

## Happy landings - at last

22 Feb 2010 by Jancis Robinson

Further to my trailed pilgrimage east in [I'm awfff](#), Nick and I did not get off to the greatest of starts on our two-week trip around the world. Our plane to Tokyo flirted with take off for five long hours, with substitute planes and cabin crews constantly mooted. But thanks to BA's flight attendants' agreeing to work a much-extended shift, we did finally get to Narita, very safe and sound, in time for the bullet train to Kyoto, from which we saw Mt Fuji, lightly dusted in snow, in the twilight.

What we missed was a tour of some of the ancient imperial capital's 2,000 temples, which was a huge shame, but we had come here with two of our children 10 years ago, which was some consolation.

We were, at least, (just) in time for dinner in the splendid Tawarayaya ryokan (traditional Japanese guesthouse) - although it was all a bit of a dash to wash and work out how to swathe our bodies in which bits of Japanese fabric in time for an 11-course meal at a low table on tatami mats. To my shame I suffered occasional pins and needles, but walloped some delicious and beautiful dishes, including a cube of lily root in creamy miso sauce, and some decorative heads of bracken, looking like miniature shepherd's crooks.

All washed down with Japan's indigenous Koshu grape, fermented of course. I am here to discover more about it and by the time you read this will be in Yamanashi prefecture, where 95% of it is grown.

We slept on the floor too, in beds made up while we ate, and looked out on to our very own carefully sculpted garden.

UK blackberries still don't work in Japan so I had to wait until early the following morning to cater to my online addiction, via a discreet ADSL cable that snaked out of one of the bamboo cabinets - strictly on demand as this is hardly part of Japan's extraordinarily ancient traditions.

I'm hoping for minimal emails over the next two weeks...