

= Thirty Minutes over Tokyo =

" Thirty Minutes Over Tokyo " is the twenty @-@ third episode and season finale of The Simpsons ' tenth season . It first aired on the Fox network in the United States on May 16 , 1999 . In the episode , after being robbed by Snake Jailbird , the Simpsons visit a money @-@ saving seminar , where they learn ways to limit their expenses . Soon , the family can afford a cheap last @-@ minute flight to another country , the only disadvantage being that they do not know where their plane tickets will bring them , which leads them to spend their vacation in Japan .

The episode was written by Donick Cary and Dan Greaney , while Jim Reardon served as director . It was one of the last episodes written in its production line , and its title is a reference to the war film 30 Seconds Over Tokyo . Several guest @-@ stars appeared in the episode , including George Takei as the host for The Happy Smile Super Challenge Family Wish Show . The episode mocks several aspects of the Japanese culture , including the perceived cruelty of Japanese game shows .

The episode was seen by approximately 8 million viewers in its original broadcast . In 2005 , the episode was first released on home video , and in 2007 , it was released as part of the tenth season DVD box set . Following the tenth season 's home video release , " Thirty Minutes over Tokyo " received mixed reviews from critics . Because of a scene in which the Emperor of Japan is thrown into a trunk filled with sumo thongs , the episode has never aired in Japan , as the scene was considered disrespectful .

= = Plot = =

The family , on Lisa 's suggestion , visits a cyber café named The Java Server . However , when Homer looks at his bank account online , he is cyber @-@ robbed by Snake , which saddens Marge because they were saving the money for their family vacation . When Ned Flanders catches Homer burgling his house to recover the lost money , he says that he got more for less by attending the Chuck Garabedian Mega @-@ Savings Seminar . After considering Ned 's advice , Homer steals Ned 's tickets (and his Jesus fish fridge magnet) , and the Simpsons attend the seminar , in which Chuck explains many money @-@ saving strategies . Later , in order to save money , the family goes to a 33 ¢ store where Homer eats a can of plankton which had expired two years before and contains red tide poisoning , as warned by ? the Mexican Council of Food . ? Then , when they snag mega @-@ saver tickets from the Flanders family at the airport , they decide to go to Tokyo .

The Simpsons arrive in Japan and , although Lisa wants to explore Japanese culture , Homer prompts the family to eat at an American @-@ themed restaurant named Americatown . Afterwards , Homer and Bart encounters Woody Allen , who is in Japan filming a commercial for rice crackers . Later on , Homer and Bart attend a sumo match . While there , Homer asks a sumo wrestler who is throwing salt for some of his pretzel , only for the wrestler to steal it . He and Bart knock him out , and the Emperor of Japan Akihito , comes to congratulate Homer . However , Homer thinks he is another wrestler and throws him into a dumpster of worn mawashi . As a result , he and Bart are put in jail , where they learn Japanese and explore its culture until Marge pays the bail . Consequently , the only money the family has left is a one @-@ million yen bill , which Lisa loses in the wind after Homer makes an origami crane from it (prompting him to say " D 'oh ! " in Japanese) .

Now broke , the family goes to the US Embassy , where the Ambassador suggests that they get jobs . They eventually find work in a fish @-@ gutting factory in Osaka , but are dissatisfied , except for Bart , who believes he has found his purpose in life . Then , they notice a TV game show called The Happy Smile Super Challenge Family Wish Show . They decide to appear on the show , telling the game 's Japanese host Wink that what they wish for is plane tickets back to Springfield , but to get them they have to go through physical torture (particularly Homer) . Eventually , the tickets are theirs , but they have to pick them up from a rickety bridge over an active volcano . Lisa is able to get the tickets , but the bridge breaks and the whole family falls into the volcano , which is actually only orangeade with lots of wasabi added . Homer scolds the Japanese for their lack of ethics , making them feel ashamed of themselves . The program 's sadistic policy does not change however , as they then show an arachnophobic Canadian couple being showered with scorpions . As the

Simpsons leave Japan , their plane is confronted by four giant monsters ? Godzilla , Mothra , Gamera and Rodan ? but Lisa goes to sleep and the monsters let the plane fly off on the journey back to Springfield .

A scene from Battling Seizure Robots is played throughout the end credits .

= = Production = =

The episode , which was originally titled " Fat Man and Little Boy " (which went on to be used for the name of a Season 16 episode) , was directed by Jim Reardon and written by Donick Cary and Dan Greaney . It was first broadcast on the Fox network in the United States on May 16 , 1999 . " Thirty Minutes Over Tokyo " was one of the last episodes produced for the series ' tenth season . Staff writers Cary and Greaney wrote the draft in a couple of days , and it was then rewritten " extensively " with The Simpsons ' writing staff . Originally , there would be a long scene about how Homer had bought a " pre @-@ Columbian vase " on the Internet , however the scene was ultimately cut from the episode . The episode 's title is a reference to the 1944 war film 30 Seconds Over Tokyo . Originally , the staff wanted the title to be " Twenty @-@ two Minutes Over Tokyo " , since an episode of The Simpsons is approximately twenty @-@ two minutes long , but they eventually changed it to its current rendition because it ? sounds closer to ? the title of the film it references . According to Cary , the writers did a lot of research in order to accurately depict the Japanese language for the episode . For example , the three categories in The Happy Smile Super Challenge Family Wish Show are written in Japanese .

In the scene at the seminar , a character closely resembling the mascot of Hasbro 's Monopoly can be seen sitting next to Mr. Burns . Because the design is slightly different from the real @-@ life mascot , the Simpsons staff did not have to pay Hasbro for using their character in the episode . The design of Homer in a Jamaican attire was very popular among the staff , and Mike Scully , the showrunner for the episode , called the design " great " . A scene in the episode shows Homer buying a square watermelon , which turns out to be round and slips out of his hands . In the background , cars are driving on the left side of the street . Originally , the animators had drawn the cars driving on the right side . However , Tomi Yamaguchi , a Simpsons layout artist at the time , pointed out that cars in fact drive on the left side of the street in Japan . Because of this , the animators had to redraw the whole scene , and Yamaguchi received a technical advisor credit for the episode . The speech that Homer gives to the audience in The Happy Smile Super Challenge Family Wish Show was originally much longer , and would partially involve kitchenettes from Broyhill . The design of the male Canadian in the game show was based on Canadian Simpsons director Neil Affleck .

The cartoon version of The Simpsons ' theme song that plays at the end of the episode was conceived by composer Alf Clausen . Chuck Garabedian , the speaker at the seminar , was portrayed by series regular voice actor Hank Azaria , who plays Moe Szyslak among other characters . The Japanese waiter in Americatown was played by American actor Gedde Watanabe . Wink , the host for the The Happy Smile Super Challenge Family Wish Show , was portrayed by George Takei . Takei has appeared on The Simpsons several times before , and he is , according to Scully , one of the staff 's favorite guest @-@ stars . The episode also features the voices of Tress MacNeille , Denice Kumagai as Japanese mother , Karen Maruyama as Japanese stewardess , Keone Young as the sumo wrestler , Karl Wiedergott as Mr. Monopoly and Woody Allen as himself .

= = Themes and cultural references = =

In his book Gilligan Unbound , American literary critic Paul Cantor described how " Thirty Minutes Over Tokyo " references and mocks several aspects of Japanese and American culture , as well as differences between the two . At a sumo wrestling match , Bart and Homer encounter the Japanese emperor , Akihito . After Homer throws him into a trunk of sumo thongs , Bart and Homer are put in jail , where they have to re @-@ enact a kabuki play about the forty @-@ seven Ronin , do origami , flower arranging and meditation . After Marge bails them out , Bart and Homer can speak fluent

Japanese , and have fully absorbed , as Cantor writes , the " exclusionary " character of the Japanese culture , as Homer asks Bart (in Japanese , with English subtitles) : " Should we tell them [Marge and Lisa] the secret to inner peace ? " , to which Bart replies (still in Japanese) , " No , they are foreign devils . " The episode also references the Japanese 's adaption to American culture , and is , according to Cantor , " filled " with signs of how eagerly Japanese have taken to American culture . In one scene , the Simpsons eat at a restaurant called Americatown , filled with US memorabilia and having only American items on the menu . Another scene shows director Woody Allen filming a commercial for Japanese television .

In order to get back to the United States , the Simpsons have to enter a humiliating game show called The Happy Smile Super Challenge Family Wish Show . According to Cantor , this is where the family find a difference between Japanese and American culture , as Wink , the game @-@ show host , explains to them : " Our game shows are a little different from yours . Your shows reward knowledge . We punish ignorance . " The game show is partly based on the Japanese show Za Gaman , as well as the British show Family Fortunes . As with many other episodes in the series , " Thirty Minutes Over Tokyo " suggests that , in the end , the Simpsons are more attached to the local than to the global , and , as Cantor writes : " indeed the global is ultimately important in the series only insofar as it can be made local , that is , part of Springfield . For all its cosmopolitanism , the show keeps returning to the American theme of ' there 's no place like home ' " .

The computers seen in the internet cafe that the Simpsons visit in the beginning of the episode are based on the Apple iMac computers . In a scene inside Flanders ' kitchen , a note which reads " 1 COR 6 : 9 @-@ 11 " can be seen . This refers to the Bible , First Corinthian , chapter 6 , verses 9 to 11 : " Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God ? Do not be deceived : neither the sexually immoral , nor idolaters , nor adulterers , nor men who practice homosexuality , nor thieves , nor the greedy , nor drunkards , nor revilers , nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God . And such were some of you . But you were washed , you were sanctified , you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God . " The cups in the 33 cent store read That 70 's Show , a reference which Danny Masterson , one of the lead actors in That 70 's Show , was entertained by , according to Scully . Battling Seizure Robots , the seizure @-@ inducing television show that the Simpsons watch in their hotel room , is based on an episode of Pokémon , called " Denn? Senshi Porygon " , which caused several hundred children to develop epileptic seizures . According to Scully , the staff received " several angry letters " from people for the scene . After the cartoon , an advertisement for Mr. Sparkle , a character that first appeared in the season 8 episode " In Marge We Trust " , can be seen on the television screen . Barney , while impersonating Homer , says " That boy ain 't right " , a line frequently used by Hank Hill , the main character of the animated television series King of the Hill . The giant monsters attacking at the end of the episode are Godzilla , Gamera , Rodan and Mothra , all of which are famous from Japanese monster movies . The scene was included as a reference to the 1998 action science fiction film Godzilla , in which three of the main The Simpsons cast members (Azaria , Cartwright and Shearer) had a live @-@ action role .

= = Release and reception = =

In its original American broadcast on May 16 , 1999 , " Thirty Minutes Over Tokyo " received an 8 @.@ 0 rating , according to Nielsen Media Research , translating to approximately 8 million viewers . On May 23 , 2005 , the episode was released along with the season 12 episode " Simpson Safari " , the season 13 episode " Blame It on Lisa " and the season 15 episode " The Regina Monologues " , as part of a DVD set called The Simpsons ? Around The World In 80 D 'Oh 's . On August 7 , 2007 , the episode was again released as part of The Simpsons ? The Complete Tenth Season DVD box set . Matt Groening , Mike Scully , Donick Cary , George Meyer , Ron Hauge , Matt Selman and Jim Reardon participated in the DVD 's audio commentary of the episode .

The authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , gave the episode a positive review , and wrote that it was " A magnificent end to the season . " They wrote that the episode was " thoroughly racist " but "

completely inoffensive because it 's simply very funny . " Jake MacNeill of Digital Entertainment News was also favourable , considering it to be one of the better episodes of the season . James Plath of DVD Town wrote that the episode has " some funny moments . " Aaron Roxby of Collider was more critical , denouncing the episode 's dated references . He wrote : " I am going to go ahead and give this one the benefit of the doubt and assume that making fun of Japanese junk culture and game shows felt fresher in 1999 than it does do now . " Colin Jacobson of DVD Movie Guide called the episode " mediocre " . He wrote that , though the episode 's concept should " open up lots of interesting possibilities " , it " doesn ' t explore them particularly well " . While he did not consider it to be a bad episode , he thought it " fail [ed] to live up to its potential " .

= = = Banning in Japan = = =

Although all other episodes of The Simpsons have been dubbed and broadcast on Japanese television , " Thirty Minutes Over Tokyo " has never aired in Japan . The reasoning behind this was that a scene in the episode , which shows Homer throwing Akihito , the current emperor of Japan , into a box filled with sumo thongs , was considered disrespectful . There was also a rumor that Sanrio objected to the portrayal of the Hello Kitty factory featured briefly in the episode . The episode has become study material for sociology courses at University of California Berkeley , where it is used to " examine issues of the production and reception of cultural objects , in this case , a satirical cartoon show " , and to figure out what it is " trying to tell audiences about aspects primarily of American society , and , to a lesser extent , about other societies " . Some questions asked in the courses include :

- ? What aspects of American society are being addressed in the episode ?
- ? What aspects of them are used to make the points ?
- ? How is the satire conveyed : through language ? drawing ? music ?
- ? Is the behavior of each character consistent with his / her character as developed over the years ?
- ? Can we identify elements of the historical / political context that the writers are satirizing ?
- ? What is the difference between satire and parody ?