Live, Work & Travel MHCHZINE

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JOBS - MUSIC + VISAS - NEWS - FREIGHT - SPORT

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Free every Monday Intenline.co.uk 2-8 March / Issue 1331

EDITOR'S LETTER

quick, because from April 1 they'll need it again. Anyone who had plans to get a Ther I visa (formerly the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme visa) had better be I'm afraid the Home Office has been at

considerable skills that many In the current economic Aussies, Kiwis and Saffas bring to the UK economy aren't as important as political nationalism. climate, it seems the

changes will affect you. Enjoy the mag.





on a murder mystery break Whodunnit? Find out

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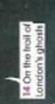
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a Master's degree.

magazine to find how the on page 42 of this week's Check out the story OUNT MAKES (KEN)

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Hongu Taisha shrine

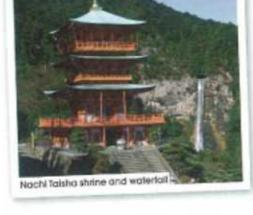
Osaka by high-speed train. Journeying down Kii Peninsula's coastline was wildly pretty: canopies of emerald forest jutted into black sandy bays fringed by a cobalt-blue ocean.

The grand shrines were striking. I first visited Hongu Taisha: a 9th-century shrine rebuilt after a flood in 1891. Its immense 34m red-lacquered torii (gate) can be seen kilometres away and draws coach-loads of Japanese visitors. The beat of a thunderous drum, clouds of incense, and the clanging of bells rung by devotees before an open-fronted hall with a trimmed bark roof

cc I sensed the awe pilgrims would have experienced "

created a frisson of excitement. The shrine priests were almost as colourful as the shrine, clad in mint-green and white robes with black-lacquered clogs and hats that resembled fruit pastilles.

For my first few days I walked a few shorter sections of the Kumano Kodo and invariably followed the paths with ubiquitous ensens where I could stop for a dip along the way. The



River Kawayu onsen was quite superb. The river bubbles with luxurious warm water and bathers dig small shallows in the gravel to enjoy a very public bath.

I wandered down to the river in the yukata robe I had borrowed from a nearby local ryokan (inn), where I had stayed in a traditional Japanese room with a futon mattress spread across straw tatami floor mats.

After my soak, I sampled kaiseki ryori. These intricately prepared meals are worth the splurge. The individual dishes are sculpted works of art: from delicate raw fish and miso

JAPAN'S GREAT OUTDOORS

DIVE OKINAWA

Subtrapical seas of Japan's southernmost Ryukyu archipelago make for great diving. Snorkelling and sea-kayaking (pictured left) are also highly recommended.

SHIMANAMI SEA CYCLE

A bizarre yet fun cycling route takes bikers

CLIMB MOUNT FUJI

Scaling Mount Fuji (3776m) can only be undertaken between late July-late August. Organised two-day summit trips stort from



\$120. See hisexperience.jp.



SHINTO IN A NUTSHELL

To outsiders, Japanese Shintoism is shrouded in mystery because if bears little resemblance to organised religions we're used to.

Shintoism pre-dates Buddhism in Japan (which arrived around AD550) by many centuries. It has no single all-powerful god. Just thousands of local deities inspired by

Moughly ironstated, animo medra way o the gods". It reveres natural objects, believi anything from trees to rocks possesses a spiritual nature

When visiting a typical Shinto shrine you' pass through the forligate, which represent crossing into the realm of the gods. Plignins wash their mouths and hands in a fountain before entering. Worshippers then stop before open-faced halls, ring a bell to wake the spi bow twice, drop money into an affertory bo and clap several times before withdrawing the inevitable photo. Some purchase a sma wooden tablet, an ema, and write a wish to bring good fortune.

soup to tempura prawns and beef boiled in a sesame sauce. Food had never tasted better.

This prepared me perfectly for a full day's hike between the grand shrines of Hongu to Nachi. We began at 5am for a 12-hour journey on one of the Kumano Kodo's toughest sections known locally as Nakahechi. Breaking dewy cobwebs across the trail, Brad and I hiked up mountainsides thickly forested with maples, camphor trees and leviathan cypresses strung with lichen trailing like old men's beards. The drums of Hongu drifted on the wind.

There were lots of ancient reminders of the trail's halcyon days. We passed oji (small shrines dedicated to forest deities), poetryinscribed pillars, and dilapidated teahouses that once revived weary pilgrims. It was hard going. An ascent up ancient stone steps beyond Koguchi village made me breathless; the slippery descent afterwards left my knees begging for mercy.



magnificent Kumano Nachi Taisha shrine ju before dark, I sensed something of the awe generations of pilgrims would have experier on their arrival.

Nachi is not only a Shinto shrine but is als located besides a magnificent Buddhist temp in which (after a night's sleep at the monaste lodgings) we attended a morning ceremony given by lime green-robed monks.

The temple was inspired by the nearby Nachi Waterfall, which at 133m is Japan's highest. Yamabushi, explained Brad, immers themselves in its freezing waters for purifical But for me, nirvana represented a hot onsen. bath and a delicious temple meal.



NEXT WEEK: SCUBA-DIVING Make a splash off Cuba's Caribbean co



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