

Outside Tokyo

Escape Tokyo by Bike

Few people who come to crowded and fast-paced Tokyo, even for a short visit, will fail to get that "squeezed-in" feeling at least once. The feeling is natural, and the remedy is escape. Luckily, cures abound, thanks to Japan's well-developed public transportation system and a generous number of pleasant (and comparatively uncrowded) places just a few hours away. Unfortunately, riding crowded trains to equally crowded resorts does not an escape make.

For anyone who can ride a bike, cycling away from Tokyo may just be the sort of detached and invigorating activity needed to expand into wholeness again. It's very inexpensive, an excellent way to see ordinary Japanese life and good exercise, too. But best of all, you can go at your own pace.

Getting started . . .

The very first thing to do is buy a bicycle if you don't have one already. Unless you're really big by any standards, it isn't too hard to find a bicycle that fits you. A well-set-up sports model with 10 or 12 speeds can be had for between ¥50,000 and ¥65,000 (\$300-360 at the rate of ¥165/\$). Only the most hardheaded won't also spring ¥6,000 for a quality helmet. (Get one of today's new light hard-shell models, and make sure the dealer fits it for you.)

And plan on another ¥6,000 for all the necessary extras: a light (in case you get caught out after dark), a lock (a light chain or cable is adequate for Japan) and a handlebar bag to hold them along with your camera, map, snacks and other odds and ends. Padded cycling gloves and hard-soled cycling shoes are also a good idea if you're going the distance. (Believe it or not, an old pair of dress shoes is better for cycling than a new pair of cushy jogging shoes.) Also pack a light-weight foldable raincoat because of the chance of rain, which is lowest in late winter and early spring.

Quality bicycles at low prices can be found in several Tokyo shops, including Hara's (Azabu-Shirogane, 441-5910), Chivrac (Ochanomizu, 255-8530), Narushima Friend (Sendagaya, 405-9615), Asahi Shokai (Setagaya, 428-4276) and Spica (Shibuya, 462-2546). If you don't speak Japanese, plan on going with someone who does, or going through the motions of sign language.

It may seem like you've put out a lot of money by the time you're ready to roll, but keep in mind you would have spent as much for two or three "resort" weekends, with little left to show.



Warming up in town . . .

Places in Tokyo to cycle safely away from snarling traffic are few. The roads that circle the Imperial Palace are for bicycles only on Sunday mornings. Komazawa Park in Setagaya Ward has a short cycling course that runs through the park (watch out for joggers and dogs). And there are cycling trails along the Ara River on the east side of Tokyo, along the Tama River on the south side and along one of the upper reaches of the Kanda River that burbles from Suginami Ward to the west all the way to the edge of Inokashira Park near Kichijoji. But for those who really want to stretch out, it's best to leave Tokyo.

The best way out . . .

With Tokyo surrounded by more of the same, there's no easy way out. Some riders prefer disassembling their bikes into large carry bags and heading out by train to wider spaces. But for those not so mechanically inclined, the ferries that ply Tokyo Bay are the carefree alternative.

The Boso Peninsula

Opposite Tokyo Bay is the Boso Peninsula, which makes up the southern part of Chiba Prefecture. Away from the coastal areas, it's surprisingly pastoral. The terrain is ideal, with roads that meander around and over gently rolling hills, and poke in and out of the occasional tunnel. Since there are so many small roads, get a map of the prefecture and study it well a few days before setting out. Don't shy away from a map in Japanese; even if you don't understand the characters, you can recognize and match them to the road signs you'll encounter.

To get there, ride an hour south from Tokyo to Kawasaki, go left and ride out to the ferry ter-

minal onto the ferry that crosses the bay to Kisarazu on the north of the peninsula. The uneventful cruise takes 70 minutes, and is great for napping, poring over your map or eating an early lunch if you got a late start. The first ferry from Kawasaki leaves at 6:30 a.m., and the last one to leave Kisarazu sails at 8 p.m., with departures on both sides about twice an hour. One-way fare (with bicycle) is ¥1,300. For more information, phone Nippon Car Ferry at 563-3911.

From Kisarazu, head inland a few kilometers and wander on small two-lane roads that angle through hills and rice fields. It's best to head back toward the Kisarazu ferry a little early so you'll have plenty of time to get home before dark. If you miss the last ferry, plan on further adventure.

People in Yokohama and points south may prefer to cycle over to the ferry landing in Kurihama and take the 35-minute cruise over to Kanaya, a small port near the mouth of Tokyo Bay. From Kanaya, ride north along the coast highway to Kazusa-Minato and turn right to head inland, or ride south to Hoda and turn left. The ferry from Kurihama across the bay to Kanaya leaves about once an hour starting at 6:20 a.m., with the last one departing at 7:20 p.m. The one-way fare with bicycle is ¥730. Phone Tokyo-wan Ferry at 272-1641 for more details.

If you leave early enough, the Boso Peninsula can be easily enjoyed on a day ride, although spending the night in a *minshuku* or small hotel on the coast is a great way to make a weekend out of it. Hardier riders may want to cross through the middle of the peninsula and stay on the Pacific Ocean side, where there are plenty of places to stay from Onjuku to Tateyama and all points in between.

Remember also that Boso is usually several

degrees warmer than central Tokyo in the winter, and several degrees cooler in the summer. With map in hand, planning your own course gives you the thrill of discovery. And unless the traffic on the coast highway is light, you're likely to enjoy the small inland roads more.

The Izu Islands . . .

If you have time for an overnighter, the Izu Islands that run in a line south out of Tokyo offer a special cycling environment. Unlike anywhere else near Tokyo, they are never overrun by cars and trucks on weekends.

Two of the islands are especially good for cycling: Miyake-jima and Hachijo-jima. Small ships to these two islands leave Hinode Pier near Hamamatsu station in Tokyo at 10:10 most nights, arriving at Miyake-jima at 5:10 a.m. and Hachijo-jima at 8:30 a.m.

Get there about 30 minutes early so you'll have time to go through the line and fill out the little form and get your passage squared away. Once aboard, you can rent a blanket for a few hundred yen and sprawl with all the other passengers on huge hard carpets for the duration of the voyage. Or for about double the economy fare, you can get a smaller, quieter room with your own space on a nicer floor. Tokai Kisen Company runs these lines; call them at 432-4551 for further information.

Miyake-jima has beautiful roads and isn't very hilly. Lush and green, Miyake-jima is a very verdant island with an almost tropical feeling. It's a world-famous bird sanctuary, so bring your binoculars. A single highway circles the island, with a long steep grade up to the volcanic crater at the top.

Warmer, more open and distinctly subtropical, Hachijo-jima is enjoyable for all riders. There are two distinct courses, each running around the island's two main mountains, Mihara-yama and the Hachijo-Fuji, so named because it's shaped like Mt. Fuji. The course around the base of Hachijo-Fuji is almost flat, with good views of the ocean and the offshore island of Kojima. Riding around clockwise is a good choice because you'll usually have a tail wind.

Most of the riding around Mihara-yama is fairly protected from the wind, with fewer views of the sea but with lots of long hills. The views are much more picturesque. Riding around clockwise is recommended, stopping at the vista point just before the first summit. There are many places to stay in the main town area where the two courses meet, but the south end of the island has a hot spring, many *minshuku* and much more of the island flavor.

Oshima, the largest of the Izu Islands, has been another good place for riding. But in the wake of recent volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and total evacuation of island residents, a relaxing weekend of cycling there depends on the condition of the island by the time you read this.

Finally . . .

Keep in mind that rain is almost always a possibility, so be prepared with an extra pair of

socks and a lightweight raincoat with hood. You will never be too far from a store, so you can always buy what you may end up needing. Chances are you won't. Keep your bag light, and don't get too prepared so as not to ruin that spontaneous "escape" feeling.

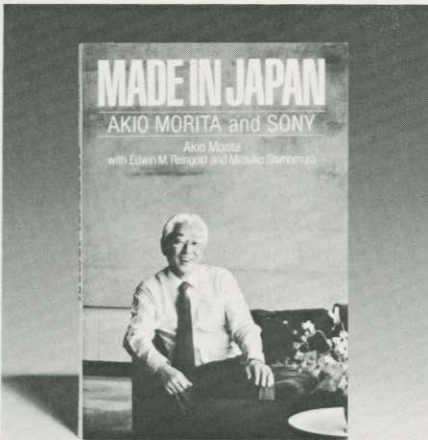
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Bookshelf

Made in Japan: Akio Morita and Sony

By Akio Morita, with Edwin M. Reingold and Mitsuko Shimomura
Published by E.P. Dutton
1986, New York
309 pages; \$18.95



Akio Morita and Sony Corp. are perhaps two of the most important reasons for the sterling reputation worldwide of Japanese consumer electronics products. *Made in Japan* is Morita's story of his life at Sony, the company he helped found. But it is also a record of Japan's come-from-behind domination of a multibillion dollar industry. For that reason alone it deserves to be read.

The words "Made in Japan" at one time evoked only derision. These same words now command respect—and often envy. Japanese companies were quick to appreciate the competitive advantage of zero-defect manufacturing. Now their goods are second to none in quality and, depending on one's point of view, in innovation. Indeed, only a Japanese company like Sony dares to advertise its products with a slogan as simple as "It's a Sony."

Innovation—Japanese innovation—is a major theme in *Made in Japan*. Despite the undeniable success of Sony, with sales of around \$7 billion a year, Western critics are quick to discount Sony's and other firms' achieve-

ments in the marketplace because of alleged underachievement in the laboratory. Yet Sony, by any standard, is a remarkably innovative company. Sony's developmental work on a Bell Labs discovery, the transistor, led to the transistor radio. A onetime Sony engineer went on to win a Nobel Prize based on his discovery, while at Sony, of the electron tunneling effect.

But in Morita's view, the key issue is not the revolutionary idea itself. Rather, "the important thing is how you are going to interpret that idea in your industry." Morita's account of Sony's many successful ventures in new markets makes for fascinating reading and gives *Made in Japan* its focus. But there are some blurry parts to the story. The great risks entailed by Sony, the new kid on the block, rushing into untried markets, are given brief treatment.

Sony did indeed ignite the demand for VCRs with its Betamax video recorder, and other companies, most notably Matsushita, followed Sony into the market—but with a different format VCR called VHS. Sony has since fought a losing battle against the VHS manufacturers. It is unclear if Sony will in the end be forced to exit the market it created. Sony is counterattacking with still another video technology—8 mm. To preempt a repeat of the VHS-Beta struggle, Sony has worked to arrange an industrywide standard format for 8 mm. This raises a key question, one that should have been addressed in the book: Why was Sony unable or unwilling to have Beta recognized as a standard? Does this reflect a weakness in Sony's ability to forge strategic alliances?

There are other areas as well where Morita gives us little information. This brevity is due to the perhaps too ambitious scope of the book. Morita has combined in one thin volume his autobiography, Sony's corporate history, a commentary on U.S.-Japan relations and an overview of the problems facing world trade. The account of Sony's early days is an area where more detail would be welcomed.

However, Morita's comments on the shortcomings of U.S. business and the erosion of American manufacturing are crisp and on target, though they will be familiar reading to trade observers. He indicts American companies for turning into mere distribution networks for imported goods, or "hollow corporations." He points out that Japanese companies, including Sony, produce electronic products in the U.S. that U.S. companies, allegedly for cost reasons, now have to produce offshore. If Japanese companies can manufacture in the U.S., so can American firms. To Morita, it is a matter of managerial will, and his criticisms are hard to refute.

On international trade, Morita's most forceful plea is for a global system to control exchange rates. The world's financiers manipulate the money markets to such a degree that the industrialists can no longer make informed decisions. Painfully wrought cost reductions are nullified overnight by currency swings. As for