

August 12, 2004

Our Day at the Market

Today we walked over to a local store here in Ginza, the 5th Avenue of Tokyo, and visited one of the main department stores. As is typical in full service department stores around the world, there was a section devoted to food, in this case two full floors. It will surprise few of you who know us that we made these our first stop of the ten floors available. We spent over two hours wandering from section to section, alternating between salivation, awe, fascination and lust.

You may have heard that Japan is terribly expensive and no one can afford to visit here. While prices in some areas, such as Ginza, are generally high, with the exception of some of the foods featured in the photos, we haven't found prices to be disproportionately higher than other high-end districts in major cities around the world, i.e. New York, London, Frankfurt, Rome, etc. We've even found some ways that enable just about anyone to come here and have a fun and affordable visit. More about that later.

But first, here are some shots from our visit to the market.

Be well,
Doug



Japanese craftsman sewing hand made slippers.



A small sampling of the teas available.



I'll save you a visit to the online currency converter. That's about \$11 USD for three peaches.



That's about \$80 USD for a musk melon. For those of you interested in supplementing your income, we have a friend here who brings over two 20' freight containers full of housewares a month from the U.S. I'm sure he could find some room for your garden musk melons. It's up to you to navigate the labyrinth of Japanese import barriers and tariffs protecting their local farmers.



Big eyed fish.



A small sample of the fresh seaweed available. It makes a fantastic salad and is very healthy.



These cuts work out to about \$65 USD per pound at current exchange rates. This was not the most expensive beef available.

e-Postcard from Ginza



That's a little over \$.50 USD per egg.



Here's the secret to visiting Ginza on a budget. This is a fresh package of Toro, with 11 pieces for about \$16 USD. That won't mean much to anyone who doesn't eat sushi, but you can easily pay \$16 for two pieces of this cut of tuna at an American sushi bar. You can buy an assortment of fresh sushi at local convenience stores here for a few dollars, along with various noodle dishes and hot food for the same price range. If eating at 7-11 is too down market for you, you can shop at places like this department store and pay not much more for excellent trays of local foods for very low prices. Grab a bottle of Sake (rice wine) or wine from a local store, combine it with some cheese and bread and you've got an outstanding meal for well under \$20 USD. You can also locate some affordable restaurants, such as the rooftop Sapporo beer garden where there's an all-you-can-eat-and-drink dinner for \$30 USD per person, about 1/4th to 1/10th what you'd pay at most of the other restaurants in this area. Convert your airline miles or credit card points to hotel points and stay for free (like we are) and you can enjoy a great visit to a very expensive destination at bargain prices.