

## Day 12 (Wednesday, 10/01/08) Miyako, Japan

The weather today started out overcast with temperatures in the low 60s. We were cruising into the harbor of Miyako about 7am. Here is where we were located in Japan and in the Miyako Harbor. The Google Earth photo of Miyako Harbor is capable



of high resolution, sufficient to make the writing on the blue roof of building next to the Amsterdam readable.

The ship was easing toward the dock when we stepped out on deck. We were instantly met with the pungent odor of newly cut wood. Orlin was reminded of boyhood days in Medford, Oregon where harvesting timber was one of the main industries and local sawmills had that same aroma. The dock where we were located was covered with great piles of neatly stacked logs. Local dignitaries and two drum bands from local schools had assembled on the pier to greet



the Amsterdam. These photos show our greeters and the piles of logs in the background.

The drum music was traditional Japanese, played with gusto along with many variations in rhythm and much flourishing of drum sticks. The mayor gave a speech which extolled the local tourist and fishing economy but curiously did not mention the timber

industry which obviously surrounded him there on the dock. The listening Amsterdam passengers clapped enthusiastically from the decks to show our appreciation of the effort that the people of Miyako had put into the welcoming ceremony.

As can be seen in the picture above, buses were waiting to take us on tours around Miyako. At 9:30 we headed for our tour called "Highlights of Miyako". On the way to the bus we snapped a close-up picture of the logs stacked on the pier. We were fascinated by the straightness and nearly perfect round cross section of the approximately 1 foot diameter logs. A car wheel is shown in the foreground for some perspective on size.



Our tour guide's name was My-Uni and she was assisted by a very neatly uniformed young lady as well as the Amsterdam staff person who was assigned as a guide assistant on this tour. My-Uni filled us in on information about Miyako. Of particular interest was the fact that all the logs we saw piled on the dock were imported from Siberia. The logs are destined to be turned into wood pulp for use in making paper. Apparently the paper mill was located elsewhere because the usual rotten egg smell of a paper mill was not detectible in Miyako. Our friend, Ray, pointed out later that the huge supply of logs stacked on the dock may be the result of a global business slowdown and reduced need for paper. They were certainly not practicing "Just in time" inventory control in this operation.

Our first stop on the tour was the local Jodogahama Beach which had been touted as the most beautiful beach in Japan, "as beautiful as paradise". Indeed the beach is beautiful and accented by the large rocks off-shore with clinging windswept pine trees.







Seaweed drifted in the water near the beach and some of it had been spread out to dry in the sun. The Japanese people relish seaweed as food but none of us Western types were sampling this banquet spread before us.



An example of how carefully the Japanese care for the trees and other plants was provided by the strong bracing they had



put in place to support the beautiful old pine trees at Jodogahama Beach.

We boarded the bus and headed for another scenic spot along the coast where the rocky coast has been sculptured by the sea over eons of time into beautiful shapes. Here is an example of what we saw.





On the way back to Miyako we passed through a small village and Barbara couldn't resist taking a photo of a spinning barber's pole standing outside this small barber shop. We hadn't seen one of these for many years.



The metal roof on this building is pretty typical. We were surprised when we learned that northern Japan gets several feet of snow each year. It is the wet heavy variety and can be a hazard to pedestrians when it slides off the roofs onto the sidewalks. This roof doesn't have them but most have vertical metal protrusions near the eaves that keep the snow from sliding off and it melts on the roof or is shoveled off.

After a stop at a typical food market the bus headed back to the ship. On the way back our guide had her young uniformed assistant sing a traditional Japanese folk song to us. Then the guide led us through some songs that used common Japanese words of greeting set to the tune of Happy Birthday. It was a valiant effort to get us familiar with the language and with enough practice like this we might eventually become understandable to the Japanese we meet. The tour ended and we returned to the ship in mid afternoon.

We had considered walking the 1 or 2 miles into the town of Miyako but clouds were threatening rain so we opted to remain on the ship. About 4:30pm all the passengers had returned to the Amsterdam and the crew was preparing the ship to get underway for Kobe, Japan.

As a light sprinkle of rain fell, an amazing thing happened. A collection of adults and children armed with umbrellas gathered at the temporary barriers to wave goodbye to us. There was also a band with an impressive set of drums that they played enthusiastically for us as the ship glided slowly away from the dock. The spontaneous appearance of





local citizens and the drum band playing in the rain was the most friendly departing gesture offered by a host city that we have observed. The passengers lining the rails and the Japanese onlookers waved as the ship's whistle gave a mighty blast of the horn to complete the departure festivities.