

# JAPAN 2013



## LET THE ADVENTURE BEGIN...

**Standing at the Brisbane Airport Jodie and I are about to embrace an experience of a lifetime. How will we go without our families? Will we survive the training? Will they overcome language barriers?**

### Tuesday 19th March 2013: Tears, Tears and More Tears

Mixed emotions leading up to this trip. Extremely excited about training and staying at the Sohonbu yet at the same time there was much sadness leaving my family. I'm not sure why it was so hard and filled with tears especially given the laughter of Sami and Steven every time I cried.

In between Sami and Steven's laughter and my tears I managed to teach them how to use daddy's phone so that we could text each other until it was bed time. If any of Martin's contacts received some weird, wonderful and whacky text messages on Tuesday 19th March from Martin... Sorry.

Time to go to the airport with the help of Wayne (Jodie's husband). Before long my phone was beeping and going crazy with Sami sending messages. I think we had about 100 messages back and forth that night and the content proved to be very entertaining and giggle worthy in the car. Mostly she was upset with me for taking so long to respond to her messages. Other times she sent heartfelt messages which would make any mum melt on the inside and then there were the messages which I can't repeat here. (I have a feeling that the predicted text took over.... I hope that is what happened.)

Anyone at Brisbane airport on the Tuesday evening would have had a good laugh whilst I was chatting to kids on Skype. There were people all around us and then when I looked up after playing on Skype they were all gone. Not sure what I did or said but it must have been good.

## Tuesday 19th March 2013: Tears, Tears and More Tears (Cont..)

So it would seem that I don't travel all that much or was I just lost without my team (Martin, Sami and Steven). Going through security with a phone in my pocket.... And to make it a little more interesting both the phone and the security scanner started beeping.

Almost forgot to mention that my toiletries bag was too big as well so I had to go and get things sorted out before clearing security. Jodie had some fun of her own carrying a water bottle through security. Not going to happen Jodie.

So we get through security and what do we do..... straight for power points so we could charge up our phones and computers. Do you think we are missing our family? And we haven't even left Australia yet.

Eventually it is time to board our plane. Jodie and I are separated (opposite sides of the plane) so we couldn't cry on each others shoulders. Instead we had to be brave and meet some new friends who would be our buddies for the trip to Taipei. From what I hear I did very well to just go to sleep but Jodie had sat next to Mr ChatterBox and was in for a long flight.

I missed dinner, but did catch breakfast. My friend on the plane was very excited at breakfast when I handed over my tim tam and croissant to him. Hey, it must be Wednesday already.

## Wednesday 20th March 2013: Taipei Airport... Here We Come!

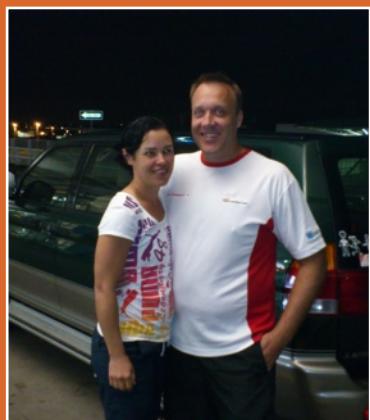
Woohoo! We made it to Taipei. There is now a sense of urgency to not only get to the toilet but to also get to the massage chairs and find Jodie some chocolate. You'd never seen anyone move so fast through an airport.

Toilet experience.. no comment. Jodie getting her hands on chocolate, phew, just in time! Jodie playing on the massage chairs for the first time... PRICELESS! I think what was even more funny was me trying to video her whilst my massage chair was in full swing.

Enough of that being shaken up for the time being, now it is time to see if we can hook up with our families once again. We had a little bit of internet access via phones but we wanted more. Yes, we are missing our families.

Do you  
think Jodie will  
go back for a  
second go on the  
massage ?

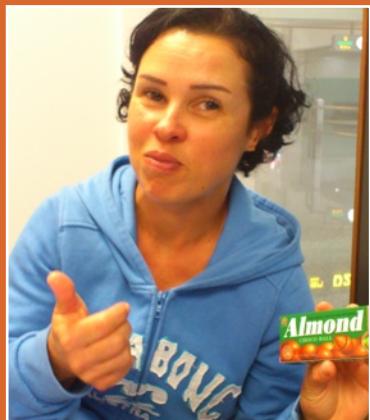
## HAPPY SNAPS



Jodie & Wayne saying  
goodbye at Brisbane Airport



Are you having fun yet Jodie?



Now we are having fun...  
CHOCOLATE!

## **Wednesday 20th March 2013: Taipei Airport... Here We Come! (Cont)**

Across from the massage chair area is one of my favourite hideouts at Taipei Airport. It's a duty free shop which has a mini library. I was hoping to connect with Martin and the kids a little more at this time, but I was a little unlucky with internet so I made the most of this time to do some other work. Time went really fast in Taipei and was filled with a lot of relaxing moments. Before long I found myself lying on the floor within our departure lounge snoozin' and I sensed a flash of light. Yep... Jodie taking a picture of me working very hard as her tour guide.

Soon enough we complete our quick trip from Taipei to Fukuoka, Japan. Big thank you to Soke Sensei for picking us up at the airport on his day off. Although I was prepared to buy bus tickets and get us to Kumamoto there was a small chance that I could've really goofed up and ended up somewhere else.

We arrived at the dojo in no time and I was prepared to train in the evening classes. As it was a Free Day there were no classes. This was probably a good thing so that we could get some rest before morning training. Soke Sensei gave us a quick tour of the dojo and a training schedule and left us to unpack and settle in at our new home for the next couple of weeks. After getting ourselves unpacked it was time to head off to Ichiban Sushi for a quick bite to eat.

First night at the Sohonbu was very cold for us Sunshine Coast mum's. We needed an extra blanket or two, but we got through the night and wide awake for morning training. OK.... so we may not have been wide awake but we turned up to do our best for our first training session of our trip.



**Inside the  
Sohonbu:  
Training Area**

## **HAPPY SNAPS**



**Out the front of the dojo.  
Arrow points to carpark  
across the road from  
Sohonbu Entry**



**Sohonbu Entry**



**Cherry Blossoms: Seen  
these everywhere on our  
drive to the Sohonbu**

## Thursday 21st March 2013: Mum's Getting The Shopping Done

Finished morning training and souji (cleaning) and.... we need to eat. Emergency run to the local convenience store. I found my favourite jelly fruit thingy (a small tub of jelly which has fruit pieces in it) and some other items. Jodie was also brave and enjoyed a jelly fruit experience as a part of her first breakfast in Kumamoto. Check out this little snack below. One of my favourite snacks when I am in Japan, dried fish and almonds. You've gotta try it at least once. Jodie tried it..... and well..... you'll have to ask her.



Now that we have some food in the tank, the plan for today is to get Jodie feeling independent and confident with exploring Kumamoto on her own and of course get some groceries to have on hand at the Sohonbu.

Everyone I spoke to has told us to go to a local supermarket called 'Trial', so this is our next destination. On the way to the Trial Discount Store we thought we'd drop into Maccas to see if we could use their wi-fi as we didn't have this sorted as yet. Didn't find any wi-fi but Jodie had an amazing cup of coffee to kickstart her day. A short walk further we arrive at the supermarket... How long it would take Jodie to find the chocolate aisle?

## HAPPY SNAPS



**Breakfast is Served  
(local convenience store)**



**Trial Discount Store  
Jodie's first grocery shopping experience**



**Ace Supermarket that I also enjoy grocery shopping. About 5 minutes from the Onsen and 10 minutes from Kamitori**

## Thursday 21st March 2013: Mum's Take On Kumamoto Transport

We have our food supplies, now it is time to see if I can get Jodie confused with public transport. A short walk from the Sohonbu is the train station (Tsuboigawa-kouen). The diagram below shows you the route that we take to go from Tsuboigawa-kouen ----> Kami-Kumamoto. (Follow the green line). You will see that it is also quite cheap to use public transport.

To the right you can see the train at the Tsuboigawa-koen train station.

At the Kami-Kumamoto station we change across to a tram. The tram ride was a bumpy experience with many people. I stood up to let some elderly people sit down and they soon became very chatty to help us learn more about the beauty of the Cherry Blossum which were now blooming in Kumamoto.

Cashed up at the ATM, played at the International Centre connecting with family and we were soon back at the Sohonbu for an afternoon of fun, friendship and training. Today I introduced Jodie to Minowa Sensei and Goshi's family (Tomoko, Runa and Rui). When we returned to our rooms we were welcomed with a bag of groceries from Tomoko-san including some of my favourites from my last trip.

Just prior to evening training we had the chance to chat with Tomoko-san and she helped us learn how to use the kettle. Yes, imagine two mum's in the kitchen not knowing how to work a kettle. What the! After a few giggles at our expense we are off and running. Tomoko-san is one amazing person. Generous and patient.

Evening training with Minowa Sensei and there are teams practicing for the weekend tournament. We usually finish our last class at 8:00pm on the Sunshine Coast. Classes here at the Sohonbu finish at 9:00pm at the earliest and then extra team kata through to 10:00pm. The Sohonbu comes to life in the evenings. I just need to wait a little longer than usual until everyone goes before I suit up into my pink tweety PJ's.

Catching a train is easier than I realised thanks to Martin



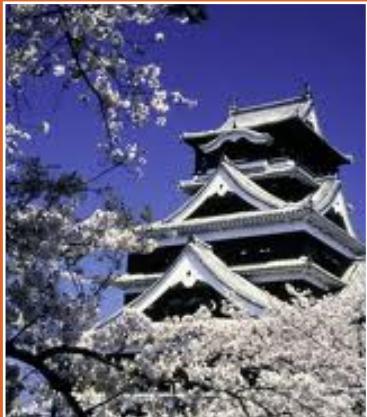
## HAPPY SNAPS



This is the train that we catch to get to Kami Kumamoto (from there we catch a tram into town)



Tram in Kumamoto



Cherry Blossums at the Kumamoto Castle

## **Friday 22nd March 2013: Samui desu..... (It's cold)**

This morning we were fortunate to have Todd Sensei join us for morning training. He is lightning fast. I have no idea how he gets around so fast without falling over.

Sample morning training routine (varies a little each day but you'll have an idea)

1. Seiza + warm up
2. Chudan tsuki (I'm guessing a couple of hundred but haven't counted. Just feels like a lot)
3. Stepping (no arms), sanchin dachi, seisan dachi, shiko dachi, kosa dachi, neko ashi dachi, rinten, rinten-hanten, kaeshi
4. Geri (individual: mae geri, yoko geri, mawashi geri, mikazuki geri, ushiro geri) + 4 kick combination + 8 kick combination
5. Oi zuki, gyaku zuki, oshi zuki, oshi gyaku zuki, rinten zuki, rinten hanten zuki, kaeshi zuki
6. Kihon dosa ichi --->shi ho warri
7. Shime no kata (full lap of dojo forwards and backwards)
8. Shi ho hai and above (all kata: self paced)
9. Final 10-15 minutes: things that we have done so far - bo training (Sharin), kaishu (individual/partner), shinai
10. Shiko dachi 360 degrees suri ashi + Sonkyo (Chudan tsuki x 10)

Today I chose to enjoy some time at the Sohonbu taking notes. Journal writing, training notes, Japanese study, updating my travel log and chatting with Martin on Skype. Whilst I was doing this Jodie went for a walk exploring the streets surrounding the Sohonbu.

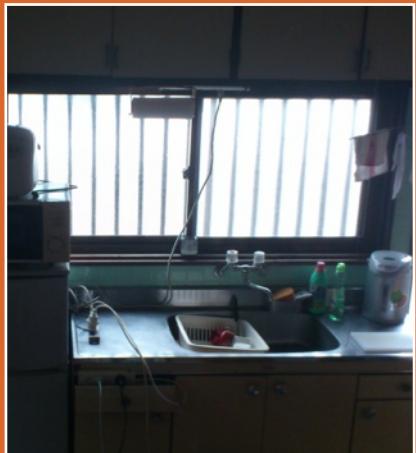
Great news, Jodie returned safely to the Sohonbu after her first attempt to roam the streets on her own. Whilst Jodie was out, Takasu Sensei came in and let me know that Ramen was on special today, so as soon as Jodie returned from her exploration and I had wrapped up my work for the morning we were off to the Ajisan Raman shop (about 5 minute walk from dojo).



## **HAPPY SNAPS**



**Work Station #1: When heater is turned on**



**Kitchen. To the right is that kettle that gave us grief for the first day**



**Lockers, drawers and stash of foods. If you look closely you might find some chocolate**

## Friday 22nd March 2013: Will Jodie Like Ramen?

On our way to Ajisan for lunch, Tomoko-san told us that it would rain soon and that we should take an umbrella. Yep.. She was right. We arrived at Ajisan and it was completely full. We had to add our name to a waiting list at the front door and wait until our name was called out. It looks as though many of the locals take advantage of this one day of the month when all ramen dishes are offered at a reduced price.

Waiting, waiting, waiting... Whilst we were waiting we met a lady (Satoko-san) that could speak english. And when it was time to be seated, we were seated next to her. Had a great meal and a great chat with Satoko-san. We are now friends on facebook and I look forward to keeping in touch with Satoko-san. In October this year Satoko-san may visit Australia and we'll be able to help her with her travels.

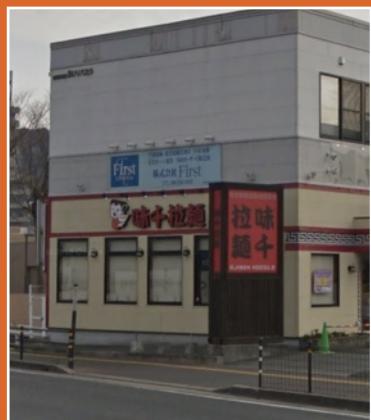
Back to Sohonbu now for an afternoon nap. Feeling a bit wiped out. And as nice as everyone is at the Sohonbu and in Kumamoto, I am missing Martin, Sami and Steven. Time for a good rest and a chat with Martin (Sami and Steven) and I think that smile will replenish in no time.

Training with Takasu Sensei first up with the kids class. The kids taught us a fancy dance I hope to remember and share with our students. And then a training session with Todd Sensei. Breaking down the kata one at a time is always valuable and I picked up a few gems which I am going to have to now add to my training journal and continue to practice.

Class finishes and... Sohonbu students continue their team kata training into the evening. From memory the kiai's, stomping and giggles ended around 10:00pm. I was tucked away in my bed keeping warm chatting to Martin. A few teary moments during skype this evening but Martin always seems to find a way to put a smile on my face.



## HAPPY SNAPS



Ajisan Ramen Restaurant



Ramen



Kids Practicing Team Kata

## Saturday 23rd March 2013: Almost Busted in my Tweety PJ's

Feeling a little jet lagged still and enjoyed a good sleep in this morning (bit of music and reading). Enjoying myself so much that I was still in bed when people started to arrive at the Sohonbu. Luckily the doors to our living area where closed off and no one could see me running about in my PJ's.

Really excited today to receive a heater from Minowa Sensei. I'm not sure what gave her the idea that we were cold other than seeing us lying in bed for the afternoon playing on our computers the day before.



A little more journal time and chatting with family before training at 10:00am. Pre-Tournament training with Sohonbu kids. Osaka Team arrived a little later and joined in with some training. Group photo below.

We were scheduled to train again 1:00 - 4:00pm but we were invited to do some sightseeing in Kikuchi City before helping with tournament set up. Toyodome Sensei was a great host and helped us gain a greater appreciation of Kikuchi City and the Cherry Blossoms.

Tournament set up time, demonstration rehearsal and we were taken back to the Sohonbu by Minowa Sensei. A quick bite to eat and straight to bed ready for our big day at the Kumamoto Prefecture Tournament.

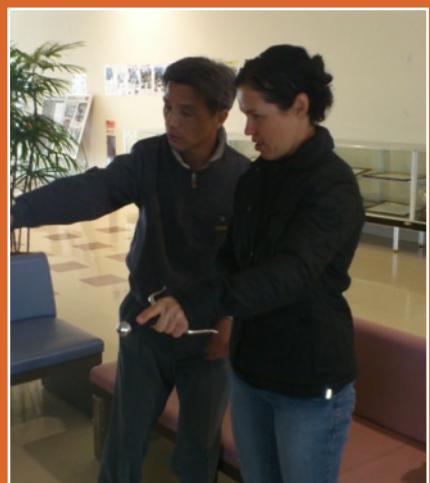
Minowa Sensei stayed late at the Sohonbu helping teams prepare their kata for the next day. Talk about dedication. I felt a little bit guilty to be lying in a warm bed with a room heated to approx 20 degrees whilst they were training but.... I was told to rest and it was great to catch up with Martin again briefly before going to bed.



## HAPPY SNAPS



Near Kikuchi Shrine  
(菊池神社, Kikuchi Jinja)



Gymnasium foyer practicing Sai  
with Toyodome Sensei



In front of the Kikuchi City  
Gymnasium