

The Japanese have seen what had to be done and done it.

Now it is America that is in trouble and that needs to regain competitiveness. Other nations can help with technology, capital, market-opening and more, but there is a limit to how much impact such outside help can have. The stimulation of Japanese domestic demand will not in itself result in a new influx of American products into the Japanese market.

As Karatsu argues, the root of the problem is that America no longer cares about manufacturing. It is time to start caring again, and Karatsu's blunt talk—refreshingly free of the cant and circumlocution that characterizes so many official pronouncements—may well be the kick in the pants some people need.

Frederick M. Uleman
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is picturesque indeed. Around this charming park are located many of the historical sites of Nara.

The Nara period was probably one of the most international eras in Japanese history. Buddhism, having become the state religion some time previously, flourished during this period, as did sericulture, weaving, metal-casting, brewing, and writing and literature—all of which had been brought over from the Asian mainland or Korea and Japanized in earlier times.

Present-day Nara City and Nara Prefecture are treasure houses of the art work of this period. The Shosoin is a repository for more than 9,000 articles, many of which were used by Emperor Shomu, who reigned from 724 to 749. These treasures include many items from Greece, the Byzantine Empire, Persia, India, Tang China and Korea, silent witnesses to the international flavor of ancient Nara.

Pagoda's reflection

There could be no better place to see first than Kofukuji Temple. At the height of its prosperity it had more than 175 buildings. Unfortunately few of these remain today. The five-story pagoda, actually reconstructed in 1426, is the second-highest in the country and a famous national treasure.

There are two ways to view this pagoda, either by looking at it directly, or by viewing its reflection in Sarusawa pond, a short walk to the south of the pagoda. The pond contains hundreds of turtles released there by devout Buddhists. Also in the precincts of the temple is the Treasure House which has on display the majority of the Buddhist images in the possession of the temple and masterpieces from other periods of Japanese history as well.

Todaiji is actually a whole complex of buildings within the extensive grounds of the Todaiji Temple, but it is known primarily for its main hall, which houses a statue of Buddha. The hall, the largest wooden building in the world, was built by the order of Emperor Shomu and completed in 752. According to records kept by the temple, 50,000 carpenters, 370,000 metal workers and 2,180,000 laborers worked on its construction and furnishing.

An undertaking which, not surprisingly, brought the nation to the brink of bankruptcy.

The original wooden structure has burned down and been rebuilt a number of times, and the current building (about 280 years old but reroofed only a few years ago) is only two-thirds the size of the original. Some people say that is why the Nara Daibutsu (Great Buddha of Nara), one of the largest statues of Buddha in the world, looks a little cramped inside its present home. Cramped or not, however, the 16.2 meter high figure is large enough to hold 17 men in the palm of its hand.

Nara is a treasure-trove for the history lover. The Shosoin is a repository which holds items such as jewels, musical instruments, writing materials and clothing which date back over a thousand years. Many of these objects belonged to Emperor Shomu and were donated to Todaiji by his consort on his death. These objects are usually on view when they are aired in October or November. Nara National Museum is noted for its collection of Buddhist art objects, primarily images and altar articles. The main building dates from the Meiji era (1868–1912) and

Outside Tokyo

Nara: Historic Treasure House

A 35-minute ride on the modern Kintetsu Railway will take you from the hustle and bustle of Osaka back in time over a thousand years to the relative quiet of Nara, Japan's capital from 710 to 784. Like Kyoto, it was not bombed during the war and manages to preserve much of the charm of prewar Japan—narrow winding streets, low wooden houses—with a generally slower pace than either Kyoto or Osaka.

When you emerge from Kintetsu Nara Station you will find yourself at the side of a wide street which will take you to nearby Nara deer park. The park is actually a large wooded area in the center of the city where the deer are allowed to roam freely. The sight of these deer standing about in twos and threes under ancient pine trees





has been designated an important cultural property.

One of the most beautiful places in Nara is Kasuga Shrine, which consists of four vermilion-painted shrine buildings situated in the midst of a small forest. Few shrines can claim to be both so peaceful and exotic at the same time. The main building has hundreds of lanterns hanging from its eaves. There is also a tree (*yadorigi*) to which six different plants were grafted: wisteria, camellia, nandin, cherry, maple and elder. Of the original six, however, the last two have died.

The main (southern) approach to the shrine is lined with 3,000 stone lanterns which were donated by believers and are lit twice a year, in February and August.

In addition, annual festivals are held on March 13 and on December 16 and 17 which include a long procession of armor-clad warriors and other participants dressed in ancient costume.

Deer and lanterns

Deer and lanterns are the twin attractions of Nara. More than 1,000 deer inhabit the park, shrines and temples. Regardless of the historical significance of Nara's relics, it is the deer which make the most lasting impression on most visitors. Vendors sell *shika-sembei* (deer crackers) for a modest price and the deer are trained to show their gratitude to anyone who offers to feed them. Hold up the *sembei* just above the deer's nose

and it will bow its head and then take the cracker. These well-mannered deer are considered to be divine messengers and a festival is held every October when their antlers are ceremonially cut.

After feeding the deer, you will be able to seek refuge in the lovely garden of Isuien. No matter what the season there is always something wonderful to see. The paths are laid out so that the visitor crosses a pond and passes several small pavilions. The main building, a former residence, is open to the public, and a bowl of ceremonial tea and a Japanese-style cake can be enjoyed in one of the larger rooms overlooking the main part of the pond.

From this room you can get a beautiful

view of Wakakusa-yama (Wakakusa Hill) and the Great Southern Gate of Todaiji Temple. The hill is covered with grass which is burned once a year on January 15 in order to rid the area of insects which might descend on the temples and wreak havoc on the treasures stored therein.

Another place from which to view 1,000 years of history is the outdoor beer hall (open May–September) on the roof of the Kintetsu Nara Station building. From this vantage point you can get a superb view of the mountains, temples, ponds and gardens of Nara spread out at your feet.

What to buy: India Ink, calligraphy

brushes, fans and *narazuke* pickles are famous local products.

How to get there: Take the Kintetsu Railway's *tokkyu* (limited express) or express service from Osaka (30 minutes) or Kyoto (35 minutes).

Where to stay: Unique but pricey (the late Emperor Showa and dowager empress once stayed here)—the Nara Hotel—tel. (0742) 26-3300. This hotel maintains the style of typical Japanese architecture of the Meiji era—a combination of European and Japanese styles.

Some temples within the city of Nara offer accommodation for tourists: Shin-

Yakushiji (0742) 22-3736; Gangoji Gokuraku-bo (0742) 23-1377. Inside Nara Park: Aoba-chaya (0742) 22-2917.

Where to eat: Harishin (0742) 22-2669.

For more information: The Nara Tourist Information Center [(0742) 24-4858] is located on the ground floor of the Kintetsu Nara Station building. The staff there speak some English and will be happy to provide you with English-language maps and other information.

Cathy and Peter Duppenhaler
Long-time residents of Nara engaged
in English-language education

Table Talk

Korean Barbecue Ryugetsu-en

Japanese sports journalism has a short attention span, and while only a few months ago everything was Seoul, Seoul, Seoul, now interest centers on the still distant Barcelona Olympics.

Yet while the Seoul fever of the summer of 1988 has subsided, some things will never be the same again. These are Japan's deepening interest in its neighbor South Korea, long described as a country "so near, and yet so far," and expanding Japan-South Korea relations across many fields. Korean consumer electrical appliances, audio equipment and clothing are everywhere in the life of the new Japanese common man. Such Korean dishes as *kimchi* and *kalbi* barbecue have become perennial items on supermarket shelves and the dinner table. As Korean restrictions on overseas travel are lifted, more and more Korean tourists will visit Japan, further enriching exchange between the two countries.

Yakiniku-ya, the Japanese name for Korean barbecue eateries, has been around a long time. In the old days, however, the word evoked images of cheap,

greasy drinking establishments far from the lively city center.

Now this is all changing. Korean barbecue houses calling themselves by the upscale term "*yakiniku* restaurant" have burgeoned around modern office districts and fashionable city centers. One of these neat and stylish establishments is "Korean Barbecue Ryugetsu-en." Although doing business in Tokyo's Yotsuya district for 20 years, in April 1988 it suddenly changed course and opened a new branch in the heart of the city.

According to Shim Hyang Sook, Ryugetsu-en's 33-year-old owner, her cooks flavor their dishes to suit the Japanese palate or preserve Korean tastes in creating original tastes of their own. A frequent recommendation is *dolsouk-bibimbub*—mixed vegetables and rice boiled in a stone jar for ¥1,500. A novel offering is *samgetang*, an imperial court delicacy costing ¥3,000. Ginseng, dates, garlic and glutinous rice are stuffed in a young chicken, flavored with salt and pepper dressing, and stewed for five hours over a slow fire. The flavors of the different ingredients meld into one. It is tender, mellow and elegant. There are also two set dinner courses at ¥5,000 and ¥7,000 per person, including tax.

Lunch time, 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., brings a range of barbecue sets starting at ¥900 and going up to ¥1,700. Then there is the special lunch for ¥2,500, *kalbi-kuppa* soup with *kimchi* for ¥800 and *bibimbub* with *kimchi* and soup for ¥650.

Ryugetsu-en fronts on the street running along and below the elevated JR railway tracks between Yurakucho and Shimbashi stations. It is a confluence of the office, entertainment and shopping districts in the area, lined with moderately priced Japanese, Western and Chinese restaurants and coffee shops. If you are staying at the Imperial Hotel and are weary of business lunches and reception food, take a stroll down this street. Only a 2–3 minute walk could bring you an exciting eating experience.

Korean travelers annoyed by the high price of food in Japan might also want to stop by at Ryugetsu-en for a course on how their native dishes have been rearranged to meet Japanese tastes.

(Yoshimichi Hori, editor-in-chief)

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