time:** May 26, 2008, 6:45 pm

Hostel looks pretty cool!

## **LOST IN TRANSLATION**

**Posted: May 18th, 2008**

I've been trying to keep track of what's going on but it's too hard so I'm probably going to be missing out a lot of what's happening so Gomen Asai in advance!



The first thing I felt in my first morning in Naha was hunger. major hunger. The problem with being both hungry and new to Japan is that the first thing that comes up to your mind when you see a building with Japanese letters written on it you think "Aha! a Japanese restaurant!" but then you remember you're in Japan and all the buildings look like that.



Eventually i found some good food (I think it was a bakery) and went on to the main street "Kokusai-dori" to walk around. For some reason the street is always full of school girls so imagine my excitement.

Other than that it was very cool and of course anime/video game like walking in the street.



I just remembered a story I'll probably forget to write about later. Today I saw some teen school girls laughing and jumping around until one of them decided to give a kiss to a metal pole in the street. don't remember if it was a sign or an electricity pole. I also saw today young girls playing baseball in school. looked fun.

Some eating stories: I ate something called puffy snow which is like a combination of sugar cones (tzemer gefen matok?) and ice cream. Very interesting. There is a picture. I also ate at some place when you order in a strange way. you pick your meal in a machine which only has green tea and each green tea is stamped with the meal it comes with and costs accordingly. So you order your green tea from a machine and then give the stamp to the cook who makes your food.



Alert! Japan has no garbage cans. You carry your garbage with you. it only has recycling cans for bottles, cans and "combustibles" (paper).

Later that day I decided to look for Mimi the Japanese teacher, I couldn't find it for the life me. Today I used some information center to find out

that Mimi's building was destroyed and she moved somewhere else nearby. She is closed on Saturday and Sunday anyway so I'll go there on Monday.

I can already proudly say that after 2 whole days of hours of walking, mono railing and cycling back and forth, I know the city pretty well. But if you know my sense of direction think about this - being directionless, the only tool I used so far for getting to places was my memory. I remembered buildings, passages, streets, etc. Now imagine all the buildings and streets look like this: @#%^#@^#@#@#^^@#^#@. Now you understand why I've been strolling for hours.

After not finding Mimi and went on trying my luck in finding the dojo. It was very hard but eventually I got it. I got to a sign which lead to a passage way. In the passage I almost got lost until I heard familiar shouting echoing for miles. I followed the shouting and got to the sign you see in the pictures. By then the shouting stopped and I wasn't sure how to enter. There was one closed door and stairs leading to another door which was partially open.

Being an Israeli/just stupid I assumed this must be the entrance the dojo's lobby so I opened the door fully and Whoops, I just walked

in on Sensei Higaona who was by himself. Don't worry later on I apologized and everything is ok. I introduced myself to the Sensei, being as amazingly kind as he is, greeted me and he told me to come back 8 o'clock.



I came back that day and the rest is history. I'm now after my second training and let me say this. If 2 days ago I was thinking about leaving Okinawa only after a month and a half to get more time for the rest of

Japan, I'm now thinking just the opposite, I want to spend as much time as I can in Okinawa and dojo. The practice has been just amazing I can't begin to tell you how it feels but I'll tell you this: Coming back from 2.5 hours practice, riding a very cool bicycle at 22:30pm, downhill along the beach of Okinawa island - Truly one of the best feelings I've felt in my life. The only thing downsizing it is that I've had tremendous difficulties in finding the hostel in the dark when I come back. It is in some tucked away street and the address standard in Naha (maybe entire Japan?) is the weirdest ever. It's like a street is actually a square and the address is a coordinate in the square and a floor number. like 15-3-2F. So anyway last couple of days each night ended with 30 minutes of cycling that square all around until I recognize some "Love" hotel called You!DreamSPACE and from there I know how to go.

Details about the training I'll tell in person when I come back. Tomorrow is the only day when there is no practice though he said he'll come to open the dojo for anyone who'll be there at 10am but I don't want to push it. Tomorrow for the first time I'll hang out at the beach laying low, in time I'll begin to practice also at the hostel and stay more at the dojo after hours to max out the experience.

Next week I also plan to check out the immigration office to see if there is a chance I can extend my visa 2 weeks that way I can stay until the Budosai (July 27th) and still have a month of traveling in Japan and just spend less time in India. if not possible I may still stay for the budosai and have only 2.5 weeks in the rest of Japan but I'm not sure about that yet. we'll see.

I expect the length of the posts the decrease now but who knows. Mata ne!

Avner.

## COMMENTS

### **Comment from Fluffy**

**Time:** May 19, 2008, 6:15 am

Seeing these pictures, here's what I've realized: Japan looks just like Korea (buildings with funny letters, strange food, all the people look like "Charlies"), but more colorful... No chance you would see a red car in Korea...

Don't decrease the length, I'm enjoying these posts!

### **Comment from djTeller**

**Time:** May 19, 2008, 4:40 pm

Dude, where do you find these crazy people?( unless they are all crazy..).

Looks like an anime movie just in real life.

Picture some Jap Chicks and upload.

### **Comment from Itamar M.**

**Time:** May 19, 2008, 7:18 pm

Avner you Cannon!

It's great to hear that you are enjoying it so much, I'm really happy for you and I really enjoyed reading your post! I can definitely sympathize with your frustration over the address system, it's a total joke. Every city is divided into sub-sections and every section into blocks and the buildings are numbered in the most illogical way. I remember wondering about for hours trying to find a specific shop selling Karate belts.

Addresses are totally useless.

Go Ninja Avner!

## THE SENSEI BEAT ME WITH A STICK

**Posted: May 20th, 2008**



Don't worry, I'm fine. It was during a 'topless-Sanshin' practice, which may initially sound like a Hentai movie, but it's just doing a kata called 'Sanshin' which is all about breathing and strengthening your muscles without your gi and shirt. That way you can clearly see what you're doing wrong. So we were doing this and the sensei suddenly pulled a little wooden stick. First he used it to straighten my back along with the stick, and then to point where I should strengthen the muscle,

then he whipped me with the stick and said the pain will help me remember. It wasn't a strong whip because I'm sure he can bat me to other side of the dojo if he wants. It only hurt for a second and didn't leave a mark, but it was surprising 😊 Later on I talked to one of the other students and he said I was really lucky and the Sensei hardly does this to anyone.

So today was the third session and we were only 4 students and the sensei and Kuramotov which is another sensei. Same amount on Saturday. It's really like a private lesson and very effective. I've started making notes of things I should practice.



Yesterday I went for a walk in the morning I suddenly I heard music and drumming noises. I followed them and saw a bunch of girls dressed in costumes dancing in the street. Then I followed them at I arrived at some ceremony with all kinds of groups dressed in costumes and doing all kinds of dancing and ceremonies. Also later on at the beach (btw Naha's beach is actually very very small, the islands around



it are a different story) there was some kind of school event with tug of war. Pics included. Later I found out it was some kind of holiday. Then at night my first time out with the gang at Base Okinawa. Turns out they were having a karaoke contest as part of the holiday celebration and one of the girls called Azumi was participating. It was really funny and I got to do some socializing and sake drinking with some of the boys and girls.

I was jokingly saying that I could have participated in the contest if they let me sing the Evangelion opening theme song and then I found out the first out of 27 participants **actually did the Evangelion song** and I just missed it. A funny thing about the contest is that it has 6 year old boys and girls competing with 80 year old grandpas and grandmas. Another funny thing is the prizes. The first prize got a big trophy and vacation tickets but the lower prizes got a box of food. More like a box of snacks like you would see taken out of a truck before they are unloaded to the minimarket. Today I finally found MIMI the Japanese teacher which is good because the language thing is starting to get frustrating even though I'm picking it up here and there I still can't really understand conversations. **Now I know how Shira felt.** There is a very nice dog of the hostel called "Gonta" (sounds like a Japanese deformation of Günter) and sometimes I feel I can communicate with him better than with the

other residents (except a British guy named Christophe who wants to travel Uzbekistan and an American named Trevor who wants to be Barak Obama). Starting tomorrow I'll have one hour of Japanese lesson every day (Mon-Fri) at 11:00am. And guess what, it's free! I just give one or two English lessons in return. This mimi is very nice. While I was waiting for Mimi to open today I went to play in the arcade. The people there have this cool ID card which keeps their score on all of the music games.



I played some Guitar Hero (wasn't very good) and some Drum Hero or whatever the name (and I sucked). I also got to look at the infamous "Beat Mania". That's about it. One last cute thing I saw twice today is little girls

wearing shoes that squeak on each step. Really cute. another cute/a little bizarre thing was a little girls dance at the contest thing which I didn't get the shoot because I was out of battery but maybe I'll get it later because someone else filmed it. It was really cute because... well 6-7 year old Japanese girls dressed in pink dancing with great coordination. It was a little bizarre because they dance moves they were making were moves that someone like Britney spears or some other more grown up, sex idol would do.

That's all for now! it's only been like 6 days since I've left and 2 of them I spent traveling, yet it feels like much,much more. Later! oh and please someone comment about the last pic. The Angels Are Back?

## COMMENTS

### **Comment from Fluffy**

**Time:** May 21, 2008, 2:23 am

Last pic looks like Beitar Jerusalem fans...

### **Comment from [The Lord](#)**

**Time:** May 22, 2008, 5:34 am

You write too much.

All i picked up was "6-year-olds" and "sex-idols".

I like the way you roll.

### **Comment from [Itamar](#)**

**Time:** May 26, 2008, 6:46 pm

Hardcore avner, Hardcore.

### **Pingback from [best kareoke song](#)**

**Time:** July 17, 2008, 6:03 am

[...] [...]

## [AVNER ON THE BEACH](#)

**Posted: May 25th, 2008**

I got a lot in common with Kafka Tamura. Sure, I'm not 15 years old and I'm not experiencing what he is, but I am on a bag pack trip in Japan! 😊 Today was what can be considered my day off. Since I have the Dojo on Monday-Saturday evenings and Japanese lessons Monday-Friday mornings and also newly added Sanshin lessons twice a week (more about that later) I'm a truly a working man here in Naha and Sunday is my day off. So in my first day off I took the ferry to one of the islands in the area



called Zamamai-Jima, a small island with beautiful beaches and crystal clear water. Truly the prefect place to be sitting and reading "Kafka on the Beach". This was more of an introduction trip.

I bought a round trip ticket in the slower ferry which means I depart at 10:00am arrive at 12:00pm and then at 15:00pm I head back and arrive back at 17:00pm. I did some snorkeling which was great and next time I'll probably do some real diving. After swimming I sat down and read Kafka on The Beach while every now and then I had to stop reading and just stare at where I am and how pretty it is. I've decided next time I will cancel my Monday Japanese lesson in order to extend my weekend from Sunday morning to Monday after noon. That way I can also spend the night at the island. I have been getting a little lousy and keeping notes of interesting things I experience which means the quality of my posts will decrease as they are more informative and less creative. But never mind that, on to what I remember. According to the date on the picture, at the 20th we had a barbecue on the roof of BASE (my guest house) it was full of delicious meat I couldn't totally recognize. There was a lot of pork, fish and beef in all kinds of Japanese barbecue sauces and one delicious dish which was some kind of big fish called Mambo.

After the mangal we went to the beach. The naha beach is more like a pool compared to Zamami. On the roof and on the beach we



played all kinds of drum-like furniture and all kinds D.js The people here traveled all around the world and brought the music styles from Australia, South America etc.. In the last few days I have been bothered with my ongoing thought about what musical instrument to buy. I almost decided to go ahead and buy myself some cool Ibanez/Yamaha acoustic bass but the big music store in Naha doesn't have one. Also I have noticed that the guitar prices here, although cheaper than in Israel,



are more expensive than in the US . So that and other thoughts once again brought me to the Okinawa Sanshin. I wanted to get one but every time I passed a Sanshin store at the main street (Kokusai-Dori) It seemed so commercialized and tourist aimed that I didn't feel like buying one and I had a feeling I would get ripped off. Until. One day I walked around in one of the non crowded streets close to the guest house where I noticed a store which has Sanshins. I opened the door and saw a grown (and may I say extremely beautiful) lady and an old man. Immediately they invited me to sit down and served me tea and some Okinawa weird sugar thing. I asked about the Sanshin and the woman gave me one



to try. I played it a bit just to get the feeling. And then I remembered a part of a song I saw on YouTube back home so I started playing that. The woman recognized it and was impressed. She got a Sanshin too and started playing that song. The moment she started to sing I was sold. I

got the shivers and it was beautiful. Then she started to teach me that song, she played a part and I repeated her. Every time I repeated her she and the other guy were shocked how I got it so fast and pointed at my head saying "good brain" "good brain" :) Anyway, turns out this place is actually also a martial arts dojo of some Shaolin karate and the old man was the sensei. The woman called Takami (with a 22 year old girl and 27 year old boy) is a Sanshin sensei. I mentioned I go to Higaonona's Dojo and the sensei knew him and said he was a good man. First I was offered to buy a 30,000 fake snake skin Sanshin. There was a real snake skin for 45,000 and another one with better materials for 55,000. I made a comparison between the non snake and the snake and decided the snake sound was much softer and just sounds better. Because they were so excited with me I was offered the 55,000 one for 45,000 including a case, a finger thing, song book and extra strings. Also after I played some more she offered me free lessons instead of 7,000 a month she said earlier. I looked at my wallet at surprisingly I had exactly 45,000 yen in my wallet. Later that caused me problems because I had to go to Zamamai and the baks were closed to I got some money from the ATM's. After I paid, we did the first lesson and I started learning to read the Kanji notes of the Sanshin. Before I left the Sensei said I was a good player and offered me another gesture of free strings with some "kishut" on them and then added some Okinawan biscuits 😊 Overall it was a wonderful experience and my next lesson is tomorrow. I've already learned the Kanji notes today, not too hard.

Avner

## COMMENTS

**Comment** from **me**

**Time:** May 26, 2008, 2:06 am

You are cool

**Comment from Fluffy****Time:** May 27, 2008, 2:22 am

I took the liberty of examining the previous post and was astonished to discover you wrote there about a Karate kata called "Sanshin". As I see it, there are three possible explanations:

1. Japanese vocabulary is extremely poor.
2. "Sanshin" literally means "painful" (this can describe the Kata, and, after listening to the YouTube clip, also the instrument). But I know Sanshin means "three strings", so it must be:
3. You're making all of this up, you never left the country, and your lie has just been exposed! (The beach in the picture reminds me of the Nahariya beach).

**Comment from admin****Time:** May 27, 2008, 2:56 am

Actually, a lot of Japanese words have multiple meanings. Shin can mean string, wire and thin but also heart, fidelity, truth and faith. So I guess the kata has something with the latter.

I'll be damned if that Zamami's beach looks anywhere near Naharia's beach. But I allow you to think that so you won't turn envy green like the shiny turquoise green of Zamami's ocean water 😊

**Comment from Fluffy****Time:** May 28, 2008, 5:50 am

I hate the beach, no matter where you happen to locate it! (It's my duty as an Ex-Jerusalemite)

**Comment from Itamar****Time:** May 28, 2008, 6:14 pm

That was a really cool story, you're quite the storyteller!

I bet you enjoyed that encounter in the shop so much... the public requires a picture of the instrument. Immediately.

You look very kakooi in the pictures, isn't your head too hot with that hat on?

**Comment** from [admin](#)

**Time:** May 29, 2008, 2:09 pm

Arigato Itamar-Kun ^\_^

actually it's not hot at all with the hat, I think because the inside is made out of a different material than the outside. I got it at a pretty bargain price of 1100yen it was at 50% discount at a street called Heywa-Dori which is a pretty big market-place at Naha.

Next post will contain a picture of the instrument, maybe along side a pretty island background :).

I also owe one more correction to "Fluffy". It turns out the word Sanshin which describes the instrument is not at all Japanese. It's Okinawa language. This is like ancient Japanese or something. So Sanshin means 3 strings in Okinawa language and 3 hearts, or something else in Japanese for the karate Kata.

I can already play and sing the first verse of "Asatoya Yunta" a traditional and very pretty Sanshin song. It also contains some word in Okinawan language.

**Comment** from [The Lord](#)

**Time:** May 29, 2008, 5:02 pm

I'm starting a petition to bring back the six-year-old-sex-idols!

**Pingback** from [takami](#)

**Time:** June 20, 2008, 7:41 pm

[...] [...]

## IT'S RAINY SEASON.

**Posted: June 3rd, 2008**

Last week marked the beginning of the famous "Rainy Season". One day I was hanging out with my new friend called Yuji and some other guest house people. We went shopping on Kokusai-Dori and then went to the arcade. I played some Guitar Hero (This time I was better) and then had to continue with the bicycle to Karate. The moment I left the arcade



HUGE rain started to fall. And it was huge. Drops the size of hashi (chopsticks). I and everyone else arrived to karate soaking wet. But it doesn't really matter because we all get soaking wet of sweat about 10 minutes after the training starts. Ever since then it's been raining every day but not as hard as it was the first time. When Raining Season ends, it's summer time and it's gonna get HOT.

Fast forward to Saturday. Saturday there's no Japanese lesson and I felt like the day is drifting away aimlessly so I thought I'd do some sightseeing. I took the MonoRail to an area called Shuri and there after going the wrong direction and using my new Japanese skills to get directions from people (Hidari, Migi, Masugi!) I arrived at Shurijo Castle.



Shurijo Castle was the pallace of the ancient Rykyu kingdom of Japan, But... It was completely destroyed in World War II. Only a few walls remained but by 1992 It was totally reconstructed. So I went to see the castle and it was nice but to tell the truth a bit boring. But it doesn't matter because the aim of the experience was to feel like an independent sightseeing tourist taking pictures walking around, and that's what I did and you can see the pictures.

On Saturday evening after Karate, Kuramotov Sensei, Which is like Higaona Sensei's side kick (Not to underestimate - 30 years of Goju Ryu, Dan 6) decided he will take me drinking. Of course I couldn't refuse and at the end of class he called me "Peledo! Change!". Over at karate they call me Peledo because Higaona decided it's easier than "Abuneru". Anyway he took me to some place called "REHAB" which seems like a special pub for "Gaijin's" . there were more foreigners there than what I see on the street in a week. Some drunk guy from New Zealand tried to talk to us but we kindly ignored. They had Guinness which was a nice change after only drinking Okinawa's Orion beer (which is not bad by the way). Kuramotov treated me for a beer and after that practically forced me for another one. Turns out he's quite a drinker. Of course I had to wake up early to go to Aka-Jima the next day but I didn't want to disappoint



Kuramotov. Also later someone else from the Dojo joined us and we initiated an iphone-email-cell phone connection (Sug'e!).

After the pub I went to sit on the beach near the guest house with Yuji



because it was his last day in the guest house and he played me some of his songs which were actually very good (Reminded me of a more funky version of 'The Pillows') and come from the same place as my songs (Hamevin Yavin) and I played him one of mine. Yuji is now going to live up north Okinawa in some tent community in a jungle where he can meditate freely. Maybe I'll visit. Anyway we exchanged details.



The next morning I woke up - hardly, and packed my things - hardly. I wasn't about to give up my day off so I took my bag and my Sanshin and headed straight for Tomari port to catch the ferry to Aka-Jima. Aka-Jima seemed to be everyone's favorite island and I was optimistic. This time at the ferry I went to sleep instead of going outside



looking at the sea like last time. It's the same sea anyway. I woke up and we arrived to Aka-Jima.

I went outside and it was raining small raindrops, and then after 10 minutes, like someone was looking out for me it stopped raining and it didn't rain again until I was back in Naha. Aka-Jima is almost a deserted island. it has about 300 people with no kind of authority and about 2 restaurants. You can walk from one side of the island to another in 15 minutes. Most of the island is guest houses and dive shops. I walked for a few minutes and then I found a guest house/dive shop which was mentioned on Lonely Planet called Sea Sir. The people there were so nice, and I don't know what there is about diving receptionist girls but they seem to be Top Quality girls. I especially made friends with a really cute girl named Ai who started diving on the Red Sea in Egypt. We



exchanged emails. Anyway, the diving is expensive. After changing my mind back and forth I decided it's no time to be cheap and I will dive as much as I can which is at 15:00 the day I arrived and at 9:00 the day later. Overall the entire visit cost me about 200\$ including equipment, sleeping and food.

I was finally able to complete my goal of sleeping in a traditional Japanese style room with Tatamis and a Futon mattress! I was a little nervous for the first dive being my first boat dive and in a foreign country, but I quickly realized diving is international. Here are the differences I noticed:

1. Boat dive, what's nice about it is that you arrive straight to the diving site and you use a big rope to just pull yourself down instead of

going downhill. Then you go back to the rope when the dive ends and you hold yourself 3 minutes in 5 meters for safety stop.

2. I got a diving computer clock thingy! On surface it's a clock but the moment you dive it changes to tell you your depth and other measures. In case you've gone deep and start going up to fast, it vibrates. Also in case you get past 15 meters it will know that when you come back to 5 meters it's your safety stop and it starts counting down 3 minutes for you! I'm sure there are other features I don't know about.
3. Japanese dives, like Japanese life on surface, is mainly about taking pictures. I was the only one there not constantly taking pictures.
4. The dives were more independent than what I'm used to. After doing a planned route, everyone gets time to just wonder around by themselves on the area of the boat and you're responsible to go back up when you reach 50BAR.
5. I was used to that you plan the dive so that on 50BAR you're already up but here 50BAR means start going up, do saftey 3 minutes and then go up.
6. Also the signs were a bit different. To sign 100BAR you do a 1 and two 0's with your hands. Weird! Also to say 80 BAR you just hold 8 fingers... 50 BAR is the same.
7. The Japanese instructors carry a writing board with them and every time they spot a nice fish they write down the name, in Japanese, and point to it. I could just look and imagine I understand what he's writing.
8. Other than that the usual Japanese courtesy was there and everyone was very kind and helpful etc. Also when coming out of the boat you immediately get served with hot jasmine tea.

That's about what I remember. Anyway the dives were very nice. The best thing was the vision. The water was very clear. I saw some nice fish and creatures but nothing spectacular. Next time I need to ask to see a

sea turtle because they have many there and I didn't get to see one. I just missed one while passing on the boat.

After the first dive I decided to get creative and I took my Sanshin to the beach, climbed on some rock and just sat there and played. I also tried to record myself. I made some mistakes but here it is:

After it got dark I came back to my room. While I was coming back I noticed the road was literally infested with cute little crabs in their shells, I tried to take a pictures but it didn't really come out. Every time you go near one of these it goes in its shell. Anyway, in my room I slept "Nakata-San-Style" for about 12 hours. I woke up just in time for the 9:00am dive. This time I was much more confident and had a great time. Then after the dive I checked out of SeaSir and went to the beach. This was the perfect time to continue reading "Murikami Haruki no Umibe no Kafka". I sat down on the beach and read through the last chapters. To make things even more perfect, Aka-Jima has a lot of ravens and crows and they were flying above me shouting. So I actually felt the boy called Raven was there.

Before finishing the book I suddenly had a big urge to leave everything and get in the water. There was not a soul to be seen so I went behind some bush and changed to my swim suit, put my bag and Sanshin on the shore and went for a swim. To celebrate my freedom I peed in the ocean. After than I came back and finished "Umibe no Kafka" on the ferry. Great book indeed. really reminds of the Japanese nature-fantasy style like in Myiazaki films.



And now after today's Karate I'm here! and I think I wrote enough. Enjoy the pictures!

Umibe no Avner.

### **CHOTTO MATE..**

**Posted: June 10th, 2008**

= Wait a minute (impolite form, between friends)..

Today I realized something quite important.

Yesterday before going to sleep I grasped the iphone for a quick look at ynet to see how things are going in Israel. Ironically I am now much more updated in Israeli news than when I was in Israel. Anyway, apart from the regular shit, I noticed this article on the front page from a woman living in Japan and teaching English. "Hey! like me!" I thought. Except there is one big difference between me and her. She is living in Japan. **I am not.**

What she wrote in the article seemed familiar. Although while I was reading it I was thinking "She is really exaggerating" or "That's not really like that". After thinking about it more, talking to more travelers and discussing it thoroughly in my Japanese lesson and the English lesson I taught along with some other French/English/Iran/Jewish/Hebrew speaking girl, I realized. **I am not really in Japan.** It's not only the food. The whole culture here is different. Being from American influence, the distance or whatever. The culture here is more of a mixed Japanese/Western culture. People speak much more directly, tend to say more of what they think and have different standards.

I guess I will find out for myself how different it is come July 13th. Yes. Other than it being 2 days after the GPS including iPhone3G comes out in Japan (trying... not... to... care), it is what seems to be the date on which I leave Okinawa and head for Mainland Japan. After being impolitely (Yay

Okinawa!) rejected by the immigration office when trying to extend my stay for an extra 2 and half weeks, I was left with a choice, either to stay for the world Budosai karate event and minimize my Japan traveling time to 16 days, or miss the Budosai. Within perfect timing I had just received a mail from Ayelet saying various things and ending with the following text (though in Hebrew):

"Remember this is your trip! Do whatever you feel like doing!"

I feel like traveling Japan.

So I will miss the Budosai, Lo Nora.

In other news. The week following my trip to Aka-Jima was pretty casual. When Saturday came I was once again called. "Peledo! Change!" It appears we're going drinking again. But this time Kuramotov Sensei took it up a notch. He and another black belt friend of his called Myagi took me to a place called "Gioza House" where they naturally serve Gioza but after an "entree" of 500ml beer, together we finished a whole bottle.

I don't remember much, but I remember one sight. When walking back home Kuramotov maybe decided his head could use a little training and on each step he took he gave it a beating with his umbrella. Needless to say the following day I stayed in the Guest house, drinking a lot of water and reading my new book. "The ultimate Hitchhiker's guide" (finally). I quite like the book. It's not as deep as "Umibe no Kafka" but it's cool and it's improving my English (and thank god for my iphone dictionary). Since I don't have a lot to write about I chose a quote from the book I really liked. I wish I had this right now:

The Babel fish," said The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy quietly, "is small, yellow and leech-like, and probably the oddest thing in the Universe. It feeds on brainwave energy not from its carrier but from those around it. It absorbs all unconscious mental frequencies from this brainwave energy to nourish itself with. It then excretes into the mind of its carrier a telepathic matrix formed by combining the conscious thought

frequencies with nerve signals picked up from the speech centers of the brain which has supplied them. The practical upshot of all this is that if you stick a Babel fish in your ear you can instantly understand anything said to you in any form of language. The speech patterns you actually hear decode the brainwave matrix which has been fed into your mind by your Babel fish. "Now it is such a bizarrely improbable coincidence that anything so mind bogglingly useful could have evolved purely by chance that some thinkers have chosen to see it as the final and clinching proof of the non-existence of God. "The argument goes something like this: 'I refuse to prove that I exist,' says God, 'for proof denies faith, and without faith I am nothing.' "But,' says Man, 'The Babel fish is a dead giveaway, isn't it? It could not have evolved by chance. It proves you exist, and so therefore, by your own arguments, you don't. QED.' "Oh dear,' says God, 'I hadn't thought of that,' and promptly vanished in a puff of logic. "Oh, that was easy,' says Man, and for an encore goes on to prove that black is white and gets himself killed on the next zebra crossing. "Most leading theologians claim that this argument is a load of dingo's kidneys, but that didn't stop Oolon Colluphid making a small fortune when he used it as the central theme of his best- selling book Well That About Wraps It Up For God. "Meanwhile, the poor Babel fish, by effectively removing all barriers to communication between different races and cultures, has caused more and bloodier wars than anything else in the history of creation."

Other than that. I'm quite excited because I bought a 3 day roundtrip plane ticket to the south most end of Japan (50 minute flight). an Island called Ishigaki. And to answer Itamar's question, **that's** where the Manta-Rays are. Specifically a diving site called "Manta Scramble". I also won't be there alone, I will meet a Dive master Japanese girl (did it in Egypt!) called Maru, which I met in the guest house, and I'll go diving with her. Oh and it's going to be expensive and let's leave it at that. 😊 I'm leaving on the night of 22/6 and coming back on the morning of 25/6 missing 2 dojo nights.

That's about all I can think about. Umm.. I ate a lot more exciting stuff but next time I'll update the "Reut" museum. No pictures today, sorry!

Otskare Sama Deshita!

Avner.

## COMMENTS

### **Comment from Prak**

**Time:** June 11, 2008, 5:15 am

The Hitchhiker's guide to the galaxy is a gr8 book, full of funny stuff and insights, you will see!

I'm just about to finish reading it for the second time...

BTW: Douglas Adams also loved diving, he even went once to Australia to test an artificial Manta-Ray and wrote a very funny article about it (can't find the link, but let me know if you are interested, I've got it somewhere)

### **Comment from Avner**

**Time:** June 12, 2008, 2:31 am

Hey Yuval!

thanks for commenting on my nearly comment less blog 😊  
don't worry I haven't given up on the hitchhiker's guide and I have plenty more chapters to read.  
duh.. what's an artificial manta ray?? Do they clone manta-rays??

### **Comment from Itamar**

**Time:** June 17, 2008, 6:27 am

Mmm, from what I remember it was one of those underwater scooter things. Like in the James Bond movies, you know?

### **Comment from YK**

**Time:** June 28, 2008, 4:04 pm

Yeah, something like a underwater scooter, Where the special thing about this one, is that they were trying to copy the movement and 'feel like' of the Manta-Ray.

Adams didn't really liked it by the way.

"Dancing The Manta Ray" / PIXIES

---

Woooooo!

-Grunt-

Do the manta ray [X4]

Your head can go real screw  
with saucers chasing you

...

### **Pingback from [Babel Fish » Chotto Mate..](#)**

**Time:** July 2, 2008, 7:55 am

[...] Chotto Mate.. The Babel fish," said The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy quietly, "is small, yellow and leech-like, and probably the oddest thing in the Universe. It feeds on brainwave energy not from its carrier but from those around it. ... [...]

### **FLAVORS OF ENTAGLEMENT**

**Posted: June 19th, 2008**

..That's just the name of the new Alanis CD which I bought and uploaded to my iphone..it sounded like a good name for my trip. Pretty extreme CD.  
more on that later!



I would like to start with some apologies. First I apologize for not writing for quite a while. I haven't found a good combination of time to write/things to write about. Second I would like to לחתנצל for the blog being English only. I have received numerous complaints about the language. Although I'm generally pro-Hebrew and would prefer writing and using Hebrew, this blog is in English for several reasons:

1. My word press skin is English oriented.
2. I made the first test post in English and from there I just carried on the theme.
3. English is fun!
4. I would like to have people from all over the world read (and comment..!) my blog.
5. This blog is about an international trip therefore it makes sense for it to be written in an international language.

The first experience I remember is last Tuesday. A nice dude I met here called Go-San turned out to be a fellow Bass player! He plays very good bass but mostly old jazz/funk classics, not That there's anything wrong with that, but I think it's important to know modern music. He can play Chic Chorea's Spain perfectly. Anyway we were talking and playing and then he mentioned there is a place he goes

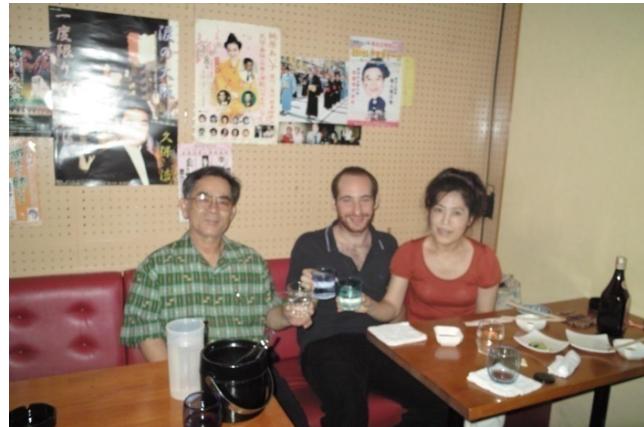


to once in a while which has a free jam session every Tuesday. So we went with 2 other guys and a girl from base. It was amazing! Finally got to play the bass after a long break and there were some good drummers and guitarists in there. I played some "chicken" and also random jamming. But, the most amazing part was when I saw a girl holding this. It was even more amazing when I heard her play it. She's there every week so next time I want to play with her. Yesterday I didn't go. I said to myself because I was tired from karate but the truth is I forgot. Xo! There are some vague iphone pictures of the Matoquin. After the jam we went to eat Ramen. Skipping to Sunday. on Sunday we had the big Goju-Ryu karate demonstration at Okinawa's WWII memorial park. We had to meet at the dojo at 12:00pm. I walked to the dojo (Fearing rain I didn't take the bicycle), on the way over I saw some shows on the street. Something which seemed like a Solar-Energy car and a stage with a rock concert. All in all nothing spectacular except that at that moment I had an Enlightenment. I've realized (Or at least I thought so) the secret of Japanese music and why I like how it sounds. First as you know, Japanese syllables are always, like, "closed".



Meaning there is no "pff" or "khh", just "ba" or "go" or whatever. Because of that fact, it is very easy to match the syllables of the song vocal to the tempo of the song. Usually on quarter notes but sometimes on eighth or something else. This gives the a pretty unique feeling to the song. Later on I thought about it and I think this can still be done in Hebrew and I will try to do it. Think about it , you don't hear to many songs going like "Ve-A-Nee-Ro-Tze-La-Shir-Ve-Le-Na-Ge-Eh-Eh-n" along the tune and beat.. Wakaru? Comment me what you think.

Anyway the demonstration thing was a little long but very nice. I put some pictures. Doing a Kata in a group in the middle of a park with nice view and wind is very nice. I was a little disappointed that I only got to do Geigsadai Ich and the Sisoshin was black belt only.



But after thinking about it I should be grateful I got to be a part of the initial Sisoshin training by Higaaona Sensei. Sisoshin is the kata you need to do for black belt. After coming back from the demonstration I had an appointment with Tamaki-San, my Sanshin teacher and Matsuda Sensei.

We were going to some bar/restaurant where there is an open stage for Sanshin players. Overall it was a very unique experience. I met two ladies which I was told were very famous in Okinawa. one is a famous Sanshin teacher and one is a famous Okinawa



theatre actress. They let me drink some suspicious white and thick drink which they said is good for the voice. I asked what it is and they said

Horse Oil. Being a little confused I naively asked how do you make Horse Oil. First they joked about it for like 10 minutes making up all kinds of explanations (use your imagination). But the real explanations isn't very cheerful either. They just slaughter the horse and this is what drips out of it or something like that. Later on they invited me to play on stage and Tamaki took pictures. Very memorable moments 😊. I also bought a present for Tamaki and Matsuda because she's getting very busy and we might not have any more lessons. I wanted to get something Israel-Oriented. I got Tamaki a John Zorn CD ("The Dreamers"). Matsuda I bought some Dreidles I found on Kokusa-Dori.

The next day I scheduled a day trip with a dude from karate called Shinya. He said he will take me sightseeing... and he sure did. Though I didn't plan it, it was the first time I missed Dojo since I got here. When he asked me what I wanted to do I just



said the first thing I thought about. That I want to see green trees and animals. So he took me up north to a city called Nago with a nice forest and then he took me to some kind of zoo park. Not really what I wanted but it was nice. We fed birds and monkeys. Traveling with Shinya was a little challenging for me. Though his English was good, I could never understand if what we're doing now is something he wants to do or not. Also to almost everything I asked he nodded and said yes but only then I had to ask again to realize he has no idea what I'm talking about. Every place I asked about he said "You want to go? Let's go". I don't know if he wanted to go or not. So first we visited Nago Neo-Park. then a place called Motubu where we went to see a castle, sorry, the remains of castle. Also destroyed in WWII...We ate too much. First at a Pizza Buffet at a nice city called Chatan. Then on the way back we visited Okinawa

City, did some shopping and then ate again in Chatan in 2 places. First time I ate Taku-Yaki and Oku no Myaki. @#@% I get tired just writing about it. Actually the zoo trip was a little depressing. I suddenly felt a big collision between the theme of my trip - FREEDOM - and animals trapped in a small area.

Some other tidbits of information:

- I went to some \*great\* all-you-can-eat buffet
- A friend from the guest house took me on bicycle for a trip and we visited a nice fish market place (see pics).
- I bought tickets to summer sonic for 2 days in tokyo!
- The other day I was asked by Mimi to teach 3 english lessons in a row. after I did she slipped me 2000 yen saying "lunch".
- I've started learning how to play Mahjong! including counting in Chinese and reading kanji numbers 1-10.
- I met some guy here from Peru and went drinking with him. A little too "Salsa-type" for me but he's interesting.



That's what I remember right now.

Another interesting fact is that this trip is making me much more interested in history, religion and the world in general because I'm meeting people from all over. I'm reading a lot in Wikipedia. I read about Japan, Buddha, Shinto and also about Peru and the terrible civil wars they had on 1980's. Apparently the guy here called Alex has some traumas from it. And..I am also reading about...

<Begin Shame here>

Israel.

In the guest house and especially during Mimi's classes I get lots of questions about Israel and the jews. So I read wikipedia ^^;; I guess only now I really know what/where the west bank really is, who controlled it in the past ,when Israel captured it and what's going in there now. same for Gaza strip and the Golan. I also read about the current legal status of the settlements and about past wars. Really all I had until now was pieces of information about Israel's history and only now I'm putting all of the facts together. Also when someone asked me how many Jews are in the world I estimated about 100 million...it's more like 13. and about 50% of them are in Israel and the rest are mostly in the USA. I guess I never really cared much about this stuff and had a more of a "don't look back" approach. Though politically, the situation is so complicated that maybe that's the only approach that can lead to any resolution.

</End Shame here>

Ok I think that is enough for now. Oh yeah I said I'll talk about the Alanis CD. I had a couple for scary days because I managed to screw my iphone's music database and almost lost all of my music. Eventually I was able to recover it and also



add the new Alanis CD. The new CD is very interesting and very extreme and electronic. Alanis is very mad at her ex-boyfriend.

## CITIZEN OF THE PLANET

**Posted: June 28th**

חיכיתי חיכיתי

בכicity בכicity

ומי לא בא

ומי לא בא

מנטה-ריי

והוא הבטיח פעמיים

שיבוא אחר הצהרים

ומי לא בא

ומי לא בא

מנטה-ריי

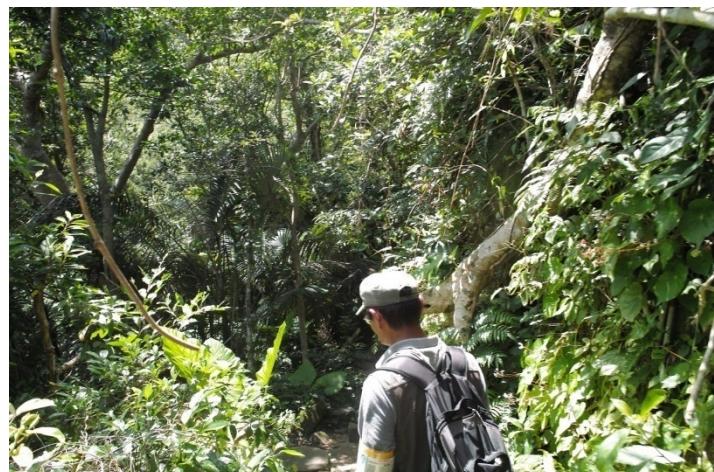
That's right. I went to 'Manta Scramble', the sight which virtually guarantees a 90-95% chance of seeing a Manta-Ray, and I didn't see a Manta-Ray. When you think about it, not seeing a manta at Manta Scramble is much rarer than seeing a manta, so I'm actually quite "lucky" 😊 So Wednesday evening, after we had a bbq on the roof of BASE, I got a motorcycle ride from Taku, a friend at BASE, to Naha airport and from there took off to Ishigaki. The flight went smooth and getting the tickets was just punching the number I got on email into a computer. Then just holding the ticket over the scanner to hear that "Drrring" sound and entering the plane.

From the airport I took a cab to the nearby "PukaPuka" guest house, where Maru was staying. Maru is a Japanese, Egypt Trained Dive Master, London Art School Graduate with a British accent who likes to paint entire rooms in various abstract themes. A very unique person I think.

PukaPuka was a very nice guest house with good people. I met a friend of a friend in base and also a Maya 3D Animator! He's about to start working at a Tokyo based studio called "OLM Digital" which among other things does the cg animation for Pokémon. Surprisingly (at least for me), a CG animator at OLM makes less money than a diving instructor at Myako island.

So on the first day we woke up early and was picked up by "Solid Crew" diving shop of Ishigaki. We did 2 dives and they were good but as I said we didn't see a damn manta. The manta point diving is just going down, crossing a small pit and then sitting and waiting for the manta to arrive until the air runs out. My air ran out first because the rest were dive masters but they also didn't see a manta (phew ^^).

For the second day I had plans to somehow visit both of the more popular neighboring islands, Iriomote and Taketomi. With the help of Maru making phone calls and reservations for me (Thank you!), after about 5-6 phone calls we managed to find a tour guy who didn't care I don't speak Japanese and can provide a half day tour in Iriomote so I can still make it to Taketomi afterwards.



So the next day early morning I took the ferry to Iriomote and was picked up from the port. In there I did the “Pinai Sara” canone tour. which is going by canoe up the pinai sara river and then hiking the Magrove jungle to the Pinai Sara waterfall. I really enjoyed the tour. At first we did the canoe which was quite easy and relaxing, except at one point suddenly an alarm on my iphone set to 10:30 started to ring and the iphone which was in a bag behind me on the canoe ringed and vibrated for maybe 20 minutes!! Just when I couldn’t take it anymore and was about to ask for them to stop for a second so I can turn around, take it out and turn it off, it



went off by itself. One of the most exciting things for me was that while hiking to the waterfall the instructor noted that we are now in a place where Hayao Miyazaki went to get inspiration for his movie Mononoke Hime! Also the waterfall itself was very big and we bathed underneath it. There was a really cool place underneath the waterfall where if you look at the water spray coming from the water hitting the rocks, you could see a full rainbow reflecting near the rocks. After canoeing back and walking back to the car I was brought back to the port (Where I’m almost certian I heard a Japanese song playing which sounded exactly like Hatikva) and took the ferry back to Ishigaki, from there I went straight to Taketomi. Taketomi is a very small island and the best way to tour it is renting a bicycle and cycling around it for about 2 hours and like lonely planet says, “soaking up the atmosphere” of the old orange roofs and countryside landscape.

After getting the bicycle I had (if I can be modest) one of the best ideas I had this trip. I knew there had to be a reason I brought the Soundtrack of the movie "Amelie" on my iphone and this was it. Cycling around the island with the soundtrack playing in my ears was so beautiful I could cry. One of the best experiences I had on the trip. While cycling around I could still hear the sounds through the Amelie music. Sounds of birds singing, my bicycle squeaking and occasionally my hand would accidentally hit the bell on the bicycle making a cute "Ding!" sound which fitted the atmosphere. Occasionally I would pass underneath a pretty butterfly and one time I even chased one with the bicycle for a few meters. Also sometimes crows would soar above me and I saw some bulls on a farm next to the road.

After Taketomi I came back to Ishigaki and went on eating, drinking and partying with the PukaPuka friends. It was great! Take a look at the pictures.



In the last couple of days I have been bothered by constantly searching the internets for tickets from Japan to India. It turns out that August 12th is about the worst week ever to go from Japan to India. First because it's in the middle of the biggest Japanese holiday and everyone are flying. Second because the cheapest flights to India are with Air China and it's straight in the middle of the summer Olympics! So after searching, thinking, more searching and more thinking I have devised the following plan:



- 20/7/2008-26/7/2008 - Naha de Karate Budosai
- 27/7/2008-28/7/2008 - 25 Hour ferry from Naha to Kagoshima(Kyushu) - 14,000yen
- 28/7/2008 - Bus to Fukoaka.
- 29/7/2008 - JR Beetle Ferry from Fukoaka to South Korea - 2.5 hours each way, 20,000 yen round trip. - **REWNEW VISA**
- 29-30/7/2008 - Activate Rail pass in Fukoaka.
- 30/7/2008 - 8/8/2008 - Traveling between Kagoshima and Tokyo
- 9/8/2008 -10/8/2008 - Summer Sonic in Tokyo.
- 11/8/2008 -~ 25/8/2008 - More traveling Japan.
- -~26/8/2008 - Fly cheaper to India (around 60,000 yen)

Sounds like a plan to me.

I will finish with lyrics from the new Alanis song which is titled like this post:

I am a citizen of the planet  
 My president is Kwan Yin  
 My frontier is on an airplane  
 my prisons: homes for rehabilitating

Avner.

## **COMMENTS**

### **Comment from Fluffy**

**Time:** July 7, 2008, 6:43 am

All those Japanese names... I lost track of your whereabouts, it's just too complicated.

Oh, and did I tell you I'm going to be a part-time Maya 3D animator myself (hopefully starting in the next couple of days)?

**Comment from Itamar****Time:** July 7, 2008, 7:24 am

Plan sounds good but you forgot to say when you're going back and seeing that goddamn manta. Because you are, you know. Yes, yes you are. You're seeing that manta. Yes.

Anyway... needs more pictures of Maru.

**Comment from admin****Time:** July 7, 2008, 4:08 pm

Fluffy, In Samsung?! Wherever, that is really cool. Congrats. What will you be animating?

Itamar, believe me I would like to go back to Ishigaki, not really because of Manta but for better , yet undisclosed, reasons. But it's just not on my plan, nor my budget 😞

**Comment from Fluffy****Time:** July 8, 2008, 2:23 pm

Aye, in Samsung. Turns out they are looking for a programmer who knows Maya for about 18 months now, so they kinda went crazy when they found out by mistake I already know it. I'm not sure yet what I'll need to do, since most of the games' content will be done by full-time animators, but I will need to do some editing too, and also write a few plugins and stuff..

## HIYAKE DOME GA KABAN NO NAKA NI KOBOSHITA!!

**Posted: June 28<sup>th</sup> 2008**

If you're ever in Japan, and have a bottle (I don't know what else to call it) of sunscreen explode all over inside your bag, then this is what you say. Not a pleasant experience, but I got through it ok. Well except it seems that my phone's earphones sound a little weaker...but on the other hand my ears could be a little damaged from 2 days (8 hours each) of THIS:

But I'll get to that later.

First story I have is 1 week and 1 day ago, my first kareoke experience! I went with 2 Japanese girls, 1 Japanese guy and 1 British fella from the guest house. We went to some place called "Banana house". In my imagination I was expecting some club style place where people sit, talk, drink and every time someone else goes up on stage and does a karaoke song. Imagine my surprise when the five of us walked into a small private room with 2 leather sofas, a big TV, 2 microphones, and a tablet like device. There is a little phone attached against the wall which you use to order beer to the room. Other than that there is no interaction with the environment, just the 5 of us singing karaoke. My second surprise was when I got the tablet in order to choose a song. I was just playing with the thought of it having songs I like from "The Strokes", "Arctic Monkeys" and "Alanis Morissette" ...But it did. It had almost any song/artist I wanted! There is an English menu so you can just search for a song or an artist and it is



broadcasted wirelessly to the TV and queued in the playlist. Needless to say I really enjoyed it. and I must say the girls were pretty good singers. I may be totally off but I think Japan has good music genes.

After karaoke we carried on to another bar which had a very nice and high tech darts arena. Seems that, at least in Naha, a lot of pubs have darts. We played some games and I had some good shots, maybe due to my "Networking team" training, but overall I wasn't amazing and was mostly beaten by the English dude and Chihiro the 21 year old Okinawa native which carried her own darts in her purse.

Lately I've been hanging out quite a lot with Stewart, the British guy (I don't remember where from but somewhere close to Manchester). A few nights ago we found a really nice bar which had darts but also a pool table and I got to defeat Stewart 4 games to 1 in English pub rules! 😊 When coming back from the pub we passed by a shop which had a big model of a ship, called "Cutty Sark" which is a very old British ship and apparently it was docked only a few minutes from Stewart's house. I said was because about a year ago it was mysteriously burned down.

Continuing the education theme, 2 days ago someone asked me how to say in English "Ume no hana", which actually means the flower of plum tree. so I thought to myself.. Hmm.. Flower of plum tree...isn't that the plum? But plum is a fruit... so what's the name of the flower? Well anyway it's all plum. You may already know this, but about 50% of the plum tree flowers get turned into actual plums after they go through a process called Pollination which is usually done by bees and it involves taking the seeds (or pollen) from the male part of a flower (called anther) into the female part of the (same or other) flower (called stigma).

More education, did you know that Okinawan people have the highest life expectancy rate in the world? Yet 40% of Okinawa men smoke! How can that be? After doing some research I concluded...well..not much. But

basically Okinawa people are healthy mostly because of their genes, their diet and their active life style:

Smoking certainly doesn't help their statistics but it's not destroying it either.

Oh and what is the most popular ingredient in Okinawa diet? Pork! And Lard!

Moving on, on Friday I finally dragged myself to get a haircut (kami kiiru). For some reason, barber shops here (correction, in all of Japan! I was just told) are always marked with a big pole in the street outside the shop which has a white background and red and blue lines moving and circling around it. No idea why, it's just like that. The barber shop itself is (of course) very organized and clean and the whole experience was very pleasant.

Ok now for the main event. I don't remember if wrote about it already, but other than the big and international "Summer Sonic" rock festival; I was also planning on attending the more local (and much cheaper) Okinawa "Peaceful Love" rock festival. And this weekend was it! At first I wanted to buy a ticket only for Sunday so I won't miss Karate on Saturday but after consulting with one of the students in MiMi's class I realized that Saturday is much better so I decided to go ahead and get a ticket for both days at 6000yen (around 60\$).

The festival was in "Koza", also known as "Okinawa City" which is the city which is most infested by Americans and American bases. To get there I took a 1 hour bus ride from the nearby bus terminal. The bus experience was pretty interesting. First when I got on the bus and tried to pay for a ticket, the bus driver yelled at me (in English) "Get off the bus!". Feeling a little offended but confused I asked to make sure "Get off the bus?" and pointed at the exit. But eventually it turned out he just meant to tell me I should pay \_when\_ I get off the bus. The bus ride was comfortable and every time an electronic sign showed the next station (in kanji) and

a recorded woman would announce it. Every station the woman also described what activities can be done nearby and sometimes provided phone numbers. Also at some stations music started and the woman read a commercial for something which I guess is related to the next stop. In order to find out how much you need to pay you look at the electronic billboard which is divided to 50 numbers, each pertaining to a bus stop. When you get on the bus you grab a ticket which has the number of your bus stop. So you just look at the sign and see how much you should pay. When getting off the bus you throw the money to some hole and the machine counts it for you. But enough about that, on to the rock festival.

When something is so beautiful that it can bring tears to your eyes even if it's the first time you see it, you know you're in the right place. I think that the combination of a beautiful female Japanese singer or guitar player, standing playing or singing (beautifully) , with clear sounding rock music in the background is modern Japanese beauty in it's best. If on one extreme end of the graph, you have a beautiful Geisha dancing near a Onsen in some forest on top of some volcano, then that is the other end.

Already on the first show on the first day when the band players came up the stage in funny costumes with the crowd cheering using their plastic festival themed fans and after hearing the quality of the sound and seeing the \_very\_ good female bass player, I realized this is going to be good. And it was amazing.

I will try to list the highlights of the first day in notes. Some bands I don't know the name of. Some I was able to understand or ask a few of the new friends I met there (I'm starting to get a lot of girls phone number and e-mails ^\_^):

- A girl band with a very good bass player.
- A young band with cool costumes and female singer dressed in a bikini.
- A cool "Dag Nahash" style band from Osaka.

- A cool rock/reggae band with a bass player who had a cool Hofner bass guitar (look it up).
- A cool Okinawa band called Zukan who threw Goyas (bitter lemons) at the audience hitting my nose with one of them.
- A cool Okinawa band called "Aburomania" or something like that having a very energetic singer dancing with his fan from side to side.
- A band called "Green peace" doing some sort of 'Euro-Reggae'
- A heavy metal band called "BLEACH" who had the most amazing female bass player. Other than being very talented she was also very... scary.. Well both scary and funny. At one moment she was all cute "Arigato gozaymas!" bowing to the crowd but once the song starts her eyes widened and she shouted in the most terrifying heavy metal voice with a very scary fixated look.
- A band called High and Mighty Color doing a mix of Linkin Park and J-Pop.
- Karyushi-58..was getting tired.
- All Japan goith. Big band with rock/brass instruments dancing/fun whatever. they were good
- D-51. 2 boys singing and a DJ playing background music. Pretty good but by chance one of the girl I met there was friends with the DJ back in Tokyo so I felt connected.
- Mongol 800 was the final act the most popular rock/pop band on the festival. The nice thing about them was that finally the crowd knew all of the lyrics and was much more excited and it was nice seeing that.

While the first day was more about young, talented, j-rock/pop style bands. The first day was more about old, 70's 80's rock (lost of hair), American style bands. It was good but I think the first day was better:

- First band was younger than the rest and was called Nuchi. Again, a very good female bass players. Overall all the Okinawa bass players are top quality!

- An old but very cool classic rock band called SS who had their own set of lady fans with SS capes (yeah...) . A cool thing was that every band had their own set of fans who came to see them dressed with appropriate t-shirts and accessories.
- Some cover band called Jambarya..nice.
- A band called Hearts grow. This was more like the 1st style. I really enjoyed the show and after the festival ended I bought a CD and had it signed. The singer was beautiful.
- Some twist/swing band, cool.
- Making Live - KISS Covers. you saw the pic.
- Kween - Queen covers. Funny.
- A band playing 70/80's rock which played a lot of songs I know from Guitar Hero.
- A band with a very good Jaco Pastorius styled bass player and a crazy old singer with crazy costumes who walked around the hall.
- Sheena and the rockets...the singer is like a Japanese version of Anita Falali only she looks ok.
- Murasaki - the most famous band and I understand they were the first to bring American rock to Okinawa. They do deep purple covers and some original songs

Ok I'm a little tired of writing so now my hands hurt and also my legs from all the standing and dancing on stage. No more pictures because they didn't allow it on the festival. I only took a few without them noticing.

Till next time!!!

Avner.

Oh yeah one last thing:

Nakata-San from Kafka on the shore makes an appearance at the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy!! **He is in fact the ruler of the universe**

## COMMENTS

### **Comment from Jigor**

**Time:** July 8, 2008, 4:34 am

Sounds fun!

Every time when I read your posts, I hear some Nintendo-style music playing somewhere 😊

Btw, if you're already in a learning mood, you can read about the barber's pole here:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barber%27s\\_pole](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barber%27s_pole)

It's a known sign all over the world, apparently it has something to do with blood (and now when I think about it, I heard something about it on "Ripley's Believe It or Not").

Enjoy 😊

p.s.

Heard Alanis' new CD too. Some cool tracks there.. (like Straitjacket).

### **Comment from Advendanew**

**Time:** September 25, 2008, 8:31 am

Favorite this one, brother

### **Comment from ADVALUESE**

**Time:** September 29, 2008, 4:06 am

Favorite this one, guy

## MEETING PEOPLE IS EASY

**Posted: July 14<sup>th</sup> 2008**

It's not just a movie about Radiohead. Seems it actually might be true.

It seems that I'm now capable of speaking Japanese good enough to make initial contact with cute girls, get them to like me and have them take a picture with me 😊

This post is dedicated to this weekend's (semi) spontaneous trip to last Okinawa-Prefecture island - "Kume Jima" and this time I made a lot of notes so it might get long.



After getting help from my Guest House friends and making a reservation at a cheap yet nice "Minshuku" (like a private room guest house) I took my Sanshin on Saturday morning and went off the 4 hour boat ride.

The walk from the Guest House to Tomari Port which carries most of the Okinawa-domestic boat rides is about 10-15 minutes, yet I arrived rather late. After buying the tickets the sales woman gave the '2-hands-going-up-and-down-alternately' symbol



meaning "you better run". So I ran and actually wasn't \_that\_ late the boat still waited like 5-10 minutes after I boarded it.

Walking in the boat carrying my Sanshin always gets me impressed looks from the old Okinawa folks, it's one of the reasons I take it ^\_^. The boat

was already full so I only had a seat in the outside area which is nice but it was hard finding a sleep position. Eventually I found it and slept for a while.

4 Hours later I get off the boat and wait for the bus.

While waiting I could already see how my Japanese is improving because I could have almost normal conversations, first with the old people asking me about my Sanshin learning and which songs I know and later with a couple talking about our background and where we should go in Kume Jima.



After getting off the bus and getting directions to the "Miya Hara

Minshuku" from the bus driver I walked a few minutes and arrived - To some woman's house who told me the Minshuku is the house next to her. The Minshuku owner lady was very kind and knew almost no English whatsoever. But

I could still manage! I understood what she told me about the room and the place and even got her to call and book for me a trip to the nearby beach attraction - Hate no Hama.



My first destination was a place called "Tatami Ishii". It is found on a nearby small island which is connected to Kume by a road. It's like a beach which is made of Tatami (Japanese mat) looking stones. I liked how it looks in the pictures so I wanted to check it out. The lady told me

the walk from the Minshuku to Tatami IIshi was about 30 minutes. The other alternative was paying 1000 yen for renting a dying pair of bicycle. I decided I'll walk. On the way I stopped at a big supermarket, got me a nice Onigiri rolls bento, water and candy for the way.

After walking for about 10 minutes I found a young boy on his bicycle. This was my second encounter with a local Kume Jima resident and from that point on the evidence only became stronger that Kuma Jima people are about the nicest people on earth. I asked the young boy if I'm on the right track to Tatami Iishi, immediately he got off his bike and offered to walk all the way with me. On the way we talked, mostly in English because 15 year old boys in junior high actually have much better English than 20-25 year olds, because after school they just stop using it! So the boy (the name I forgot) lives in Kuma Jima and likes it. His father is a fisherman. His hobbies - fishing. Tuna fishing. 40kg Tuna fishing and a point at the ocean which is 1000m deep. That's about it. Does one really need anything else? At that age I was thinking how to make the next combo in Mortal Kombat, he just goes fishing.

Arriving in Tatami Iishi I thanked and greeted the boy goodbye. At that moment started my amazing streak of meeting '2 girl' duos who came to Kume Jima from somewhere else in Japan. They were all about my age, all finished university and in holiday from their jobs and always had 1 girl which was prettier than the other (I don't think (at least I hope) any of them will ever read this ^\_^) but I still



think all Japanese girls are pretty so it's ok. The first duo were 2 girls from Tokyo called Manami and Kaoru. I'm starting to use tricks to remember the names of the people I meet. I remembered Kaoru is like Kaeru - which is "to go back" and Manami is like מנגמי which I'm not what it means but it means something. We talked and swam for a while at Tatami IIshi and then decided to head to Eefu beach which is the



popular beach of the island. I didn't mind walking but they wanted to get a taxi and even order one on the phone even though you can easily find one in the street. Also didn't let me pay my share of the taxi fare. Arriving at Eefu beach which is very 'white sand' pretty we went swimming and looked for fish. After getting out (and taking a picture) we decided that we will meet at the beach entrance at 19:45 and go eat together.

I started walking back to the Minshuku and stopped on the way to ask a woman for directions. Immediately she pointed at her car at offered to take me! She told me she works nearby



at a "Shi-Sa" (okinawa lion symbol) clay making workshop place for kids and offered me to stop by. Unfortunately I didn't have time. Arriving at the Minshuku I took a shower, organized some stuff and went out for another walk to Eefu beach. It was now dark and a bit harder to get around so once again I asked a young school girl and her friends if I'm on the right direction. Once again she offered to walk with me until the

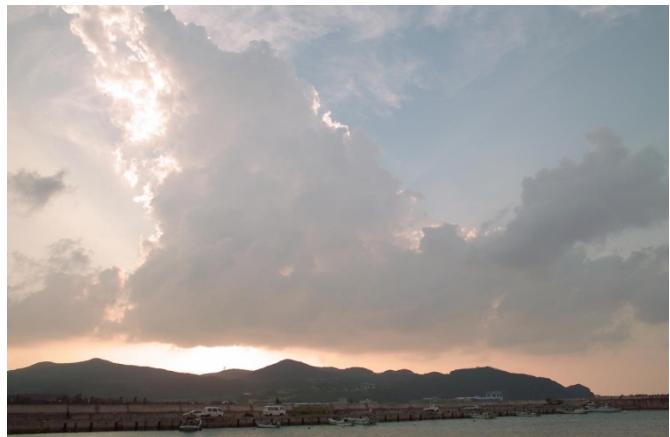
beach. Though this time we were only 3 minutes away. I got to the beach entrance and the girls weren't there...I waited... and waited...for about 20 minutes and eventually gave up. I was hungry and there was a place which had many people and seemed nice just where I was waiting so I walked in.

Inside there was a long table with a big group of people of all ages having some sort of party. Another table had a seemingly drunk man sitting and I sat at an empty table. I ordered the local "Kume Soba" (noodle) which was of course very good. After finishing my meal the drunk man invited me to come sit. He treated me to some good carpachio so I couldn't refuse. Then he also treated me to the local Kume Awamori which I also couldn't refuse. All the while he was trying to talk to me part in Japanese, part in local Kume-Jima language and part in English. He talked.....very.....slowly. I could hardly understand anything but he said something about how all people of the world are actually the same and have the same heart and mentioned John Lennon. Behind us one of the party people stood on the table and had a toast. One of the girls on that party really caught my eye. She looked a bit like the singer from "Hearts Grow". After thanking the slow speaker and I got off and before leaving walked to say hello to the party people who showed signs they were interested in me. I started the usual "my story" conversation and before I know it I was off with them going to their karaoke party!

The people were all Kume Kima post office workers and this was a welcome back party of one of the workers. We partied and sang all night (I did my usual Evangelion and Beatles routine but also Cowboy bebop, Metallica, green day by request and some more) and they were really amazing people. Of course they paid for everything and I was treated for more food and drinks. The girls name by the way is Andy. On the taxi back I got the email from one of them (hopefully I got it right) so maybe I'll even be able to keep in touch.

On the next morning I woke up at 8:30 to be picked up by the "Hate no Hama" beach tour guys. The driver was a friendly girl from Osaka. On the way we picked up another 2 Girl duo, this time from near Osaka. I would like to take this opportunity to declare: **Osaka Girls Rule!**

This duo was called Mai and Miyuki. Mai was easy to remember but Miyuki I had to write down. We talked on the way and on the boat to the beach and then said something about going snorkeling, and before I knew it they were gone somewhere and I found myself with yet another 2 girl duo and yet again from Osaka! one was named Yuki which means 'Snow' and the other 'Maki' which is ..you know..a sushi role ^.^ we went to swim together and saw some nice fish and took pictures. I lent them my diving mask. On the way back I even shot a movie with them but not worth uploading. Those were all really short encounters so I didn't feel a need to ask for e-mails to keep in touch, although maybe I should have because it's always nice to have..but on the other hand like I said, it seems Meeting People is Easy.



Near the shore of Hate no Hama I finally had my first encounter with an Umigame! A sea turtle. It was small but so cute and beautiful with a somewhat orange painted shell. Near Tatami Iishi there was also a sea turtle museum but it was closed when I got there.

After coming back to the Minshuku I felt like it's a good time for nap and fell asleep for like 3 hours. After waking up I decided I will talk a long sightseeing walk up Kume Jima and take some pictures. I actually felt I needed a break from all the socializing and go back to my solo ways. Walking around Kume Jima with the iphone playing and taking pictures just felt great. I also put the Amelie music again because it fit.

I would like to note that their a certain activities I do in this trip and seem to just magically improve my state of mind. Doesn't matter how I feel before, afterwards I always feel great and I also interact better. The first one is walking or cycling in a beautiful place, with music in the background and just thinking to myself. Trying to take pictures also adds to the experience but is not mandatory. I actually also get a similar feeling by walking with my iphone in Tel Aviv.

The second is Karate. and I get that here everyday. The difference in state of mind before and after karate is indescribable.

Anyway, I walked and walked and took pictures and suddenly it was getting dark. It was a little scary but still I felt safe. Some places had criqet/insect noises which were so loud they penetrated through my music. Eventually I found my way back to Eefu beach. This time it wasn't very crowded being sunday but I found a nice resturant and had the so far best Sushi I had in Japan. On the way back from the resturant I went to Convenient Store CoCo to get me some Pokki (really good beigale/chocolate combination) and sitting outside I saw the 2 Tokyo girls! Well, turns out we each had a different concept of the word entrance. I was waiting at the gate of the beech while they were sitting on a bench and the beginning of the road which leads to the gate. we were like 2 minutes away but it was dark and even though I walked around a bit I didn't see them...They waited for me **1 hour..**I feel kinda bad but what canyado. I would have missed the karaoke experience if I met them 😊 Anyway we set on our different paths and I went back.

On my last night I had the most unrelated dream ever. I was in Anat Ferber's house, baking croissant for her birthday part. She was baking a heart shaped croissant. She was worried no one will come to her birthday but right before I woke up people from Desk Bambam and the Kabam started to show up. **Could someone explain this to me??** I can't but I know I had a big craving for pastry afterwards so I bought something the first chance I had. Anyway, I woke up and went to the nearby bus station to get to the port. After waiting 2 minutes a car stopped by and offered to take me. The driver had pretty good English and told me he was met an Israeli lady in Tokyo. He asked her if she hates Hitler and she said she doesn't hate him she just feels sad for him... Hmm.. Ok. I really don't know what to say about that but maybe I will know better when I finish the book I bought about Bushido. Recommended btw. He also wanted to talk a bit about the Israel-Palestinian situation..I chose an optimistic approach. After that I got on the boat and now I'm here! Phew!

Enjoy the pictures and 1 update to the Reut Museum (Sushi!).

Avner.

## **COMMENTS**

**Comment** from **chaka chaka**

**Time:** July 15, 2008, 12:09 am

Japanese girls are hot

**Comment** from **Fluffy**

**Time:** July 16, 2008, 5:09 am

About that dream... I think you're just missing the army. Or homesick. Or just plain sick. Anyway, it's still better than that dream you had once about tracert ^\_^

**Comment** from **Itamar**

**Time:** July 25, 2008, 10:25 pm

you donkey. you are teaching me Japanese when you come back 😊

## פօסט יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשִׁבְיל אַיִלָּת

**Posted: July 19th, 2008**

אם לרעות יש מזיאון אוכל (שלצעריו אי אפשר למצוא בו אדרה, אברה, מוז, לוֹגְרָגָרֶת) אין סיבה שלאיילת לא יהיה פוסט משללה. ביעוד כי היה לה עכשו יום הולדת! לרגל היום ההולדתן שסימל גם חדשים לשתייה שלי ביפן החלטתי לעשות שימוש ראשון באתר [www.jajah.com](http://www.jajah.com) ולהתקשר לארץ.

אין ספק שהזה היה מאד מואר, הרגשתי כמו בתוך סוג של שער דו מימי שלרגע החזר אותו לארץ. עד הרגע הזה היו לי מספר הזדמנויות מעטות לדבר עברית ביפן. אחת היא כМОבן לעצמי, אבל גם זה נעלם ודי מהר מצאתי את עצמי מדבר אל עצמי באנגלית וגם בייננית. הדרך השניה הייתה בשיחות עם יפתח, בחור ישראלי הגדול ממני בשנה ומתאמן איתי בדוג'ו. יפתח הגיע כחודש לפני ומתכנן להשאר עוד שנתיים-שלוש בהן הוא ישלים מחקר (תואר שני) על ההבדל בין הכיבוש האמריקאי באוקינאווה לבין הכיבוש האמריקאי בשאר יפן. הידעתם שבמשך 20 שנה המطبع הרשמיפה היה דולר והמכוניות נסעו בצד ימין? אוקינאווה סופחה באופן מלא לארה"ב לאחר המלחמה וקיבלה עצמאות מלאה רק ב-1972

עם יפתח יכולתי לדבר עברית ממש כמה דקות, 3 פעמים בשבוע. בנוסף לכך, לאחר ששמעתי מספר שמוות מהאנשיים המקומיים מצאתי את "קובי". קובי הוא בחור בעל מבחר קבועים ורטשות מחומצנות שiyorש כל יום ברחוב הראשי, מול סטארבקס, ומוכר צמידים. קובי נשוי לאישה יפנית ומגדל ילדה בת 3. כשהיגשתי לראשונה לדבר עם קובי, לא הייתי/agMRI בטוח שהוא ישראלי כי הוא כבר לא ממש נראה ככה. גם המבטא שלו נשמע קצת כמו מבטא ספרדי, אבל בכלל אופן הוא אכן ישראלי וניהלנו כמה שיחות מדי פעם.

חוֹזֶם מהקרים הללו אני מדבר רק יפנית ואנגלית כאשר אני מנסה לדבר יפנית כמה שיותר. זאת הסיבה שכשדיברתי עם איילת הרגשתי מואר. אפשר אפילו להגיד שלא הייתי רגיל לטון הדיבור. זה מעניין לראות איך טון הדיבור שלי וגם של שאר התירירים הנמצאים פה מתאים את עצמו לטון הדיבור היפני. דיבור בטון יפני משמעו להנגן ולהסכים הרבה יותר, לדבר לאט וברוגע, להתפאל יותר מדברים פשוטים וכו'. טון הדיבור של איילת נשמע לי קולני ואףלו טיפה תוקפני אבל זה בסדר ואני לא רוצה שזה ישתנה 😊. כי זאת התרבות שלנו וככה זה צריך להיות.

לאחרונה יצא לי לדבר יותר עברית מכיוון שהבודוסאי אוטוטו מתחילה  
והישראלים מטפטיים אל הדוגו בכל יום. עוד על זה ועל החווית האחראנות,  
ובעיקר על התוכנית המדיה/משוגעת שלי לטיפול ביפן שמתחיל בעוד  
שבוע, בפוסט הבא שיחזור לשפה הבינלאומית.

אבונרו פלדו.

### **Comment from ניר**

I finally caught up with your blog!

It did actually take a while to read it all, but it's good stuff and I enjoyed  
it 😊

btw, my recommendation, don't break in the language department.

Starting to actually think in another language is one of the few LEGAL  
thought-process-altering-tricks available (and it's fun!)... I can only  
imagine the effects of thinking in Japanese.

### **IKITAKUNAI!**

#### **Posted: July 24th, 2008**

Means I don't wanna go. But I must, this Sunday 😊

The last week has been packed with great things. Too much to remember  
and to write but I have some pictures. This time I will try a new  
approach of embedding pictures in the middle of the post and not just  
the end. Some pictures are in bad focus, sorry!

July 15th I went on a trip with my 2 best guest house friends, Taku and  
Natsu, and another girl from the guest house called Minori. Minori is a  
hair stylist who just lives in the guest house instead of in a regular lonely  
apartment.

We rented a car and drove up north, first to a nice town called Nago. Inside Nago there is a place which is famous around Higaonna's Dojo because one guy lives 5 minutes away from it and he keeps going there and taking other people with him.



The place is called "Pineapple Park, and it's a park about pineapples. The deal is so: You pay 500 yen, then you have to go through a boring but rather amusing ride in a driverless pineapple themed cart, while going through various gardens of pineapples and listening to stories about pineapples. Then once you've passed that you get to enter a world of "Tsumame Tabehodai" - An all you can eat feast of food samples. Everything that anyone ever thought you can make from pineapples is there: Cookies, Chocolate, Wine, Cakes, Bread, Awamori, Beef, Pork (I'm not sure how they use it there)..and yeah, pinnaples. They also make shampoo, face cream and various other products. It was well worth the 500yen.



Next was a visit to the nearby factory which makes the famous Okinawa "Orion Beeru". It was nice but no "Nomihodai"...Only 2 glasses each. And the car driver had to wear a badge that would deprive him of any drinks.



After that we stopped at some cool "Chill-out" places in Nago. The first was Nago guest hosue. Basically a wooden shack, sitting right in the middle of an amazing beach, with a great atmosphere all around. Then we ate at the nearby Kangaru Hamburger bar. After that we went to another island located at the connected small island "Kouri-Shima" .



Following that we continued driving until we reached the northern most point of Okinawa Island, called "Cape Hedo". The lonely planet describes the surrounding as a jungle, but actually it's more of a thick forest. Recently (maybe after reading Umibe no Kafka) I've had this weird urge to find a big jungle and just dive into it, surrounding myself with big trees and plants, where the sun is totally blocked. But I've yet to experience something like that. Maybe the closest I got was when hiking in Iriomote. Anyway near cape Hedo there is a point where you can drive up a mountain and...whoa what a view.



More Tidbits of Information: I went fishing (tsuri) ! Along with Ivan from Argentina and Tamom from BASE. Woke up at 5:00am. First we went to a place, then an old Okinawa woman came and told us there are no fish there and if there are they are polluted. Then we went to another place, and didn't catch anything. and I lost my weight thingy. But my throw is not bad and it was fun:

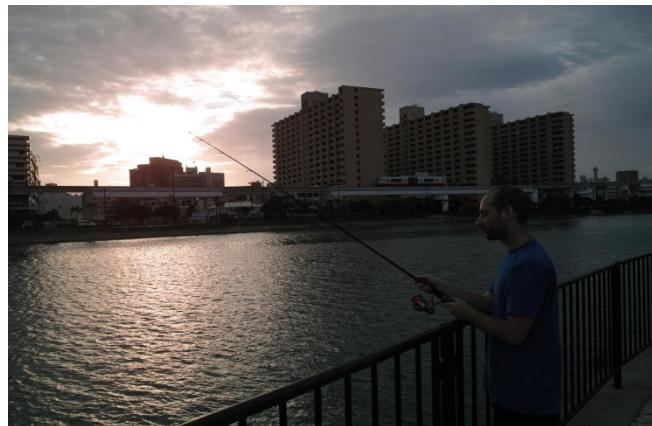
A surprise guest at the guest house! And who said celebrities from mainland don't come to Okinawa.

Budosai. The Budosai started. About a week ago I met a British blackbelt couple at the Japanese lesson place. We were talking about the budosai and suddenly they mentioned as if I was supposed to know that they're paying **250 pounds each** to attend the Budosai. There is a Japanese word, well more sound effect that describes how I felt that moment. "Gabiiiiin!" (Btw I have a work in progress



Japanese sound effect dictionary I'm writing, maybe I'll post it). But after doing some more checks I found out that as being a part of the main dojo I'm considered staff and I'm supposed to help with the preparation and then I don't pay. So one day before the Budosai and also the first day of the Budosai I was busy preparing registration bags and handling the registration process...was quite interesting to see all the countries.

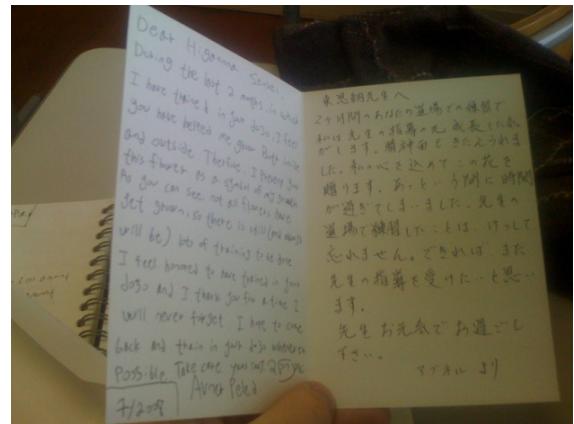
About 700 people are attending this year's Budosai from all over the world. Later I started training in the Budosai itself and it's interesting because you get to learn from the top senseis all over the world and Japan. Another



interesting moment I noted was that while the preparation was going I wondered into another dojo at the Budokan building and there I found a few old men dressed in traditional samurai cloths practicing the arts of a real Katana sword. I also got to meet Ilan-Sensei who came here and his wife Granit (who is apparently reading my blog, agh! people are reading my blog?!) and we hung out.

Gifts. It's time to buy gifts for the Okinawa people that made my trip (Souvenirs for Israel later). I think my gift-sense was pretty sharp:

- For my Japanese teacher I bought a book about Japanese "Go-Gen". "Go-Gen" is the Japanese word for Etymology. Etymology is a concept I've stumbled upon while reading the book I bought here (don't



remember if I wrote about it or not). It means the study of the history and origin of words, part of linguistics. I find it very interesting. I attached a note thanking for the time, mentioning funny times and promising to come back.

- For Higaonna sensei I bought a (fake) white flower in a (fake) water vase. So yeah it's fake but I think it ok because the flower is only symbolic. In the note I wrote that the flower is a symbol of how much I've grown inside and outside due to Sensei's training. Also the plant consists of 3 flowers, 1 is totally open, 1 is totally closed and 1 is half way. This, I wrote, symbolizes the training that is still (and actually always will be) to be done. I got the Japanese teacher to translate the note for me in Japanese.
- For Base I'm getting a humble gift. A memory card reader which symbolizes the memories I will always have from this place (also they need one ^^). On the reader I will put a sticker of a "Fuli-Kula" picture I will take with Taku and Natsu. It's this kind of picture you take in a machine and it puts backgrounds and whatever and prints you a sticker.

Loft. A few days ago I went out with a girl called Saori I met at Japanese class (she took English) and 2 other people (Japanese guy and Australian

girl). We went to see the movie Indiana Jones. A few notes about that. Movies here are expensive - 1600 yen - about 16\$. When you get popcorn they put the carton in a nylon bag. Btw Japanese people put everything which can be put in a nylon bag, in a nylon bag. Some cookie snacks are a plastic bag carrying inside many cookies each wrapped in a nylon bag. But then again, the movie theater was amazingly clean. I also noticed the volume of the movie was lower than what I'm used to. Another nice thing was that during the movie my mind kinda drifted and for a few moments I felt like I'm in Israel again. After the movie we went to a place Saori heard about called "The Loft". "The Loft" is quite an amazing place. It's open from 18:30 to 01:30. You pay 300 yen for entering and you can just hang out. The place is full of every possible toy you could imagine. From kids teaching toys to darts and football to Nintendo 64 and Super Famicom. It also has an electric guitar, base guitar (with amp) , keyboard, drum machine. Oh and it's also creepy. It has some kind of fetish theme to it and it's full of dicks all over.

This post is getting long but it's ok because this may be the last long post I write from Japan. Sunday I go out on a really crazy trip. **And this is the plan** (took me quite a while to make..!):

- 27/7 - 7:00am ALine ferry to Kagoshima (Kyushu) . 25 hours.  
(booked)
- 28/7- 9:10 - Jet Foil Boat from Kagoshima to Yakushima Island. 2 hours. (booked) Hike in Yakushima.
- 30/7 - 7:25 - Jet Foil Back to Kagoshima. Go to JR Station.  
**Activate Rail pass.** Ride to Fukouka (Hakata station).
- 30/7 - 16:00 - From Fukouka ferry take Jet foil boat to Pusan, Korea. In Pusan go to Zen Backpackers hostel (booked).
- 31/7 - 12:00 Boat back to Fuokouka - **Get new VISA.** Take Shinkansen to Nagasaki. Go to Nagasaki AKARI youth hostel. (booked)
- See Nagasaki and festivals- <http://www.nagasaki-hostel.com/>

- 04/08 - Take Shinkansen to Beppu. Stay at beppu buest house (booked).
- Rest at Onsen. See mount Aso.
- 06/08 - Take shinkansento Kokora station. meet friend. celebrate birthday. continue shinkansen to Hiroshima. Hiroshima J-Hoppers guest house (booked).
- See Miyajima temple and peace musuem.
- 08/08 - Take Shinkansen to Tokyo . stay at Taku's friend's house.
- SUMMER SONIC (bought ticket)
- 11/08 - Take Shinkansen to Hokkaido. Stay for free at [Ainu](#) school recomended by Kota. (booked)
- Ainu Moshiri IchiMan Nen Sai - Ainu 10,000 years festival.
- 16/8 - Take Shinkansen to Tono Valley. Stay at Youth Hostel (booked).
- See various Lonely Planet "Tohoku" (Northern part) sites.
- 20/8 - Take Shinkansen to Kyoto. Go to Gojo hostel (booked).

### **Rail pass end**

- 1 week at Kyoto, Osaka, Nara.
- 27/8 - Take bus (or if I have money, Shinkansen) to Tokyo. Stay at Taku's friend or if can't , hostel.
- 1 week at Tokyo.
- 3/9 - INDIA

Phewwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww!

### **COMMENTS**

#### **Comment from nir**

**Time:** July 25, 2008, 4:32 am

That loft looks really cool!

This is how the Milega should have been, if they weren't all shanti and what not..

Well, except the dicks maybe.. :-\

(I can actually imagine Karen getting her picture taken with each and every one of them and tagging "Bulbul #1", "Bulbul #2"...)



### **Comment from Itamar**

**Time:** July 25, 2008, 10:11 pm

Ah, avner, your trip is so cool ;\_;

### **Comment from Fluffy**

**Time:** July 30, 2008, 2:34 am

I think you have here some pictures capturing the essence of Japan's strangeness: People hangin' around, chilling, minding their own bussiness, no one minding the F#\$%ING POKEMON GUY SITTING THERE SMOKING A CIGGIE!!

Or maybe it wasn't a costume, but the real deal?

## **GUUZEN**

### **Posted: August 1st, 2008**

So when I said I was booked for Hiroshima, I actually wasn't. I was about to book it right after committing the post. My Arrival date - August 6th. Seemingly, a normal date. Well, a day before my birthday, but still, a normal date. No reason for anything special to happen in Hiroshima this date. Well...**except that's when the ATOM BOMB fell on Hiroshima.** They have big ceremonies and every single hotel and hostel is booked. So my plan was altered a bit. My orginal plan was actually to meet a friend I met in BASE on the way from Beppu to Hiroshima in a place called Kokura. We were gonna celebrate my coming birthday..So now she will help to me a nearby internet cafe where I will sleep until the first train the next morning.

### **Don't Panic!**

Sleeping at an internet cafe is a common thing for homeless Japanese people and travelers and it's very safe. Being the safest country on earth..

So everything will be ok. Today I went to MiMi and printed a whole bunch of maps and addresses for my whole trip. By the way Guuzen means coincidence (full phrase - Guuzen Icchi).

Tomorrow is my last day here. First there is a demonstration at the Budosai and many people are coming including some from my guest house, Mimi and also Matsuda sensei from my sanshin place. After that there is a Sayonara party for the Budosai where I will give my present to Higaonna sensei. After that we have a dinner party at BASE where...get this, we're going to make Humus. I thought about this idea along with Taku (nicknamed "Yorichou" - meaning "Head Chef"). We bought all the ingredients and I'll use the recipe from [humus101.com](http://humus101.com). You can actually find everything at the super market. Dry chickpeas was a little harder to find but it was found. We'll see how it will turn out...I expect the worse ^^;



Next day on 7:00am I'll be off. Along with my towel, my Hitchhiker's guide to the galaxy and my Sanshin.

Oh and one last thing. Lately I invented a new name for myself. It's called "Avner Lavigne". That's me doing Avril Lavigne at Kareoke. Avril Lavigne being very famous in Japan, along with the fact I really like her (and I don't care what you say!!) , made me sing a lot of Avril Lavigne in Kareoke sessions. So I started calling it Avner Lavigne. And then , another Guuzen. Who would have thought that it will be Avril (and her co-writers) who successfully captured the feeling I get sometimes about

Japan and the Japanese people. The song is called "Innocence" and part of it goes like this:

It's a state of bliss, you think you're dreaming  
 It's the happiness inside that you're feeling  
 It's so beautiful it makes you wanna cry  
 It's so beautiful it makes you wanna cry

This innocence is brilliance  
 I hope that it will stay  
 This moment is perfect  
 Please don't go away  
 I need you now  
 And I'll hold on to it  
 Don't you let it pass you by  
 Ja ne.

## **SO THAT'S WHAT IT'S LIKE**

**Posted: August 1st, 2008**

Being a traveler... riding the trains and the ferries every day. rushing through sightseeing spots. Meeting new people every day. It's nice 😊

I wanna start by telling about the last day at BASE Okinawa. I actually made Humus! and it was actually good! I followed the recipe on [humus101.com](http://humus101.com) and it worked! I got help from Taku in logistics but I was the head chef! I still can't believe I made it. I made the humus to look and taste as much as I can like in looks in "Abu Dhabi". It was actually quite close! I decided the quantities based on what we bought, the recipe and constant tastings. I also made a discovery. Always when I would eat in "Abu Dhabi" I would feel like they had some kind of special ingredient which made it taste better and caused a pleasant sensation in my mouth but I couldn't figure out what it was. Now I know. It's lemon. Looking at my Japanese friends "wipe" and enjoy the Humus I made was really a

unique sensation. It was a first time for all of them. They all complimented me about how good it was.

The next morning at 6:00am I left BASE, greeted by Taku and Natsu. Naa-Chan cried.. :(... I shall be back!!

On the boat to Kagoshima I basically slept a lot. Each person had his own private little cell and it was quite comfortable.

Straight from Kagoshima I took a taxi to the nearby port and boarded the Jet Foil boat to Yakushima. Arriving at the port of Yakushima I understood how hard it is to get around. There are 2 bus lines and they each go around every 1 hour. While waiting for the bus I tried to communicate with the people at the port and maybe find hiking companions. First I talked to a group of teenagers from Fukouka who seemed to have a common t-shirt. They didn't really understand what I'm talking about and told me to wait for their group "leader" to come. Then I talked to 2 boys who had good English because they both went to school in California. One was from Tokyo and one was from Osaka. They both gave me their numbers and the Tokyo guy said I must call him when I'm in Tokyo. I will!

While staying at the port I found out I made a beginner traveler's mistake. My busy plan was based on the fact I take the first ferry out of Yakushima 2 days later at 7:25am. Yet on that time there is no bus which can take me from the youth hostel to the port! It seemed like the only option was to take a taxi for about 7,000 yen! (70\$). I was bummed but never the less ready to continue.

Arriving at the hostel I was once again a bit troubled when I realized it's pretty far from any form of civilization. It didn't have a super nearby, only a small shop called Watanabe which only had bread and rice crackers. Let's I wasn't surprised to find out I was the only one in my dorm room.

While talking to the owner I explained my problem with the bus and we found a solution. I was to transfer the next day from Yakushima youth hostel to another youth hostel which is right by the port (which I didn't know about). We also formulated a hiking trip which included the sites I wanted to visit and took me back right near the new hostel....I got my money back for 1 day and there was only one problem left: It meant I had to carry all my luggage (bag & Sanshin) in the hiking trip. I thought "No problem!" . I wasn't exactly right.

At dinner time at the hostel I walked in and looked for people to join me on my trip. My trip was basically doing 2 sites , which normally people do in 1 day each, in just 1 day. So people weren't very inclined to join me. But one woman called Aki who was actually a new staff member at the hostel said she was planning on going to the first site anyway so she will join me until we split at the road to the second site. So I went and bought water, 3 packs of rice crackers, took a hot bath (first time, great), had some talks

and drinks of the  
Yakushima local drink  
"Midake" (3 peaks), and  
went to sleep.

The bus for the  
beginning of the track  
was at 5:02am. I was to  
meet Aki at the start



because she was coming by motorcycle. While waiting Aki I started realizing how heavy my luggage is but it was possible. Eventually Aki came and we took off. I don't know how I could sum up how beautiful Yakushima island (Princess Mononoke Island) is. I'll just say it's beautiful and it's green and post some pics. But a lot of the pics I took are in Raw format so I'll only post these when I come back.

On the way to the first site which is called Jomun Sugi (a big Cedar tree) Aki helped me by carrying my Sanshin. Everyone was interested to know what it is and to hear me play. I promised I'd play when we reach the destination. There is a part on the way where the road becomes a lot of climbing and they have a place there I could leave my bag and take it back when I come back. But I took my Sanshin because I promised I'd play it 😊

Eventually we reached the site and I played my Sanshin. Everyone gathered to listen. It was really cool. I wasted some time because I had to tune and fix the strings which got loose on the way. I met some people from Okinawa there and I felt connected to them like we're from the same place. Sometimes when people ask me where I come from I think about saying Okinawa ^\_^ .

On the way back we realized that if we don't go back fast I might not make it back on time before it's dark. So we started walking very fast down the road. Occasionally meeting groups on the way and asking to "Michi Okete Kudasai" , please clear the path. I was back with my bag and Aki was right behind me carrying my Sanshin, having no problem with the fast pace.

Eventually we reached the place where the roads split. I continue to the next destination, Mononoke Hime forest on Shiratani Unsuikyo and Aki goes back home. We were told it's a hard track but I believed I could handle it. We found that the route is marked with pink ribbons along the line. I also took a picture of the sign at the beginning that Aki translated for me so I will know if I see more signs



with the same writing. What happened next is hard to describe in writing but I'll do my best.

I was alone in the thick forest. Hardly any sun coming in. Striding through the trees and rocks, carrying my huge bag and my Sanshin. Breathing and panting hard. Heart beating fast. Thinking if I'm on the right track. Thinking what will happen if I get lost. Will I sleep at the forest? Will someone come? What about my plan? I don't hear anyone. Following the pink ribbons. Muscles start to hurt, feet start to hurt. Climate is so humid. My shirt is soaking wet. I'm thirsty. Try not to drink too much. Occasionally loosing track of the pink ribbons, going back and finding the track. Sometimes leaving my luggage behind and climbing to see if I'm going the right direction. Takings rests. Passing by the most beautiful green images I've ever seen. Too nervous to take pictures. After a while it's like I've become one with the forest. I can distinctively see the pink ribbons without thinking. On the way I meet packs of deers. I walk by them like they are my neighbors. I learn to find the spots where drinking water is pouring. I fill my bottle a few times. Getting very tired. Not sure I can make it. So heavy. Eventually I come into a sign. There are 3 choices and the sign is Japanese only. I recognize one option and I know not to take it. I take another option, it leads up. And more up. Going up so much I can hardly make it with the bags. I see some light at the end, I think I may be close to an opening at the forest. I climb up and up on rocks and wooden steps. I reach a high peak. Climb some more. I find myself on standing outside of the forest, on a big rock. It was the most spectacular view I have ever seen in my life. It looks down on infinite miles and miles of trees. In front of me are just clouds and mist moving fast. There is only the sound of wind. I look down to see if I can see any people, but I can't see inside the forest. I try to take a picture but the camera lens is too wet from being in my pocket. I take some picture (but it's RAW format). This is the end of the route. Obviously I was wrong and got to a sightseeing spot instead of the forest which continues outside and then to civilization. I go back down and take

the only route left. There is not much time left and I don't have much strength left. I carry on, after about 20 minutes I see 2 people (Japanese couple from Tokyo) walking towards me, I feel rescued. I want to tell them "take me home!!" but I ask them where I am and if I'm on the right track and where they are going. My map is all wet and torn up. But I was on the right track and they are just coming from there. They are going to see the rock I just

accidentally saw. I decided that I will now just sit and wait for them here to come back. I sit and wait. Some flying insect keeps following me and we play hide and seek. I eat some crackers.

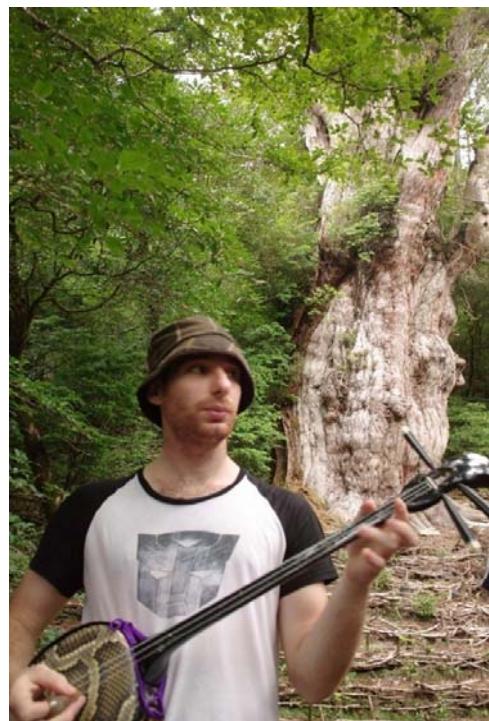


Eventually I'm tired of waiting and I leave my luggage and start climbing my way towards them. I feel like I can roam freely through the forest, like it's my home. Eventually I see them and join them. They are walking

fast, my feet hurt so much I can hardly feel them. But I know I'm saved. Also they have a car and they offered to drive me to the hostel. Also the guy carried my Sanshin once in a while.

Occasionally we take rests and the girl is taking pictures with me. We are at the Mononoke Hime forest. It's amazing. Finally after about an hour just when it's starting to get dark we get out of the forest. The girl shoots a video of everyone happy and we drive home. I thank them non stop and give them my e-mail and ask them to send

me the pictures. At the hostel I shower, notify Aki by mobile email that I'm ok and treat myself to Sushi and a Sneakers bar. I go to sleep.



Ok. Although I have a lot more to tell I'm gonna stop here because It's really late and I should go to sleep. I will continue this another time when I will tell you about Korea, the shinkansen, how I was interrogated but eventually got a new visa and Nagasaki (which is where I am now).

## COMMENTS

### **Comment from Itamar**

**Time:** August 3, 2008, 2:39 am

Sooo.... those two Japanese people you met, they weren't soldiers from WW2 by any chance?

### **Comment from Kafka**

**Time:** August 3, 2008, 10:56 am

shit!

## CHAPTER 2

### **Posted: August 3rd, 2008**

So last time I stopped after surviving the forest of Yakushima island. But this feels like a year ago.

I took the first ship out of Yakushima and that's when my complicated trip plan started. I was to make it to Hakata port in Fukouka until 16:00pm to catch the last boat to Pusan, Korea. Arriving Kagoshima I immediately took a taxi to Kagoshima station. There I finally activated my Rail pass (and almost too late because in 1 more week it would have expired). The activation took about 10 minutes and right away I reserved my tickets to Hakata Station, Fukouka. I boarded my first Shinkansen and it was indeed fast. My ears kept plugging and I could feel we're going very fast. After the Bullet train I had to take a connection to another train. Everything was very intuitive and comfortable, not to mention free.

Arriving at Hakata station I immediately took a taxi to the International Port where I noticed I'm 2.5 hours early. The staff allowed me to take

the 14:30 boat. While buying the ticket a staff member warned me that if I don't have a departure ticket from Tokyo when I come back, they may not let me go back to Japan. And I have yet bought my ticket from Japan to India.

At the fast Jet foil boat (engine like of an airplane) I saw the for the first time the Transformers movie and 3 hours later reached Pusan,Korea. The first thing I noticed about it was that it smelled a bit less good than Japan. At the port I exchanged 100\$ for about 100,000 won and got some Korean candy along with the money (they taste wierd). I found the cheep shuttle bus to to subway and took the cheep subway to the meeting place, where I used some guy's phone (he just offered it when I tried the public phone) to call June, the owner to come and pick me up.

The Zen Bag-packers hostel is located on the 29th floor of a 32 floor building. It's very new, clean, pretty and full of Americans. And also it has a printer. At night me, June and 2 American dudes went out to an All you can Eat raw Tuna restaurant. I've had so many new flavours in 2 hours it was hard to cope with. Also the Koreans eat with metal chopsticks. We talked and I learned a lot about the history of Korea, the situation with North Korea and how all the males go through 2 years of army service at the age of 18 which used to be hell where the commanders would accidentally kill cadets with "Aikido" kicks but now it's gotten a bit better (Now they just rarely slap the cadets). After eating and drinking until full and drunk we came home and I immediately reserved my ticket to India for September 6th through expedia.com (750\$) and printed the confirmation. Me and another American took the advice of June and went up the roof to see a view of Pusan, it was indeed gorgeous.

The next morning myself and another American who was coming back the same day took the cheep taxi to the port. 15 minutes after the boat left the port it suddenly stopped. After standing still for 10 minutes it started

coming back to Pusan because of engine problems. luckily I was no longer in a hurry. We waited for a while and then entered another boat.

Arriving at Fukouka I was nervous and hoped they wouldn't give me any problems at the immigration. After checking my passport I was ordered to wait outside. Let's say I'm happy I bought my return ticket because I had to show not only that, but all of my tickets, all of my money ( and count it ), all of my trip plans, my luggage (including my sanshin and my medicines to India) and every other possible item. But I must say the employers at Fukouka were very nice to me and were very impressed by my Japanese. In fact we had almost the entire "interrogation" in Japanese. Eventually they let me go with a "last time" warning and gave me a new 90 days visa which is more than I need.

Leaving Hakata I took the bus to the station and from there the Limited Express train to Nagasaki. The train had leather seats and you could buy snacks and drinks. I felt it was a good time to continue reading The Hitchhiker's guide to the Galaxy. I arrived at Nagasaki around 22:00pm and followed the instructions I previously printed to get to the hostel. Nagasaki, being tourist oriented, is a very easy city to get around in. Everything is signed in English and they have a very convenient Tram service (they call it "Street Car") that goes through most of the major spots in the city and only costs 100 yen from anywhere to anywhere. The hostel was already closed but they left me a note with a number to call in a public phone nearby. I called "Nana", one of the two owners and she told me to code to get in the hostel and my key was another the counter. When entering I met a girl called Yui who is Japanese but something already seemed strange when I saw her walking around the Tatami room with her slippers on. Turns out she spent almost all of her life in Australia (The Australian accent also seemed strange ^^).

The next day I declared as Atom Bomb day. I visited all the important sites and museums until I got tired of it. I saw many pictures and items but I think the item which impressed me the most was a big block of

wood used as part of a roof of a building near the explosion. The wood was all scorched by the heat rays of the bomb, except where it was covered by leaves of a tree. So it actually looked like the inverse of a tree with leaves making its shadow on a roof in the sun.

In the evening I went to eat with Yui where I found out that she doesn't eat sushi, or in fact any kind of shellfish, raw fish and not many kinds of meat. She is not a vegetarian, just traumatized by some childhood events (so I believe). Though she does like vegetables and she dragged me to a some vegetable. She walked extremely fast because she was afraid it would close and I was still in pain from the Yakushima hike . Eventually it was closed. Then we continued to a place in I wanted to go to in Nagsaki's China Town district, where you can eat Champon which is the Nagasaki version of Ramen which is based on squids and octopuses and all kinds of Chinese vegetables. Anyway that was closed too but a nearby place was open, but Yui didn't even want to get in there so we separated our ways. I went to eat Champon and I must say it wasn't very good. But because it just wasn't fresh.

When coming back I felt I had to do something more that night to make it up and I went to a club listed on Lonely Planet. before that I visited a shop which specializes on strawberry cakes and bought myself a piece, it was divine. Then somehow I found the club and had some drinking and dancing but not too much communicating. After a few DJ Sessions there was a show case of some Hip-hop dancing groups and they were superb! Good enough to be in "Nolad Lirkod" for sure. Eventually I was really tired and came back. The next morning I went to see the Dragon Boat races going on at the Harbor. It was really cool. The boat consists of about 20 people, 10 on each side, rowing and shouting as fast as strong as they can. At the center there is a guy standing and hitting a Japanese drum and some metal thing, setting up the beat for the rowing. That's the guy I'd like to be.

After the harbor I went to a place called Glover Garden. It was pretty but boring. A nice thing to do was to find 2 stones on the floor which were heart shaped and located on the map. It says if you find one you will find love. I found one after seeing another guy find it first, Is that good enough? When the sun was setting down the trip to Glover Garden became worth it when a live show at the main garden, surrounded by colorful lights started. The show was from a 3 girl group (singer, keyboard/backup singer, violin) called September. They were very good and they did one cover which I recognized from my Karaoke days in Okinawa. After coming back, Shingo and Nana (owners) were just leaving for some dinner and a look at a festival/bazaar going on at the big Spectacles bridge crossing the Nishigawa river which is the main river of the city. We had a lot of fun and they treated me to dinner and some pineapples. Then I went to sleep thinking maybe I'll go again to the club soon but instead I slept 11 hours.

Today was temple day. I visited the main Buddha temples and one Shinto shrine. It was nice but I wish I knew more about what I saw. At the Shinto shrine first I entered somewhere I wasn't supposed to enter and was politely escorted out. Then I did the Shinto praying ceremony which is 2 bows, 2 claps, 1 bow and pray. But I forgot the praying part. Then there was a place where you can pull out notes (also in English) of the oracle to see your luck. My note said basically that I'm doomed and should avoid pretty much any activity for now. After the shrine I went to get another shot at Champon at the place which was closed and this time it was open and it was indeed good.

Phew that's about it. Now I'm here soon going to check out the Bazaar again and tomorrow I leave for Beppu to do some Onsen/Volcano action!!

Pictures will be posted.. some time...in the future..

Peace

### **Comment from Fluffy**

**Time:** August 5, 2008, 3:44 am

Korea does have a funny smell, right? I can smell it everytime I think of the place. You can feel it in the air, but it's very noticeable when you drink the water...

And about the army, it probably wasn't Aikido kicks (it's Japanese...) but Taekwondo (same shit to me though).

### **OOPS, I DID IT AGAIN**

**Posted: August 5th, 2008**

**Retroactive - Restored from draft.**

The time is around August 5th, the place is Beppu - Onsen town. Beppu also has another attraction, a day trip to the active volcano called Mt. Aso. In the Beppu guest house I meet a nice, pink dressed, Jewish, overweight American guy called Patrick. Patrick amuses me with his knowledge of pleasant Hebrew words (I like how he says "Yofi!") and i ask him if he wants to go with me tomorrow for a day trip to Mt. Aso. He enthusiastically agrees and so it begins.

The lonely planet has a description of the trip you can take in Mt. Aso. You take an early morning train to Aso, take a local bus to the mountain, then you can either take a cable car to the top or walk for 30 minutes. Then from the top you can either go back or go on a little (3-4 hours) hiking path along some old rail route all the way to the bottom. But the description of that path in lonely planet is a bit vague.

Before setting off I ask Patrick, while ignoring the way he looks, if he is up for some hiking. He answers, also ignoring the way he looks - "Betakh"!

We take the train and bus when we reach the cable car we opt for the 30 minutes' walk. Except for being a bit of scolding looks from the fit Japanese passing by, Patrick walks it just fine and we reach the top of

the active volcano - Naka Dake. Dake means top and Naka means middle. It should not be confused with the special Okinawa fist - "Naka *Daka* Ipon ken", which means something like middle knuckle or finger.

We enter Naka Dake following a sign which states the current danger level of the mountain. The current level is 3 - yellow. It should not be approached by people with Asthma and a minimum of 1km (I think) distance should be kept from the center. The more we get close to the mountain stronger the scent of Sulfur becomes. The scent was familiar to me from the Onsens. Eventually at the top there is a big Sulfur cloud which keeps moving according to the wind. Everyone tries to avoid it and we try to find the right moment to take some pictures. Down there you can see some kind of mysterious liquid looking light blue substance, which is the source of all this.



After having enough sulfur in our lungs we check the Lonely Planet for instructions how to get to the downhill hike. We notice some paths from Naka Dake are closed and basically there is just one path to take , so we take it. The road starts as a simple rail path and the hike is easy, but the more we advance to more it starts sloping until at one points it becomes really steep and you have to start jumping and sliding through rocks to get to continue. We hesitate whether we should go down and if this is even an official route. I suggest Patrick I will go down to check while he waits. I go down slipping and sloping until Patrick is just a small figure up ahead. below me it seems like it continues the same way so I assume it goes all the way down. I holler to Patrick asking if he thinks he can do it and Patrick answers this time with a more hesitant "Yeah..!"

Patrick goes down to meet me and at a few points it seemed to me like he's about to fall on his face but he makes it through alright and we continue on. The more we advance to route looks less and less like a route, surrounded with weeds and rocks and getting hard to cross. But since going up doesn't seem like an option anymore we carry on. Occasionally I have to give Patrick a hand in some of the more steep jumps. After a while it starts to rain and the way gets slippery.

We go down some more until reaching a one especially steep slope and while Patrick takes a rest I go check how it continues from there. I think only the Arctic Monkeys can accurately described what I felt then.

### **Shit Sock Horror.**

There is no continuance. The road ends. It's a chasm. A cliff. A dead end. Nada.

I'm thinking we may need to climb all the way back but realize it seems almost impossible. For Patrick it is 100% impossible. So I think maybe I should leave him there and go call for help. After panicking some more we calm down a bit and Patrick looks up at another hill above and what may seem to be like a route on top of it. The way the weeds are aligned makes him think it may be an official trail. He is also reminded to tell me that someone once told him to "Never go hiking with Israelis". It's still raining and even stronger. I gather strength and go check the hill above us. The climb is difficult but at one point I stumble across a rope which allows for an easier climb and also gives me hope because it means people have been here. I climb and crawl and hold and grab, scratching my hands on stuff, until I reach the top at see some arrows drawn on the ground pointing in various directions. I shout back to Patrick and he begins to follow me. He had to take many breaks in the middle and some points I couldn't see him so I shouted to make sure he didn't fall down. Eventually he makes it and while he rests I go check the rest.

There is some kind of trail. It's thin and rugged and sometimes hidden by plants but it looks like a trail. We start walking towards the unknown. We walk and walk and Patrick becomes calmer while I'm still afraid the trail is gonna disappear on me or won't reach anywhere helpful. After a while the rain stops and I also begin to calm down and we take breaks and have some interesting conversations. We continue walking and the path turns and turns but does seem like it's going down. The time was ok but Patrick's legs were starting to feel really weak and we had to take more breaks. Also the water condition wasn't at its best. While walking we heard an occasional gunfire like "Bang" which we weren't sure what to think of. I thought maybe some people are stuck and shooting a flare gun. Also while walking Patrick noted all kind of hiking advices about trails that he learned back home. We also came across some signs but they were all in Japanese.

I think we walked for at least 3-4 hours until the path turned into a road and we walked into some kind of an empty farm. First signs of civilization. We walked the road around it until we got into some kind of split and we chose to continue in the same direction. We reached a rice field. We started walking along it and then we heard one of those bangs again but this time it was *really* close. Close enough to make us duck and start shouting "hello?? Don't shoot!" Some guy came out of the woods and I think he tried to tell us that they are scaring off the birds from the field. I don't know where the guy with the gun was but we felt safe enough to continue. Getting really thirsty and out of water I was hoping to reach a bus/train station real soon. And luckily it wasn't far away. We reached straight into some family's house and the guy there had a truck and offered to give us a ride to the train station. I remember the happiness of climbing on to the back of his truck and I shot a video shouting "Nitzalnu!" and then having Patrick mimic what I say. I will upload it some time.

The train station we got to was nowhere near the station we were supposed to get to but there was still time for the last train and we had

to take 3 trains instead of 1 but we didn't mind. they had a vending machine (Plus we both had rail passes). We road the trains, passing by some interesting village with a temple and fountain and eventually made it back to Beppu at night.

After learning the first lesson at Yakushima about hiking alone, the lesson I learned here was to know your route exactly before you start. What appeared to have happened was that the route we actually wanted to take was closed because of Volcano activity and we went on a god knows what path to nothingness. We were lucky to cross with a different hiking trail which lead to the opposite part of the mountain. Overall - quite an experience 😊

Avner.

## I AM NOT DEAD

**Posted: August 18th, 2008**

I guess every blog must have an \*I am NOT dead" post and now here is mine.

Lately I have been so overloaded with traveling and experiences that it has been pretty impossible to write not only because there was not time or place to write but also because there are just too many things to write about.

Right now I am in the beautiful, captivating and fascinating Tono valley. I already leave tomorrow for Kyoto and I actually wish I could stay more but tomorrow is sadly the last day of my Rail Pass and I have a lot to travel. Right now I am waiting for the bank to open (actually waiting for the exchange rates to get updated so I can change money) because I am out of money and I want to get some before I start cycling around the sites (this time the suitable cycling soundtrack for Tono - Juno Soundtrack). And next to the bank there is a place with free intrenet so that's a great way to pass time.

What I'm going to do now I might regret in the future but this seems to be like the only choice. I am going to quickly write a summary of everything I have been through until now since the last blog post and hopefully I will be able to expand about it and post pictures later. Gomen Asai!!

- **Beppu** - In Beppu I have experienced Onsen bliss. Onsen is the greatest thing in the world. I got used to the whole public shower thing. I met a friend from BASE Okinawa now working at Beppu. I took a sand bath where you lay in a robe n front of the beach and a girl grabs a shovel and covers you completely with hot sand and then you just lay for 15 minutes. Then you shower and bath in the Onsen. I also bath in what's called an "Outdoor Onsen" where you follow an outdoor beautiful path to a natural spring of hot water which is voluntarily maintained by the people.
- **Kokura** - In Kokura I met with a friend I met in Okinawa. We had dinner at a fine restaurant and celebrate my birthday. In the middle came a magician who showed us card tricks and did some mobile phone tricks like activating menus without touching it. Then she surprised me with a birthday cake and I was really surprised because with all the traveling I kept forgetting it was my birthday. After which I slept in an Internet Cafe which can be described as heaven on earth. 2000 yen to stay overnight, Reclining leather seat, Free ice cream machine, Free popcorn, Free drinks, shower, toilet and of course, big screen internet full of MMORPG games. The only bad thing about it was I didn't get a lot of sleep because I kept surfing the internet.
- **Hirosima** - A pretty big an advanced city. Not as romantic as Nagasaki but more modern and high tech. I celebrated my actual birthday with some Atomic horrors. I also visited the nearby Mijajima island which I really enjoyed. The island is quite and lovable with deers hopping around, good food and ancient history centered at the famous orange shrine on the water. (pictures later)

- **Tokyo** - Wow. so many people. Getting out of the station was quite a shock. After coming from scarcely to moderately inhibited cities and towns, I came into the big momma. And what I can say, I love it. I love crowded, I love noise, I love action. I was hosted by the kind Ken-San who lives near the sizzling Shibuya district. On the first night we took some cycling trips around and after that it was all about Summer Sonic goodness. I saw many bands which I will definitely download or buy their CD's when I get back. The highlight for me was the pillows act where I nearly cried with joy while signing along FLCL songs with all the hard core fans. Summer Sonic was all about big. Thousands of people, great sound, great food and what not. It was an interesting experience on the train back squeezing in with thousands of summer Sonics people. I did get a quick introduction to the tokyo train and subway system which is could because I am coming back soon. The summer sonic ended with Coldplay act (turns out the one song I thought I knew is actually about 5-6 different songs which all sound alike). And an unplanned surprise had the singer sing while the beautiful Alicia Keys (the previous act) played the theme of "clocks" on the piano. followed by a dazzling fireworks act.
- **Ainu Festival** - This trip is all about going from one extreme end to another. After the mega-blast summer sonic I came to spend a whole week in nature, in the beautiful Hokkaido. The trip started with meeting a Japanese girl from Vanuatu (near Australia) at the bus stop and becoming friends for the whole week. In the festival I slept in a tent, bathed in did laundry in the (very cold) river, shit inside a toilet bowl covered hole and ate local Ainu food. I compete in races and tug of wars to win food money, I crafted my own wooden Ainu instrument, I learned to play the "Poi", I met a Japanese crazy old man who was married to an Israeli woman and has 2 girls living in Israel one of which is called "Lotus Etrog" and plays in Tel Aviv in the Tziporela show and the highlight was playing my Sanshin with the Ainu band and getting great comments from the dancing crowds. I also saw some great music acts with very special musical instruments from all

over the world including something cool from Africa I forgot the name. I also bought one CD of a Tokyo based band called RabiRabi.

- **Hakodate (Hokkaido)** - Again hovering between extremes I went from a week outside to a nice and private hotel at Hakodate where I had one of the best showers of my life. In the morning I went to the morning fish market and fished myself a squid, later eating it while the pieces are still moving on my plate.

Whew I just wrote just enough for the bank to open Right Now. So gotta go!! Thanks to everyone who wished me a happy birthday. Tomorrow Kyoto!

Oh and that night at Kokura's internet cafe was also productive:

### **Ita-Kun Arigatou Gozaimas!**

It was a rushed decision but I believe it was right.

מצב החלטות						
שנת רישום תשס"ט א' - 2008/1						
עדיפות	חג	שם החוג	אונל לימוד	תואר	מצב החלטה	א-התקבל
		0475 חקר התודעה דן חוגי ראשוני				1
		• התקבלת במעמד מן המניין				
		0618 פילוסופיה דן חוגי ראשוני				1
		• התקבלת במעמד מן המניין				

Avner.

### **COMMENTS**

**Pingback from I am NOT dead : blog edvdbox**

**Time:** August 18, 2008, 11:43 am

[...] Original post by admin [...]

**Pingback from Alicia Keys | I am NOT dead**

**Time:** August 18, 2008, 11:58 pm

[...] I guess every blog must have an \*I am NOT dead" post and now here is mine. Lately I have been so overloaded with traveling and experiences that it has been pretty impossible to write not only because

there was not time or place to write but also because there are just too many things to write about. ... Source: I am NOT dead [...]

**Comment from Fluffy**

**Time:** August 19, 2008, 3:45 am

Well this post was certainly easier to read, less time consuming... But your longer posts are more of an interesting read, full of tiny details and feelings.

So don't neglect writing the posts expanding this one!

**Comment from Itamar**

**Time:** August 20, 2008, 3:25 am

Wow Avner, amazing post! That Ainu festival really came out of nowhere, you didn't tell me you were planning to visit Hokkaido! You're really covering a lot of ground... sounds like you're experiencing so many new things, everything sounds like it's taken from a movie, really great, I'm so jealous I could cry.

And good luck in your new studies program, it sounds really exciting!



[אני על ההר](#)

**Posted:** August 24th, 2008

אני על ההר  
בראש המקדש  
העיר לא זזה  
אין שום חדש  
מאחוריו ציוצים  
מקדימה אורות  
מחליט לחשות  
אולי יש מה לראות  
  
עוד מעט חושך  
אבל אני לא פוחד  
לא שמשהו שומר עלי  
אני בלבד מתמודד  
אולי מישהו יבוא  
דרך השערים  
אולי תעבור רכבת  
מעבר להרים  
  
אני כאן בפגש  
בין כל הצבעים  
העיר האפורה  
העצים הירוקים  
ובאמצע עובר  
הצבע הכתום  
את קיוטו עדין  
לא מיציתי עד תום



**Comment from Itamar****Time:** August 27, 2008, 1:49 am

כפרה עלייר

יש לי מבחן ביפנית

**MATA (RETROACTIVE)****Posted: September 5th, 2008**

**\* The following post was written on my iphone in my last day in Japan at around 6am. Although my views my have changed since then, I'm keeping it authentic.**

Mata. Not saynora.

Today I leave Japan with a little sense of incompleteness. I've yet to have reached a full understanding of this country. But I must say I feel like I belong here more than I belong in Israel. Life here, as stressful as it may be, is built on the historical bushido originating values of honesty and respect - Something which may be a bit lacking in the Israeli society. Another value is absolute devotion to whatever occupation one may follow. Starting from train stations operators and ending with art.

Indeed, anything in Japan which is human made is nearing perfection. Music, food, painting, cloths..and maybe even the people themselves. It really feels like the Japanese people are a bit ahead on the evolutionary scale from the rest of the world. Maybe part of the reason is the beautiful and diverse nature that surrounds it , providing inspiration.

After 8 days in Tokyo I can conclude that **this** is the city for me. Leave the nature for vacations! give me fast pace advancement. Life is too short to be living in a cave. There is a universe to disocver. Make some difference for the next to come.

Last 3 days I shopped till dropped and today I took a long walk in Tokyo followed by a party till the first train at dawn.

Now I go to experience the other extreme end of world culture, which may change my view on things completely. One thing I know for sure, Japan has not seen the last of me.

Itekimas.

### **Comment from Itamar**

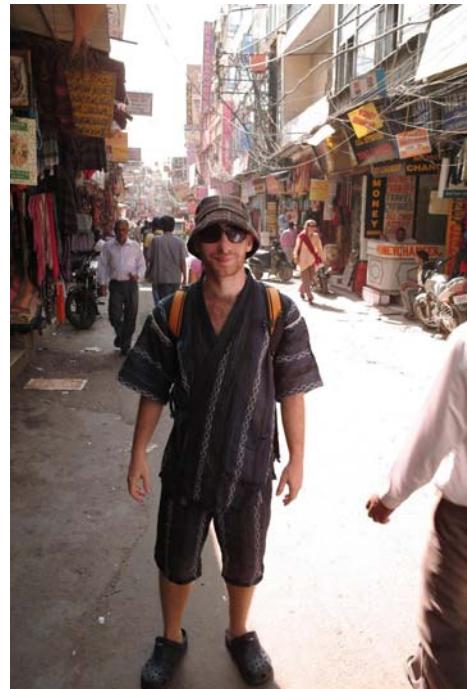
**Time:** September 13, 2008, 10:38 pm

Thanks for sharing your thoughts. I'm glad you have such an inquisitive approach to your trip, it makes things much more interesting.

### **WHOOPS A COW**

**Posted: September 6th, 2008**

I'm really sorry for not posting anything for a long time. When too many things happen all at once, you don't know where and how to start so eventually you do nothing. So I just wanna report that I am now safe in Delhi, India. For now it pretty much feels like walking around in "Shuk Hakarmel" except there are cows on the street. The amount of Israelis and Hebrew is about the same. I'm walking around in my "Jinbei" keeping the Japanese heritage, installing Chrome in Indian internet houses for the future of mankind. I have a final post in Japan lined up which I will write later. I wrote it in my iphone and I don't have it with me at the moment.



Tomorrow we will take a day trip for Agra, home of the Taj Mahal and next day start traveling towards the north.

Namaste!

## COMMENTS

### **Comment from Itamar**

**Time:** September 11, 2008, 5:10 am

well already commented on the picture so I will provide content by saying I eagerly await your final Japan post. here's hoping it contains an epic battle where you defeat your former master (who is now evil).

## JULEI!

### **Posted: September 17th, 2008**

This post will also be pretty short and contain no pictures. It's much harder when there is no free guest house internet and you are dependant on internet cafes (or just "places"), which are not everywhere and occasionally the power goes down. Not to say it isn't possible, but the traveling itself is tiresome enough.

From the time I wrote the first post I have been traveling with the intention of gradually decreasing the population of my destination.

From Delhi I took a 12 hour bus (I think) to a town up north called Manali. The bus was a heavily air-conditioned tourist bass with declining seats. It almost reminded me of the buses in Japan. It does not prepare you in any way for the actual local bus traveling in India.

Manali has the population of about 4,500 people. We drifted a little away from the "town" into a smaller village called "Vashisht". In Vashisht I equipped myself with the local fashion (though I still like to walk around in the Yukata). We also met an Israeli girl called Shir (academic oboe player) which is now traveling along with us.

Oh and our balcony had a view into the green mountains backed by snow capped mountains of the Himmalia. I rather not carry on describing it because it will only do it harm.

After a few days of shopping, jamming, walking and eating in Vashisht we grabbed a local bus from Manali to the “terminal” town of Spiti Valley called Kaza - population probably around 2000.

The local bus much resembles some kind of a “loona park” car ride, except it lasts 10 hours. At some points it’s fun, some points not so much. It’s also not the best thing to do when your stomach is in the process of figuring out the pile of new things which just landed on it.

As much as I wasn’t prepared for the jolly ride, I wasn’t as nearly prepared for the massive desert which is Spiti valley. Huge brown/yellow mountains in many unexplainable geometrical shapes. Kilometers of kilometers of desert terrain. Oh and still backed by snow capped Himalaya mountains.

After taking 2 days to get used to the height of Kaza and Spiti (~3600, about 800 meters higher than the top of Hermon and about the size of Fuji) we took a 2 hour local bus (this time I knew what’s coming) to an even smaller village called Mud (or Mudh) - population around 200 I estimate.

The stay at Mudh has definitely been the highlight of my Indian trip for now. First I forgot to mention that Spiti valley is mostly inhibited by Tibetan people (“Julei” is “Hello”). They are so cute! Maybe like a more



rugged and dark skinned version of Japanese cuteness. Life in Mudh is simple. It currently revolves around going to the field with the donkeys, getting grass and food for the animals to keep on the roofs and in store, because in December the snow starts and there is no going in and out until March. That's pretty much it. We help chasing the sheep out of the guest house so they don't eat our food, and also learn some cooking. The horses have daily walk to the fields and mountains. We sit on the roof and play and read a book. (I finished Murakami's After Dark, in good timing because the story happens between 0:00am to 6:00am in Tokyo, something I recently experienced). I play with the kids with sticks and stones and spoil their technological innocence by displaying my iphone. We take occasional 30 minute walks around the village which is enough because you don't have enough air for it anyway. (I'm also trying to go back to Karate and do Sanshin Kata every morning, I also did some practicing at Vashisht).

The heart of the fun was hanging out with Reika, the 21 year old "boss" of the guest house we stayed in (The employees are her sisters, father, mother, uncle and grandmother). I would describe her as Beautiful and Powerful. She really makes you want to stay for the winter. I really want to show pics but it's too much right now.

I will settle for uploading a pic I came up with for Ilan's birthday at Kaza. It will at least show you part of the view.

Durjeshe! ("Thank you" in Tibetan).

## COMMENTS

### **Comment from Fluffy**

**Time:** September 21, 2008, 2:55 am

Ah, well, now it's out in the open!

Durjeshe (thanks) and rakoshi (enjoy) again!

## **Comment from Maximillian Adventure**

**Time:** September 21, 2008, 8:45 am

Maximillian targets Rita, hoping to get a dance with her that will bring her under his control. Maximillian Adventure

### **PART I**

**Posted: September 28th, 2008**

For the first time in a long time, I have this feeling of space. I'm going to stay in one place for more than just the next day or two. Among with other sensations, this brings me the freedom of writing a long Blog post, plus the Internet here is cheap. I am now in Dharamsala, Argubely the most comfortable and worthwhile place in the sub-continent called India. But enough about now, let's begin reviewing.

Just when I thought i wouldn't have any more of those life threatening-but memorable experiences, I got one, straight on my left shoulder.



Shortly after posting the last post we took a bus from the Spiti valley town called Kaza, to a town called Tabo. The area is close to the border with China (Tibet) so you need to make a special permit in order to enter it, so they can "track" you. The permit mostly involves walking from place to place, having someone look at you and then signing your paper. I think that it's just a test to see how bad you really want to get there.

After making the permit we (Me, Roman, Shir and a group of 5 north Israeli girls who mystically join with us by chance wherever we go) started going to Tabo. The ride to Tabo was a "short" 3-4 hour local bus drive, by then I've gotten a little more accustomed to local bus

drives. I've begun experimenting with levels of food eating and water drinking before and while in the drive. The objective is to have just the right amount so you would be satisfied and nor your stomach or bladder would start hurting before the next stop. The stop thing is also a little complicated, because while the general Indian mentality is not being pressured or stressed by anything, they still prefer to make bus times and hurry up on stops. That, along with the fact that usually the bus driver and conductor (they are always a "team") aren't that strong on the English side, makes it hard to understand how long we have each stop and is it enough to pee (or more if you are not "balanced").

But enough about bus driving, we arrived at Tabo, first to find out that the room quality there is a big improvement over what we had the last week or so. They actually had electricity. and they could use it to heat water! We settled in a guest house called "Zion guest house" managed by some kind of an Indian, South American, European mutant. The manager, who calls himself "Angel" is a young fella, married with children to a German lady, runs many businesses, makes a lot of money and is heavily into Reggae. He also raps, usually about guest house stuff. Here is a piece of one of his works of art:

24 hour.

No toilet No shower.

Full Power.

I'm sure he had more but I'm belittled from copywriting his songs on my blog.

We settled in the room. Me Roman and Shir, it's been the usual arrangement for quite a while. We took a shower (bliss) and went upstairs to Angel's restaurant to get some food. The head chef was Angel. We followed the latest trend in Mud and stepped into the kitchen to help him make the food (that is, cut vegetables). I ate some kind of local Spiti dish consisted of some kind of pasta cooked in cream sauce

with dried salty yak cheese. Although it sounds delicious it actually wasn't quite good. He was better at doing Roman's Shakshuka.

After settling in I reviewed the available options of stuff to do in Tabo. One was the "Gompa", a Tibetan Buddhist temple; it was one of the biggest ones on Spiti. The other was apples. I have gotten recommendations in a previous place that the Apples grown in Tabo are something special. Of course Buddha can wait.

Ever since my visit to the Ghibli museum in Tokyo (Yes, I've just realized my whole Tokyo experience is untold, Tokyo is like New York, the experience is walking around and I was lazy on making notes) I've had this fantasy of carrying with me a sack of apples. The girls who goes on a "trek" in the museum exclusive movie, "Looking for a Home" deals with any obstacle, friend or foe by giving it a nice juicy red apple. She also eats the apples herself. That basically means that in life "all you need is love, and apples". I asked around the place and by a help of a guy from a place where I bought my now trusty Yak fur/Goat beard shawl I was lead to the big apple farm. We got to the hut of the farm keeper (which looked a little like the guy who always plays giants in movies), had to wait till he finished his meal, and then went for a walk around the trees to gather some apples. There were red ones and yellow ones (with a yellowish hue). They cost 40 Rupees a kilo (about 3.5



shekels) and they taste like heaven. I bought a sack and treated everyone.

I'm gonna stop now and do something I've never done until now. Publish the post and continue it later. I'm just so hungry. I'm gonna upload a picture of the apples and when the story continues I'll upload more pics.

To Be Continued.

## COMMENTS

### **Comment from Fluffy**

**Time:** September 29, 2008, 2:16 am

Funny thing, I've just started getting into apples myself. Since last week I hold a steady stock of yellow-red striped apples ("Gala") in my fridge. Better than candy!

## PART II

### **Posted: September 29th, 2008**

Arriving to Dharamsala provided a down side and an upside. The down side was I turned sick, the cold kind. nose, throat and everything. The up side was that if you had turn sick anywhere during a trip abroad, Dharamsala would be one of the best places to do it. So with the help of Ginger-Lemon-Honey tea, Thukpa soup and Reiki treatment I'm on my way to recovery.

Last thing I told about was the cheerfulness of apples in Tabo. I know that whoever reads Roman's blog already knows the rest of it, but I will shamelessly ignore that.

We went to sleep in Tabo knowing this is our last day and we leave towards a high village with a nice lake called Nako. There wasn't anything else to do in Tabo and the discovery that "Angel" is not quite of an "Angel", doesn't really believe in his marriage and likes touching foreign girls made the decision easy.

On the next day we woke up to the sound of rain.

On a normal country, other than the fact it is very rare and surprising for it to rain in the middle of September, there is not much to it. If India was a normal country I probably wouldn't have traveled there in the first place.

We were worried that the rain would cause troubles in the road, and therefore the bus will not come. I think that at that point I wasn't really thinking about landslides, just that the road could get



wet and slippery. I was also not thinking about the possibility that the rain will cause trouble but the bus will come anyway. But it did come and we were very happy. Until it stopped. In front of a huge boulder.

Not a moment of shock passed, and everyone was called "Cello Cello! let's go!" If India was a normal country you would think they would mean "come on let's go back!". But what they did mean was "Come one get off the bus and help us move those rocks!"

There was a huge boulder at the middle. The plan was clearing the left mountain side of the boulder and filling the rest with rocks, creating some sort of "ramp" for the bus to move on, magically hovering above all the chaos. It was raining and freezing, everyone was soaked. The girls hid under umbrellas



and under the bus itself. The boys (and yeah, me and Roman too) helped move the rocks. After maybe 10-15 minutes the bus driver decided it's good enough to try and went inside. As he turned on the engine the happy Indian music started playing and as everyone watched he drove fast and straight on to the ramp, just enough to get stuck right in the middle.

Once again everyone started moving rocks, trying to clear the bus's way. That's when the landslide started. What I remember was everyone running and me running

faster. Then looking at the place where the boulder is, seeing little rocks, big rocks and very big rocks slide down the mountain. But they don't really slide, they bounce and they bounce fast. I saw some rocks bouncing in a way that if anything other than chasm went by they way, they would smash it into bits for sure. Then the landslide quieted down and everyone went back to moving the rocks around.



It was even more freezing and raining harder. I joined the "weak" sitting under the bus until I felt guilty and got up to move a rock, then came back. As time moved on, various methods have been tried. Some people came from I dunno where with 2 long metal sticks which were used along with India's finest physicist bus drivers to try and move the boulder, with no success. A jack was used to lift the bus, to create rock filling below it. The Indian music started the bus tried to move a couple of more times, with no success.

Eventually, after a long series of failures, accompanied with small victories, people were finally able to move the boulder enough and

organize the rocks in a way which would allow the bus to move across it, greeted by cheers of the hypothermic crowd. We were all cheerful and happy, for about 5 minutes, where we stumbled another block, this time one that cannot be cleared.

It seemed like it only took 2 confusing minutes, for the entire contents of the bus, including the driver, to walk out, saying something about a village 7km away and leave us waiting inside



the bus. The company that remained inside the bus included Me, Roman, Shir, the 5 north Israeli girls and a very shocked Japanese dude called Koyama.

Koyama is a government officer. Koyama has to be back at work in 3 days. Combining these two facts and the fact it seems like it's not going to happen made Koyama very nervous. The words Seppuku and Karooshi started floating around the air of the deserted bus. Because Koyama was also typically not strong on the English side, I was immediately assigned as his translator and guardian. Of course I was happy to because it's a chance to slow down the forgetting of Japanese and maybe learn some new words.

Having huge bags made the option of walking 7km towards the next village pretty low on the priority scale. Basically we had 2 options:

1. Aside from us, there was another Jeep following the bus, of some Indian army infrastructure planner and his driver. The planner was pretty optimistic, he said a bulldozer is coming in 2-3 hours to clear the road for us for the next village. Being in India, everyone doubted that very much.

2. Apart from the 7km village, we were actually just near another really small village, which probably didn't have any guest houses or shops but was still a sign of hope.

Me and Roman decided to get out and check out that Village while the others wait for news or the Bulldozer. The road was filled with something which at first look like a mountain of black stones but then turned out to be a mountain of black stones and sinking mud. Needless to say we sunk in it to our knees. Eventually we crossed a bridge, walked a path and started climbing towards the village of Sumra (Just looking now at the Google map makes me feel absurd we were actually there). While we were climbing towards the village, the village people (about 5) gathered to look at us and shout and wave. We shouted and waved back. It was fun.

When we arrived at the village we were greeted by the village's only Semi-English speaker he led us to his brother's house and let us sit by the fire, serving us salty butter Tibetan tea. That was the first time I've tried this great tea and it's been my favorite since. A house in Sumra is basically a room with a tea making place at the center while at the sides there are shelves filled with tea cups and thermoses. The guy told us we are in Sumra and denied any way of getting anywhere. After realizing there is not much left to do, we asked the guy if we can buy a thermos full of tea



from him, to bring back to the bus. After saying his thermoses his brother's and from Tibet and are not for sale, he eventually led us to his own house (identical looking) where there was one thermos he was willing to give up. It wasn't very good looking and he wanted 800 Rupees but it was worth it. He filled the thermos with regular Chai, threw in some cookies with it and we went back.

The road back suddenly looked scarier than it was the other way around and every noise which sounded like rocks moving made us jump. But eventually we made it back to the bus and were praised as gods of tea by everyone who were freezing and seeing no sign of hope. Koyama was nervously grateful.

We only got around 10 minutes of joy which later turned into pure happiness when we actually saw a yellow bulldozer coming. The army guy couldn't be more pleased with himself. Along with the bulldozer the bus driver also came back, so we all got on the bus and drove for the nearest village called Hurling. Hurling had a guest house, A dhaba restaurant and some sheep.

To Be Continued.



## PART III

**Posted: October 6th, 2008**

Roman is gone and I have only 10 more days of traveling. The end is viewable. But that means I better post the rest of the story before I'm out of here!

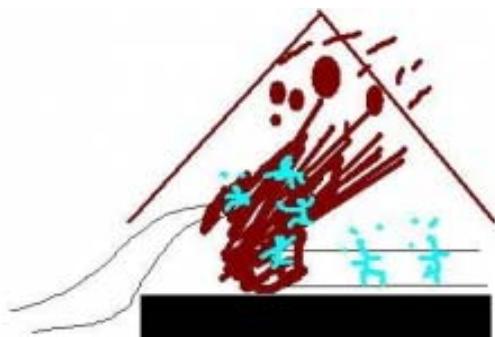
So we arrived at Hurling, which is actually a kind of government base for bulldozers or something like this. We entered the only guest house available and found out you had to go to the toilet outside in the rain. And there were no hot water. No toilet paper for sale either. Also there was only a big room for 4 people so we stayed me Roman, Shir and Koyama. We were hoping that we can get out of here to a more "touristic" place as soon as possible. On the bright side there was a Dhaba with pretty good rice, dals and paranthas.

We went to sleep, having nothing much to do and the next morning came down to check what the bus driver is up to. He's not going anywhere. This might be a good time to introduce our Indian bus conductor friend called "Little Little". We met him in Spiti valley. He offered us some local wine ("Little little"). He's also a very positive person. He will enthusiastically answer "Yas! Yas!" to any question you would ask him. That's why at first we kind of preferred to ask him if the bus is going today, but later on he just became annoying.

Realizing the road is blocked we passed the day by eating and playing chess and went to sleep hoping the bulldozers would do some work. I think we were also given a bit of hope from the bus driver and "Little Little". The next morning we even came down with the bags. "Nothing" - that's another phrase "Little Little" liked to say. We hung out at the Dhaba for a while until we met some guy who came walking from the nearest touristic village on the way to Nako (our path). He described to us that there is a block for about 5km, from there the road is open for 30km until 2km from Nako where there is another block until Nako. Being

fed up with the place we decided we will take this wook tomorrow morning.

Morning came and we got the bus driver to take us until the block. He dropped us off at some military check point and from there we started walking. The road didn't seem that hard. there were rocks and blocks which were indeed too big for a bus but not too hard for the foot and we cruised by them, until we came to this. Unfortunately because of "it" I didn't take a picture of "this" so instead I will try to illustrate it with paintbrush.



The mountain has just collapsed into a slanted pile of rocks in a degree which would make it hard to walk without a bag pack. and almost impossible with one. The black rectangle in the pic is the chasm. I was getting ready to start heading back when Smadar, the leader of the 5 girl pack went skipping up the block, dropping some stones in the middle and almost slipping, saying "it's not that hard". She made it to other side and after a few minutes of puzzlement the other 4 girls started to follow her. Roman also made a decision, left his Sitar behind and started climbing. I looked behind me and Shir was digesting the situation while Koyama was terrorized. I mentioned that I don't think I can pass this with my full-of-Japanese-stuff bag pack and in the mean time Roman was caught somewhere up on the block thinking about how he's gonna continue. I think that's when some rocks started falling. They were small but powerful and they made Koyama say he's going back. I almost said I'll go back with him but looking around it seemed that everyone were ready to climb and thinking about being stuck some more in Hurling didn't appeal to me so I asked Koyama if he wants to keep going with us and started removing the little bag from my big bag to make it easier.

Smadar was already at her third or fourth run of the thing and began doing it quickly so I just left my Sanshin and little bag and started climbing. Slowly, slowly I climbed, diverting the bag pack weight to the direction which is not the chasm, dropping some small rocks in the middle. I was already near the end of block, where it started declining into the following road, when I heard Smadar saying something about we better move fast, then I heard rocks falling. Then I felt rocks falling. I started moving more quickly and felt some small rocks dropping on me, I tried to deflate them with the arms. Then a bigger one hit me on the left shoulder. What happened then felt like my consciousness just swayed away and my body started to take matters into its own legs. As if he was saying "ok I'll handle this from this point". I practically ran across the block until the end of it leaving dust and falling rocks behind. After arriving at a safe point and regaining my consciousness back I noticed Koyama and Shir are also coming safe and sound. Smadar who was already mastering the block took the liberty of going on another run and bringing by Sanshin and small bag. I thanked her with the bit of consciousness I had left.

From there everything got better and better. We carried on for another kilometer and ran into a truck of government workers clearing the road. They gave us a lift to the nearest village where from there we took a jeep to Nako. In Nako there was the second block talked about, but that was just a hard climbing trek, nothing really dangerous. We passed through it (I think it reached over 4000km height) and from there got another small ride until Nako.

In Nako we arrived exactly at a Tibetan wedding. There were big celebrations and costumes and ceremonies and everything. At evening we were invited to the wedding, where we sat, ate and drank and listened through one of the weirdest and most boring wedding traditions ever. A guy sits and reads a list of all the people from all the villages around who gave money and presents for the wedding, reading how much everyone gave, while all the old ladies of the village listen and

gossip about it. Even the bride fell asleep. Then there was a dance party, which consisted of one song going on for hours (at least it sounded like that) and people circling around in a sort of "train" dance. carrying more gifts and money. They also had this traditional necklace made out of money. Bizarre, but interesting. They also had this buddhist ceremony where they take this dummy made out of wood and cloth and hay and stuff, symbolizing evil, and they throw it to the fire cheering.

I think I've told enough for now and there is not much more. I will leave you with some pictures.

Oh yeah Nako has a lake

### **Comment from Fluffy**

**Time:** October 6, 2008, 3:10 am

Are your parents reading this? Because if they are, you are probably grounded, young man.

ט"ו

### **אויירת סוף טויל**

**Posted: October 12th, 2008**

The end of the trip is being felt stronger and stronger, with loads of mixed feelings, but the general feeling is...damn good 😊

A week ago Roman left to meet his brother in Thailand, and I moved to spend the last week of my trip at a quieter, more scenic nearby village called Dharamkot.

I packed my stuff and walked up, choosing a nice guest house in the middle of the forest and without knowing, entered the room right across a Japanese girl I met in Tokyo! This is by far the biggest coincidence I've had this trip (The second one was meeting a British dude I met in Okinawa on a boat to Miya-Jima). When I was in Tokyo for Summer

Sonic, Ken-Chan, the dude that had me over showed me around town and took me to one of his favorite places in a neighborhood called Shimo-Kitazawa. It was a coffee shop/Spiritual book store hand built by a friend of his. Upstairs from the shop lived a girl who came down to talk to us. I told them I'm going to India and she told me she's going too in the end of September. Then I think the conversation was something like this:



her: Maybe we'll meet!

me: I doubt that, India is very big.

her: You never know!

And turns out you really never know. And some more crazy facts. She has a friend who works at the HR department of @% Square-enix! And he friend's husband is a musical director at Sqare-Enix! He was now on tour with their band in USA. You know which band that means? H.H Nobu Ueamatsu's band! And guess what the girl's name is - it's Nobu. Yikes.

Anyway, I spent the first part of this week just resting, doing karate and reading about Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance. Doing some shopping at eating good food (They actually have real Japanese food here!). The last couple days I joined a group of Israelis for some last minute nature trips. The first one to a hot spring/temple called Tatapani and the second one to a high (and very cold) place with good view called Triund. Yesterday on the way to Triund my camera selflessly killed herself from the inside, like telling me she is no longer needed. What she didn't think about was how much I paid for her and if the guarantee

applies. I actually think it applies but I will have to make that sure back home.

Tomorrow I'm going to see the golden temple at Amritsar and the next day start heading back. Supposed to arrive Natbag around 14:00 on October 16th, where I have to continue almost straight to Boris's wedding. 2 Weeks later school starts and I have to say I'm quite excited and I think it'll be great.

Sorry it's kind of a short post but it's really the end. I have some drafts and things to say which I will post from Israel. I leave you with the last picture of my camera.

....

.....

.....

Long live Ruby on Rails!

## LIVING IN A MOVIE

**Posted: October 14th, 2008**

I wrote a mini status mail to Roman and I figured I might as well write a mini status post.

Amritsar is a really good choice for the end of this trip. being here sure feels like living in a movie. It has a constant soundtrack of the Sikh prayers and music, it has amazing visual effects of the golden temple and the crowded Indian market and it just feels made up. But it's not, it's religion.

And best of all, it's all free! I'm staying in the temple's free dorm with some German people, a British couple that came with me on the bus, a Sikh wannabe French dude and a Korean dude who got his bank account closed by his family because he was supposed to go back 3 months ago.

And no Israelis! Which is somewhat relaxing. I'm Also eating free thalis (plus some really good sort of Amritsar special rice pudding) in a huge dining hall which is like one big religious soup kitchen for the masses.

Tomorrow at 5:30am is my train to New Delhi and next day 1:00am is my flight home.

No pictures because the iphone doesn't do them justice (I'm too spoiled). You will have to search for someone else's pics of the place, I'm sure they will be good. Just imagine me in the middle wearing an obligatory orange bandana.

..

.....

.....

I miss my bass guitar...and you.

Avner

## COMMENTS

### **Comment from Fluffy**

**Time:** October 16, 2008, 5:26 am

And now it seems like you will have to wait a whole extra day at the land of the Borats! Fun fun fun!

### **I'M STILL HERE!**

**Posted: October 14th, 2008**

It's been a hard day's night but I'm now at Rishikesh instead of Tel Aviv. I've already complained and told my story to many friends and family and basically any Indian which gave me a "Hello friend/sir" in the day that followed my original departure date, so I won't start telling everything again. Instead I will present the lessons learned:

1. **Always** Reconfirm your flights. **Even** If your airline/ticket policy does not mention anything about reconfirmation. Don't trust anyone to let you know if there was a change even if they have your details.
2. If your flight was canceled **The Airline Company** is responsible for you from the minute of the departure. They should arrange you accommodation, finance your stay and provide you an alternate flight. All this according to **Regulation (EC) No 261/2004** which is part of the Warsaw convention which all airlines must subscribe to. Remember to collect receipts!
3. If your Airline office is managed by an Uzbek called Atabaev and he refuses everything you say, don't sweat it. Even if his Indian workers tell you to be stiffer with him until he gives you. It's not worth it. This can be handled from home. Just accept the situation and get a new ticket. Buddhism at its best?
4. This may be just relevant to Uzbekistan Airways, but it seems that even if the Indian guys see on the computer that a flight is full, It may look different for the Israeli guys. (Uzbekistan Airways Israel: 03-5104685)

All in all, after everything, I've calmed down and am happy to extend my trip for 10 more days because it allows me to visit the town of Rishikesh and see the Ganges river. Rishikesh is all about Yoga, Meditation and staying in calm places called Ashrams which teach and do many singing and rituals. I on the other hand checked in to a Ganges sunset over viewing guest house and am continuing the practice of my Japanese heritage - Karate, Sanshin and Bushido. Maybe I was reinspired after meeting another Japanese girl on the bus. I have a nice riverside sandy spot under my balcony which allows me to practice Karate for the astonishment of the Indians nearby, and reading Bushido after educating myself more in philosophical studies (also finished reading 'Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance') it actually feels like I understand it much better now.

I believe practicing Karate is very similar to doing Yoga and Meditation except karate is also a martial art so it's practical not only on the spiritual level. Though I'm sure Yoga is also physically practical so I won't downsize it without actually knowing it.

Now Bushido, if I may be allowed to exaggerate, is I think what many people are looking for. It's a philosophical and moral way of life **which is not bound to any religion and is not preaching or religious in any way.** It is simply the study of the Japanese moral values which are affected from Buddhism, Shinto, the philosophy of Confucius, Mencius, Wang Yangming and actual experiences of moral conduct during war. It contains all the good values of justice, benevolence, honesty, duty, and self control without binding them to any religious phenomenon like Karma or Rebirth, which is maybe why Matan quit Tushita.

Too bad there is no school which teaches Bushido as it is, that's because other than the book by Inaze Nitobe, there is no official "credenda" of Bushido. You just have to go to Japan and experience it by yourself. I would still advise anyone to read the book. It was actually originally written in English because its purpose was to bring Japan and America closer, so it feels original. I was going to suggest it may be good business to translate and publish it in Israel but it seems that has been done already.

But enough about Japan, A feeling I've started having in Amritsar, after a while of traveling India alone, is that I'm just starting to really like India. I've adjusted to the food, the way of life, the traveling doesn't bother me anymore and I don't mind the beggars either and in fact generally enjoying the life in India. I was internally laughing at the India "newbie's" with me on the bus, who were horrified by the bumps on the road. I also know what stuff is best to order at Indian food restaurants and I enjoy just walking in the street and talking to the locals. All in all, I'm ready for more serious traveling in India.

But will have to wait for next time. My new flight is on the night of October 26th, with a delightful 7 hour wait at Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Expected to reach Israel around noon of the next day. In the mean time I'll spend the remaining time with my nice Ganges River, saving the floating dead bodies experience in Varanasi for next time. What I do plan to check out is the "Beatles Tour" so I can see the place where The Beatles stayed and wrote the White Album, which after listening to several times lately, I think is actually my favorite Beatles album. To anyone who doesn't know, the song "Sexy Sadie, you made a fool of everyone" is about the Maharishi who hosted the Ashram where the Beatles stayed, he made himself a saint but was actually a big hack.



Tata!

## COMMENTS

### **Comment from Fluffy**

**Time:** October 19, 2008, 8:29 pm

Maharishi, what have you done? You made a fool of everyone.

Only changed because George asked John nicely.

Ta ta!

### **Pingback from [Uzbekistan » I'm still here!](#)**

**Time:** October 21, 2008, 5:24 pm

[...] I'm still here! This may be just relevant to Uzbekistan Airways, but it seems that even if the Indian guys see on the computer that a flight is full, It may look different for the Israeli guys. (Uzbekistan Airways Israel: 03-5104685) ... [...]

## COMMENTS

### **Comment from Fluffy**

**Time:** October 19, 2008, 8:29 pm

Maharishi, what have you done? You made a fool of everyone.  
Only changed because George asked John nicely.

Ta ta!

**Pingback** from Uzbekistan » I'm still here!

**Time:** October 21, 2008, 5:24 pm

[...] I'm still here! This may be just relevant to Uzbekistan Airways, but it seems that even if the Indian guys see on the computer that a flight is full, It may look different for the Israeli guys. (Uzbekistan Airways Israel: 03-5104685) ... [...]

**Comment from Itamar**

**Time:** October 26, 2008, 9:17 pm

Hey avner, see you back in Israel, come visit me in my new apartment,  
I'll help you deal with the culture shock

**Comment from Itamar**

**Time:** October 27, 2008, 9:32 am

ד"א, בקשר לענייני הבושידו, עשינו עבודה השנה על 47 הרונין, דמויות

.סוף מסע