

LIVING

Tokyo's Skytree tower, simply awesome

TOKYO, Japan:
FROM THE outside, the Tokyo Skytree tower in Japan stands almost isolated.

At 634 metres, it is the world's tallest radio transmission tower dwarfing some of its contemporaries – the 600-metre tower in Canton, China, the CN Tower in Toronto, Canada (553 metres), and even the world-famous Eiffel Tower (324 metres) in Paris, France.

At its highest point, the outside air temperature is 5 degrees Celsius. The tower was built after high-rise construction negatively affected the transmission of radio and television waves across the city, and opened in 2012.

On the day I visited as a part of a group of journalists, wide sheets of slow moving wispy clouds seemed to hug the area around the tower.

Regardless, by the time we had got to the 450 meter mark up the tower, the view below was still spectacular.

Tokyo lay below us like tiny pieces of a jigsaw puzzle or a miniature toy town set and we were in awe.

To make up for the grey outlook, we were given a treat; fitted with 3-D visors, we were given a virtual tour - a chance to experience being 'outside' alongside a professional window cleaner as he worked on the large windows, connected by safety pulleys and cables.

The oohs and aahs kept coming as the our 'partner', washed and wiped his way across the large windows, and yes, we all gripped our seats, holding on for dear life.

But safety is literally at the heart of the Skytree design. Representatives say the tower was built to withstand even a large earthquake measuring over 5.0 magnitude on the Richter scale, to the extent that persons are asked



Photo by Amitabh Sharma

View of Tokyo from Tembo Deck on 350th floor of Tokyo Sky Tree.

to stay inside instead of evacuating should there be an earthquake.

"If there is an earthquake, it could be one of the safest places in the world to be when that happens," Megumi Onuma, the chief publications officer of the Tobu Corporation, which built the structure at a cost of more than 1.4 billion yen.

Skytree was designed incorporating a special thick steel column which runs through the centre of the structure up to 400 metres all connected to specially designed

triangular beams attached to its concrete walls.

The triangular beams and centre column absorb the energy of the force during a quake, and while it will sway, the measure prevents the building from crumbling under its own weight. Onuma says the technology allows Skytree to reduce the effects of a quake by almost 50 per cent. Today, it remains one of the country's premier tourist attractions, drawing more than four million visitors annually for what is truly an awesome experience.



What's your view? Let us hear from you. Email: theweeklygleaner@gleaneruk.com

Glenda Anderson
Gleaner Reporter

KYOTO, Japan:
PERHAPS IF I hadn't stumbled into Tokyo, Japan, a little after 4:00 p.m. bleary-eyed and dazed from a 13-hour journey from Dallas, Texas USA, I would have never discovered one of the country's delightful little powerhouse of a meal.

Yes, I had eaten my way across the Pacific Ocean (you know things are going to be special when you are given hot towels midair to clean up before a meal). But still when I landed at Narita International, I needed two things; a warm beverage and a bed to fall into.

I found the bed first, a wide flat number looking something like a double and single pushed together, just high enough from the floor not to hurt yourself should you fall off. Perfect.

The warm I found last, literally, at the end of my meal. I spotted the cauldron first and thought, oh great! Soup. I love soups. I charged

Discovering the simple joys of miso soup

over, filled her up, settled and was pleasantly surprised.

Miso soup, a thin, mild flavored broth is very popular as a breakfast item, and its ingredients I'm told are staples of Japanese kitchens. Miso itself is a paste made from fermented soy beans, rice koji (cooked rice mixed with a mold to speed up the fermentation), salt, rice and barley.

It varies from a whitish color to dark brown, depending on how long it has been aged. A cook can add a variety of ingredients, and most often it will include cubed tofu (a firm, mild soybean product) and seaweed.

Delicate, almost like a tea. But it also has a nuanced richness, savory from the miso paste and the traditional Japanese dashi, a complex flavored broth. And yes, you may drink straight from the bowl.

Miso soup will vary as you work your way across Japan. In Tokyo, miso soup tends to be a darker variety. Here in historic Kyoto, Japan's ancient capital, culinary tradition dictates that miso is of the whitish variety.

If done the traditional way, miso paste is made in a two-ton handmade cedar barrel with the cooked ingredients left to ferment and cure

under one ton of rocks, which folklore says not even hurricanes can shift.

Today, though, you don't need to have access to a ton of rocks to enjoy miso soup. It's available as a freeze-dried product, or in a packet in powdered form. Add-ons such as seaweed, freeze-dried tofu squares, and others ingredients are also included in these

convenient formats. And in either case, just add hot water.

Although miso is central to Japanese life and is served as a daily item no matter the meal, its history is that is of Chinese, brought to Japan by Buddhist monks.

Since it is made from rice, it was originally considered a luxury item and only

Photo by Floyd K. Takeuchi/Waka Photos
Miso soup with wakame (seaweed) and diced tofu and vegetables; and green tea.



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Enjoy Trelawny's Bunkers Hill Xperience

DESPITE A myriad challenges, culture and history remain an integral part of life in Bunkers Hill, Trelawny, thanks to the Bunkers Hill Cultural Xperience, an entity devoted to keeping the history alive and exploiting its tourism potential.

The five-acre property, which houses the Bunkers Hill Cultural Xperience, is a peaceful, lush green surrounding, which is enhanced by the colourful trees and shrubbery, near the Tangle River.

The property, which is jointly managed by the husband and wife team of O'Brian and Clover Gordon, was opened in July.

"We are here to uplift the community, and we want everybody to see the vision so they can jump on board," said Clover. "We strongly believe that Bunkers Hill can be one of the best community tourist attractions in Jamaica."

The history on display comprises several bamboo and thatched structures, similar to the dwellings of the Taino natives, who lived in the area centuries ago. There are also several small caves at the site, which were used by the Tainos and later by the Maroons. Part of the experience is a guided tour to the neighbouring ruins of the former Dromilly Great House.

Despite challenges such as the bad roads leading into the community, the Gordons are completely focused on making the attraction, which offer Jamaica food and drinks, a beautiful waterfall, wedding facilities, and a botanical garden, among other attractions, a success.

One of the objectives of the operators is to forge a partnership with the residents of Bunkers Hill and the surrounding communities to ensure that they, too, can enjoy some of the benefits.

"Ninety per cent of the food and other



Kadeem Petgrave (forefront) and Simier Lansend (far right) at Bunker's Hill, Trelawny, with Boston College students.



The Falls at Two Hills is situated a few minutes from Bunkers Hill, Trelawny.

products that we use on the property come from the community," said Gordon.

"We see this as a social enterprise, and we want the community to have a say in what we do here. All the staff members that we employ are from Bunkers Hill, Dromilly, and surrounding areas."