

## Mount Nokogiri Offers Spectacular Views of Tokyo Bay and Beyond

The Boso Peninsula loops around one side of Tokyo Bay, as if to protect Tokyo from the choppy waters of the Pacific. In the fall and winter months, when the air is dry and clear, or just after a strong wind has cleaned the sky, this peninsula can be seen from the high-rise office buildings in the center of the capital.

Near the tip of Boso Peninsula rises Mount Nokogiri, so-called because its jagged ridge really does resemble the teeth of a saw—or *nokogiri* in Japanese. The 329.5-meter peak, the most well-known mountain in the region, is famous for its unusually steep cliffs, which have brought forth breathtaking cries from tourists for a long time.

The easiest way to reach Mount Nokogiri is by taking the JR Uchibo Line southward around the bay side of Boso Peninsula. But for a fine fall day, with the autumn foliage at its most colorful, let me suggest a slightly different route: Take a short cruise by ferry across Tokyo Bay and then climb the hillside by ropeway. This ideal course enables you to fully enjoy spectacular views of Kanto.

From Shinagawa Station a train ride of about one hour on the JR Yokosuka or Keihin-Kyuko lines brings you to Kurihama, situated on the eastern side of Miura Peninsula, which faces Boso Peninsula across Tokyo Bay. The bus journey from the station to the ferry terminus takes about 10 minutes. The ter-

minus is about 300 meters from the site where Commodore Matthew C. Perry, leader of a squadron of four "black ships," came ashore in July 1853 to deliver a letter from the American president to the shogunate.

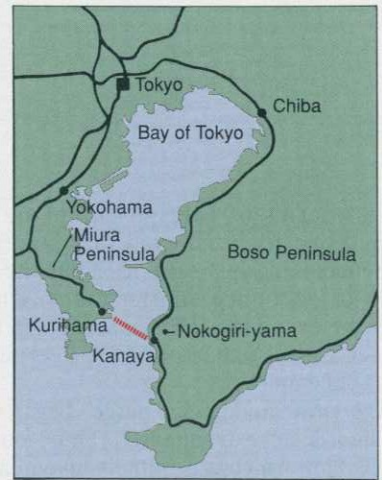
The three cross-bay ferries, which include the 2,932-ton Kanaya Maru, leave at intervals of about 40 minutes from 6:30 a.m. to about 7:00 p.m.; the one-way fare is ¥490 for adults and ¥250 for children. (From the end of November to the end of January only two ferries make the journey, and less frequently.) The 35-minute cruise takes you across Uraga Channel, one of the busiest sea lanes in Japan. Making its way past tankers and cargo ships of all sizes plying across the bay, the ferry finally arrives at the port of Kanaya at the verdant foot of Mount Nokogiri.

Looking up at Mount Nokogiri from the pier at Kanaya, you can see the gray stone surface near the top, the perpendicular cliffs, and the pillar-like rocks that show you immediately that this mountain once served as a huge quarry.

About 10 minutes on foot from the pier is the ropeway station. The ropeway journey is just four minutes, and the one-way fare is ¥380. If you prefer walking, there is also a hiking course. The 300-meter steep trek is not recommended during the sticky season, but a leisurely climb that takes in the autumn foliage might be a good idea. On a clear fall day, the view from the observatory at the ropeway station on top of the mountain takes in Tokyo Bay below, the hills of Boso Peninsula, Miura Peninsula, Izu Peninsula, Mount Fuji, the Kanto Plain, and, if you are lucky, the hills of Chichibu in the distance. In other words, Mount Nokogiri provides a

spectacular view of the whole of the Kanto region. Even if you forget to take a camera, be sure not to leave your binoculars behind.

Originally the southern side of Mount Nokogiri served as the vast grounds of Nihonji Temple,



the admission is ¥500 for adults. Established in 725 by Emperor Shomu (reigned 724 to 749), Nihonji Temple is thought to be the oldest temple in Kanto built in accordance with imperial command for the purpose of worshiping the state and the emperor. The temple was a grand complex in the past, with seven main halls, 12 smaller buildings, and 10 residences for priests. After the suppression of Buddhism in the Shinto-Buddhist conflict that began in 1868 and a destructive fire in 1939. All that remains today is a temporary main hall.

One of the spectacles of Mount Nokogiri is its concrete statue of the Great Buddha, sitting in a square just down from the top of the mountain. Completed in June 1969 after an original image, erected in 1783, had been devastated by the elements, the statue actually boasts of being the biggest in Japan. While the total height of the Nara Buddha is 18.18 meters and of the Kamakura Buddha 13.35 meters, the Great Buddha on Mount Nokogiri rises a whopping 31.05 meters.

Without a doubt, however, the most thrilling of the mountain's spectacles is Ruriko Observatory, known familiarly as Jigoku Nozoki, or Glimpse of Hell, from where it is possible to look down directly over a sheer perpendicular cliff created by quarry work in the past. The sight is sure to send shivers up your spine. It is definitely not recommended for anyone with a fear of heights.

Quarrying for the foundation stones of houses first began on this tuffaceous mountain in about 1850. In the mid-1860s the quarry work moved from the lower half of the mountain to the upper half to extract better-quality stone that was more resistant to fire and water. Organized quarrying began in the late 19th century, when industrial modernization became a national policy. At the time 80% of the population of the



Above: A view from the top of Mt. Nokogiri toward Tokyo Bay and beyond. Right: The biggest Daibutsu statue in Japan, with a total height of 31.05 meters.





Kanaya district was engaged in the stone industry. After the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, however, demand switched from stone to cement, and the stone industry suffered a rapid decline. After World War II quarrying continued scantily, for example to provide materi-

als for bread ovens, but then it died out completely in 1983. Now it is only the visiting tourists to Mount Nokogiri who echo the shouts of the people who worked there in the past.

To return, you can retrace your footsteps and take the ferry back to

Kurihama, or you can head for Hama-Kanaya Station on the JR Uchibo Line and hop on a train heading northward to Tokyo via Chiba. That way you can say that you have been all the way round Tokyo Bay.

*Misu Ritsuko*

## TABLE TALK

### Tex-Mex Restaurant Zapata



When speaking of ethnic food, one is apt to think of Asia. Yet the word, which originally has the meaning of "nation," also embodies the nuance of an indigenous food culture taking root in a new country as a result of immigration to that country—a phenomenon common to today's advanced countries.

In Japan, ethnic food is merely understood as an exotic foreign cuisine. This is not the case in America. Home to an estimated 7.5 million Mexican residents, Mexican restaurants sporting Spanish name signs can be found everywhere. It is therefore not hard to see why restaurants providing Tex-Mex cuisine have attracted so much attention in America today.

Tex-Mex, a name with a very pleasant ring, also gives a vibrant, lively feeling. Mixing spicy-flavored Mexican cuisine (Mex) with Texan, characterized by a simple grilled, very large portion of meat and fish, the restaurant seems to cater their meals

to New Yorkers. Although in New York there are over 50 Tex-Mex style restaurants, in Japan, such restaurants are still very much a rarity. Perhaps Zapata, which is located in the trendy area of Harajuku, is one among the very few. This restaurant, which has a technical tie up with El Rio Grande—a popular restaurant with a very stable business in New York in spite of the keen competition—is where you can enjoy real Tex-Mex food.

In terms of the characteristics of Tex-Mex food, it is, above everything, very natural and healthy, something that has much to do with the effective use of ingredients. The basics include chili tomatoes. Among others are also salsa, which is blended with lots of herbs, and tortillas, which are kneaded from corn or white flour and fried after the dough is stretched in a circular shape. As for dishes to go with tortillas, the variety is as great as for Italian pastas. The names also change accordingly. In addition, spices such as cumin, coriander and green jalapeños also play a big role in spicing up the meat, fish and vegetable dishes. What's more, the food is arranged in a very sophisticated French fashion, offering a pleasurable sight.

When you arrive at your seat, the first thing you want to do is to let a frozen Margarita gently wake up your taste buds. If you went straight to tequila, you run the risk of getting drunk before having the chance to savor the food. For a snack, an order of guacamole would be good (¥600). Another suggestion is fried tortillas with creamy avocado, a sure way to prompt your appetite. For an appetizer, I recommend the mixed tacos—four kinds

of fillings with tortilla chips (¥1,200)—and the gratin enchiladas baked in tomato sauce. I suggest you adjust the spiciness to your taste by adding chili tomato sauce, green chili sauce and sour cream accordingly.

Made from generous portions of fresh meat and fish, although all of the main dishes are wonderful, a rather unusual dish is the Mole Poblano, a grilled chicken with spicy chocolate sauce (¥1,800). This sweet, spicy sauce unique to Mexican cuisine is mixed with chicken. Cazuela de Mariscos, a mild dish with all kinds of seafood, caters to the first-timer. Naturally Zapata has a variety of Mexican beer, tequila and wine that go perfectly with the food.

The interior of the restaurant has an international image distinct to the New York consciousness. Painted on the ceiling of the waiting bar is a gothic-style painting. The walls and the interior are unified in earth colors, and the lighting is soft, giving the diner a very relaxed feeling enabling one to enjoy the sophistication of New York without being there. For those who claim to enjoy trying new things, I definitely recommend this restaurant.

*Hori Yoshimichi*  
Editor-in-chief

Zapata  
Ebina Bldg. B-1  
6-18-10 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku Tokyo  
Tel.: (03) 3499-5888  
Hours: 12 noon to 2:00 p.m. (four courses available, ¥1,000 to ¥3,500); 6:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. (two courses available, ¥4,000 & ¥5,000); every day  
Wine: ¥3,500 to ¥9,000

