Curiosities and facts about Japan

The annual meeting of International DAN (DAN America, DAN Europe, DAN Japan, DAN Southern Africa, DAN S. E. Asia Pacific) in 2012 was held in Tokyo at the School of Medicine and Dentistry of the local University, headquarters of DAN Japan.

The mission that DAN has brought to an international level has aroused great interest on the part of the Japanese media. In this photo: Professor Alessandro Marroni, President of International DAN, is interviewed by a Japanese television station.

Ronal Nishi, famous for his work with DCIEM tables, was among the DAN Japan guests.

Things of Interest in Japan

The food

For the Japanese, the sense of sight is the first of the senses that comes into play at the table. Every plate must fulfill precise rules of harmony and grace; juxtapositions of colours and forms that are complementary and balanced. Even the takeaway is a real work of art!

For diners not used to using chopsticks (hashi), eating chicken wings can become an arduous task!

Make sure you use the chopsticks the right way! They are not used to cut nor, by any means, to spear pieces of food. Poking the hashi in your dish is considered one of the worst possible blunders at the table.

In traditional restaurants in areas outside of the city, you can find fascinating grill-cooking, where each person at the table, kneeling and equipped with heat-protective gloves, cooks the food (meat, fish, tofu, corn and vegetables) him/herself.

The tatami

Tourists from the West may be surprised when entering a reserved room at a traditional hotel. There are no beds; only a small, low table and chairs with no legs. In fact a tatami, a type of mat kept in the wardrobe, is unrolled on the floor right before going to bed. A rather “hard” experience, but worth trying!

Shoes are taken off at the door when entering a room. One walks on mats with slippers or a typical style of socks.

The toilets

Japanese toilets are fantastic and very high-tech. The toilet seat is always nicely heated. The buttons located on the side offer the user various possibilities like turning on relaxing music, or playing natural sounds like birds whistling or running water; the purpose being to cover up the “other sounds.” It's even possible to project pretty images. To finish things up, when tending to personal hygiene, one can push a button and stream of warm water shoots out to wash the private areas.

The Fuji-San

Considered the most beautiful volcano in the world, the image of Fuji-San is found everywhere in Japan. The last major eruption was in 1707. In ancient times it was revered as sacred, and women were forbidden to visit it until 1868. Every year in July and August, the season of ascending the mountain, over 250,000 pilgrims of all ages reach the peak. The climb takes five to seven hours. For millions of people the ascent

to Mount Fuji is something to do at least once in one's life, even if an old Japanese expression says, “everyone climbs Mount Fuji at least once, but only the crazy ones come back.”

The masks

One thing that most strikes tourists from the West is the number of Japanese with their faces covered by masks; used to prevent the spread of viral illnesses, like the common cold. Also, the Japanese do not blow their nose in public because the practice is considered very improper, thus the mask makes it possible to hide the bothersome dripping from one's nose.

Christmas

Even though Christianity is not widespread, the Japanese really like Christmas, mostly for the decorations and its consumerist spirit. Christmas trees are already put up during the first few days of November and are exhibited in hotels and shopping malls.

The dives

Dive centres in Japan are very well organized. The centres closest to Tokyo (about 100 km. away) are found on the Izu Peninsula, can be easily reached from the capital by means of high speed train *(Shinkansen)*, such as the so-called “bullet train.” Here, the weather conditions for diving are excellent in every season.

The price of two dives is around 19.000¥ (about 160€). This includes the trip by boat, the air tanks and weights, one meal, the dive guide, and transport from the station.

The only problem can be the language because the majority of Japanese only speak their native tongue. The pre-dive debriefing may require a translator. Many of the translators who work in the dive centres are women (according to certain sources, 90% of Japanese divers are female).