

Ogi, the small town on the southern coast of Sado, is famous for its taraibune, "tub boats," which are shown in almost every picture you see of the island.

starts and before school children begin to swarm to the same beaches that are, currently, quite pleasantly deserted. The main point is if you like to camp out and truly enjoy lovely scenery, go to Sado Island when the weather is warm and you can exile yourself from the daily grind, at least for a while.

PRACTICALITIES

The Sado Island Tourism Board puts out an excellent English brochure on Sado, which includes a list of sights, tourist and tour information, and detailed listings on how to get there. A price list for rentals and taxis, and maps of how to reach the ferry or jetfoil ports are included. The Tourist Information Center in front of Niigata station has information available. The TIC in Yurakucho has a pamphlet on Niigata and Sado Island that contains useful information on how to get there, what to see, and where to stay.



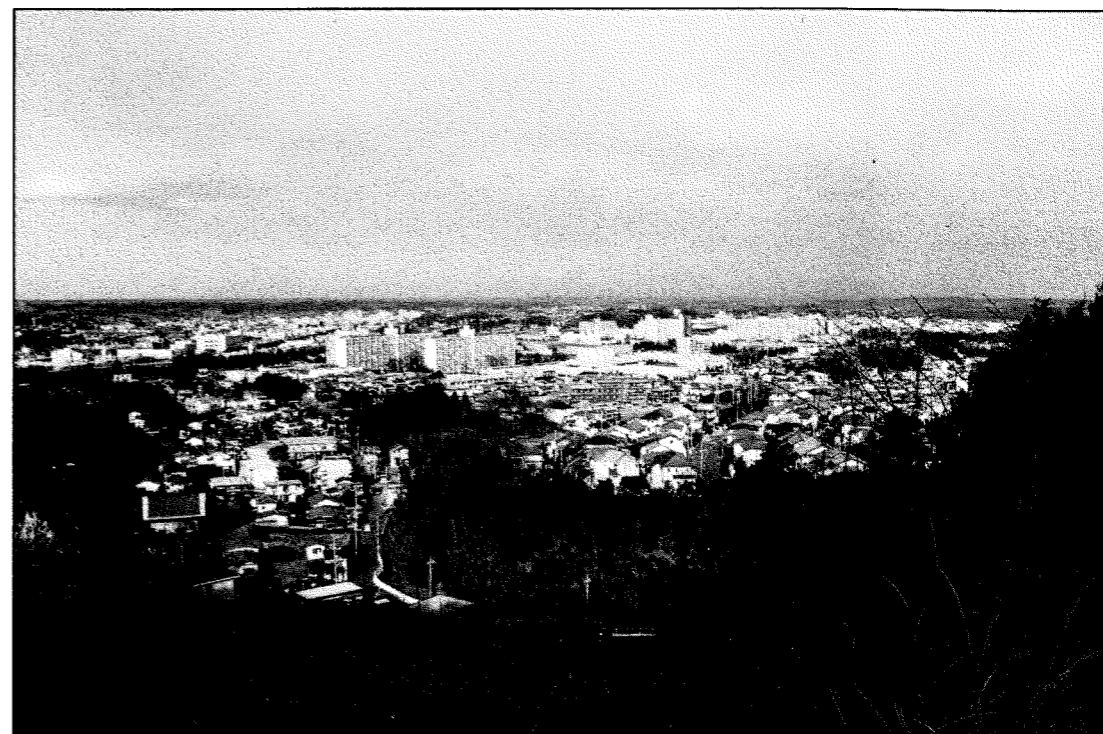
GETTING THERE: One of the fastest, but more expensive, ways is to take a shinkansen to Niigata and then ride the jetfoil to the island. Car and passenger ferries also go to Sado and take 2-1/2 hours, but this can be very enjoyable if the weather is nice. A Seibu bus runs from Ikebukuro to Niigata, costs about ¥5,000 one way, and takes five hours.

GETTING AROUND: Pick up a bus schedule at the station in Ryotsū, Sado's main town. Some buses run infrequently so you'll have to plan your time carefully. Friendly locals can be relied upon to give you rides. Rental cars are available, probably the best way to see the island.

ACCOMMODATION: Ryokan are usually in the ¥10,000 - ¥25,000 range. The Sado Seaside Hotel costs about ¥5,000 per person. There are a couple *minshuku* "people's lodgings," and a few youth hostels which cost about ¥2,000 each. ♪

Tokyo's Wild West

Photos & story by Richard Evanoff



The American poet Gary Snyder, who spent a considerable amount of time in Japan in the '60s, once said that people face in two directions: "one is to the world of people and language and society, and the other is to the nonhuman, nonverbal world, which is nature as nature is itself." I often think of this quote when I climb Mt. Hatsuzawa, a small mountain near Takao Station and one of the first in the range that extends westward to Mt. Fuji. From the top of Mt. Hatsuzawa, there is an almost perfect 360 degree view of the surrounding area. Looking west, the mountains stretch endlessly towards the horizon. I sometimes come up here at dusk just to watch the sunset cast a nimbus behind the faces of these mountains. East is Tokyo. On a clear, smog-free day you can see the towers of Shinjuku looming in the distance, some 38 kilometers away. If you have excellent eyesight, you can also make out Tokyo Tower and the Sunshine City Building in Ikebukuro, one of the tallest buildings in Asia.

I moved to the Takao area precisely because I wanted to live in two worlds—the world of people, language, and society I see from Mt. Hatsuzawa when I

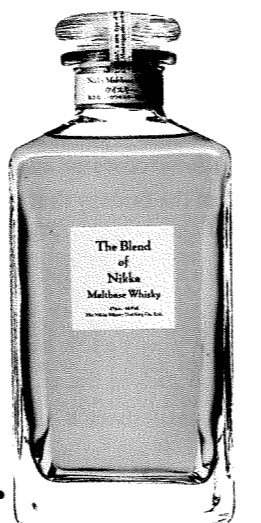
face east and the world of "nature as nature is itself" I see when I face west. A well-rounded life involves both, I think, but the longer I live here in Takao, the more it seems that the balance is being tipped dangerously away from the world of nature towards the world of culture. "Economic growth" is indeed out of hand, and the result is not an improving quality of life, as the politicians and mainstream media would have us believe, but a rapidly diminishing one.

When most people think of Tokyo, they have images of concrete and neon, office buildings and factories, traffic-clogged streets and overcrowded trains. Many are unaware that the far western rim of Tokyo also boasts numerous waterfalls, mountains, and forests. An imaginary hike from my house in Takao through Tokyo's "Wild West" would take you first through the Takao National Park, across the peaks of Mt. Jimba and Mt. Shoto, and along the Sasone Ridge to Lake Okutama. From there it is possible to ascent Mt. Kumotori, Tokyo's highest peak at 2,017 meters—although the trip requires at least two days and you have to stay overnight at a mountain hut. The hike can then be continued

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eastward through the Chichibu-Tama Natural Park, over forested ridges and mountain streams where there's an abundance of wildflowers and subalpine flora. After crossing the Tama River at the Hatanosu Gorge, several popular hiking destinations are immediately accessi-

(called the *ken-odo*) around Tokyo which could connect outlying cities such as Hachioji, Tachikawa, Yokohama, and Kawasaki. The highway would eventually pass through the Mt. Takao area, and there are plans not only to build a tunnel through the mountain itself, but also a

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ble—Mt. Gozen, Mt. Otake, and Mt. Mitake. Near the latter are the Nanayo and Ayahiro waterfalls, a natural “rock garden” called Gansekien, and the Yozawa and Mitsugo limestone caves. The route I have just described, moreover, could be done entirely on mountain trails within the borders of the Tokyo Metropolitan District. At least a week would be needed to complete the hike, and the total walking distance far exceeds the 38 odd kilometers from my house to Shinjuku as the helicopter flies.

What's worrying is that there is increasing pressure to “develop” the wild areas in the western part of Tokyo—all in the name of “economic growth” and “technological progress.” One of the most potentially destructive projects is the plan to build a loopway

spaghetti-style exit ramp that would connect the loopway with the existing Chuo Expressway. Last summer, about 3,000 local citizens marched from the proposed construction site to the Hachioji city office to protest the plan on the grounds that it would destroy the area's natural environment and simply lead to more urban congestion. Despite local opposition, however, the government continues to push the project.

There have also been success stories in Takao, however. On New Year's Day two years ago, I joined a handful of people on the top of Mt. Konpira (near Takao) for a Shinto and Buddhist ceremony. We were praying that a Tokyo high school would not go ahead with its plans to dynamite the mountain in order to build a new high school and sports complex. We held gath-

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erings at the mountain on a regular basis and gradually more local people got involved. Finally, last October, on the same day as a rally which attracted 500 participants, the school announced that it had suspended its construction plans. Our work isn't finished yet, however, since the same construction company that had been hired to dynamite Mt. Konpira has ambitious plans of its own to build condominiums for 20,000 people and a golf course in the Tama Hills south of Takao.

I, for one, would like to live in a place where I have access to both culture and nature. Fortunately, I'm not alone in my quest. There are quite a few organizations in Japan, with both Japanese and foreign participants, that are working to keep western Tokyo “forever wild.” Friends of the Earth sponsors hikes several Sundays a month to various locations around Tokyo, including not

only Takao and Okutama, but also Tanzawa, the Boso Peninsula, Nikko, and other areas. A monthly hike schedule is available from Friends of the Earth, 4-8-15 Nakameguro, Meguro-ku, Tokyo 153, telephone 03/3760-3644. If you're interested in actually getting involved in the “movement,” the Japan Environmental Exchange is a good group to contact. Their address is JEE-Kanto, 2-10-28-106 Kamisaginomiua, Nakano-ku, Tokyo 165, telephone 03/3999-0571.

Finally, for hardhitting reports on what's going on environmentally not only in the Tokyo area but throughout Japan, I can highly recommend Japan Environment Monitor, published ten times a year. One-year subscriptions are available for ¥5,000 from JEM, 18-11 Saiwai-cho, Kofu, Kofu-shi, Yamanashi-ken 400, telephone 0552/28-5386. By working together, we can make a difference!

