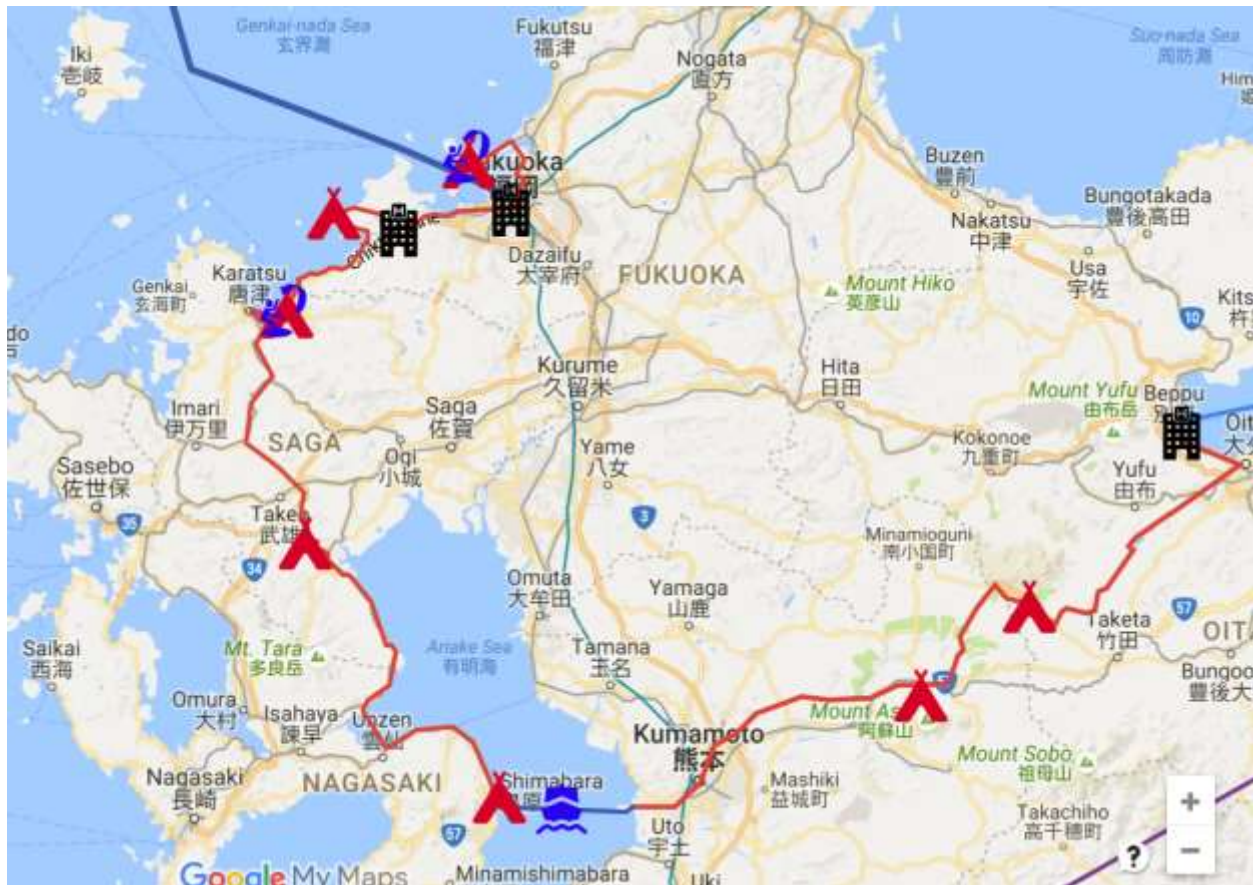


## Season 11 – Part 4. Japan - Last days in Japan around Fukuoka.



We 24.8.2016, day 409. Kite surfing! (Kashima - Karatsu, 68 km)

Again we were up and out of the tent before sunrise at about 5:45 feeling quite battered from the restless night. We packed up and headed off to the sacred 7 Eleven to buy some milk and sat down on the parking lot to have our Müsli. OK, it was a parking lot, but we had a beautiful view out over lush green rice paddies and a wonderful sunrise. It was a wonderful start to the day. Again the bike ride was not much fun. The road was very busy and the bike path as usual very bumpy with lots and lots of kerbs that chew up the tires and shake the panniers. Also -as usual- the bike path sometimes runs on the right, sometimes on the left of the road, this means we always had to stop and wait for a break in the traffic to cross the road. But -as Siria always says when I complain- at least there IS a bike path.

We arrived in Karatsu around lunch time. Again it was sizzling hot with temperatures of 38°C. Apparently Japan is currently in a record breaking heat wave. Karatsu had significantly more going for it than Kashima. We found a nice place to hang out for a while and to plan our next days. We were now only about 50 km from Fukuoka and still had 4 nights to spend somewhere outside of Fukuoka. We hadn't booked early enough to find an affordable place to stay in Fukuoka over the weekend. The only places left were in the range of 200\$ per night. On the spur of the moment decision we decided to take a ferry out to Iki Island. So we headed over to the ferry port only to watch the ferry leaving just as we

arrived. So we changed plans and decided to head up the coast a couple of kilometres where we hoped to find a place to camp on the beach.

This ride turned out to be absolutely lovely. There was a gravel path leading through a wonderful pine forest right beside a very long sandy beach. When we finally got out of the forest we found ourselves on a magnificent beach and my heart jumped when I felt the stiff breeze! This most certainly would mean kite surfing! There was a very cool beach BBQ place nearby where I quickly asked if Kitesurfing was OK. He told me to keep out of the area surrounded by buoys and so I ran back to get rigged up as quickly as possible, fearing the wind would die as the sun slowly sank. I was not on the water very long, but it was one of those magic moments that make dragging the trailer with all my gear over 17'000 km more than worthwhile. At the BBQ place there was a delicious hot shower and we spent a very nice evening exploring yet another eerily dead resort place with a couple of empty hotels and a 7 Eleven where the motorbike kids were hanging out, dressed in their cool gear, eating noodles in preparation for their long night of keeping everyone awake with their noisy engines.

We camped well away from all roads up on the beach and the only sound we heard was the relaxing rhythm of the waves rolling up onto the beach.

























Th 25.8.2016, day 410. A magic camping afternoon (Karatsu – Keya no Oto, 38 km)

Once more we had an absolutely wonderful day. The road hugged the shoreline and took us past wonderful rocky coastline, small white beaches and emerald green water. We knew there was a camping out on a little peninsula that looked very touristy. Again it turned out to have well past its heyday and was completely empty. But the camping was open and turned out to be absolutely lovely, built into a hill with wonderful little camp spots complete with table, shaded by leafy trees that were full of very noisy insects. There was also an improvised shower rigged up in one corner.

We cooked a delicious pasta salad and spent a wonderful afternoon playing the guitar, writing, dozing and waiting in vain for the same wind we had had the day before.

As the sun started to set, we drank the little bottle of Sake we had bought and went down to the beach ready to join the party. When we got there we found that all the pavilions were completely empty. Only in one corner there was a group of kids drinking beer. So we got some pop out of one of the dispensers and sat on the beach to watch the sun set. As it was getting dark, the kids started lighting some fireworks. They then started to shoot the fireworks at each other. Some stray rockets also flew in our direction. We decided it was time to leave. Back at the tent we enjoyed the luxury of having a table, cooked a huge pot of spaghetti and went for an early sleep.









Fr 26.8.2016, day 411. Into the suburbs of Fukuoka (Keya no Oto – Itoshima, 31 km)

We had a delicious long sleep at the camping and then started thinking about what we should do for the next days. There was no wind, the sky was overcast and it looked like rain. We decided to head towards Fukuoka and find a hotel for ourselves to hand out and take it easy. The ride into the suburbs was quite short and soon we also found an AZ Hotel, this is a cheap (cheap for Japanese standards that is) hotel chain, where we got one of the last rooms for 80\$. We couldn't really care less. We bought huge amounts of Sushi from a supermarket and two beers and had a delicious Sushi party in the room.

Finally it didn't rain and in the evening a stiff wind picked up. Also there was a quite a remarkable drop in temperature. I felt we maybe should have stayed at the camping for one more night, then maybe we could have got in some more kitesurfing and also we could have saved some money on the hotel, but it was OK, as we really enjoyed having a hotel room with hot shower and clean bed.









Sa 27.8.2016, day 412. Fantastic kitesurfing! (Itoshima – Fukuoka, 52 km)

We didn't have a place to stay for the night but we were hoping that we would find some place to camp out at one of the beaches north of Fukuoka. To get there we had to cross the city. After doing our best to empty the breakfast buffed at the hotel we headed off towards the city centre. There was quite a stiff breeze blowing and the hope for some more kitesurfing grew. We soon got to the city beaches, where according to Mr. Google there should have been a kite spot. But it didn't really look very suitable. We went into a water sports shop to ask and indeed the lady said there was no kitesurfing here. Downbeat we returned to our bikes, when a long haired Japanese surfer dude came up to us, pointed at the kiteboard on my trailer and asked us if we were looking for a kitespot. Then we got all the good useful information about Fukuoka. He pointed out the city beaches that were good for kiting and also where there were good spots out on the large peninsula to the north that we were anyway thinking of checking out to find a place to camp. Also concerning camping he was able to tell us all the good places. You just have to find the right people to ask!

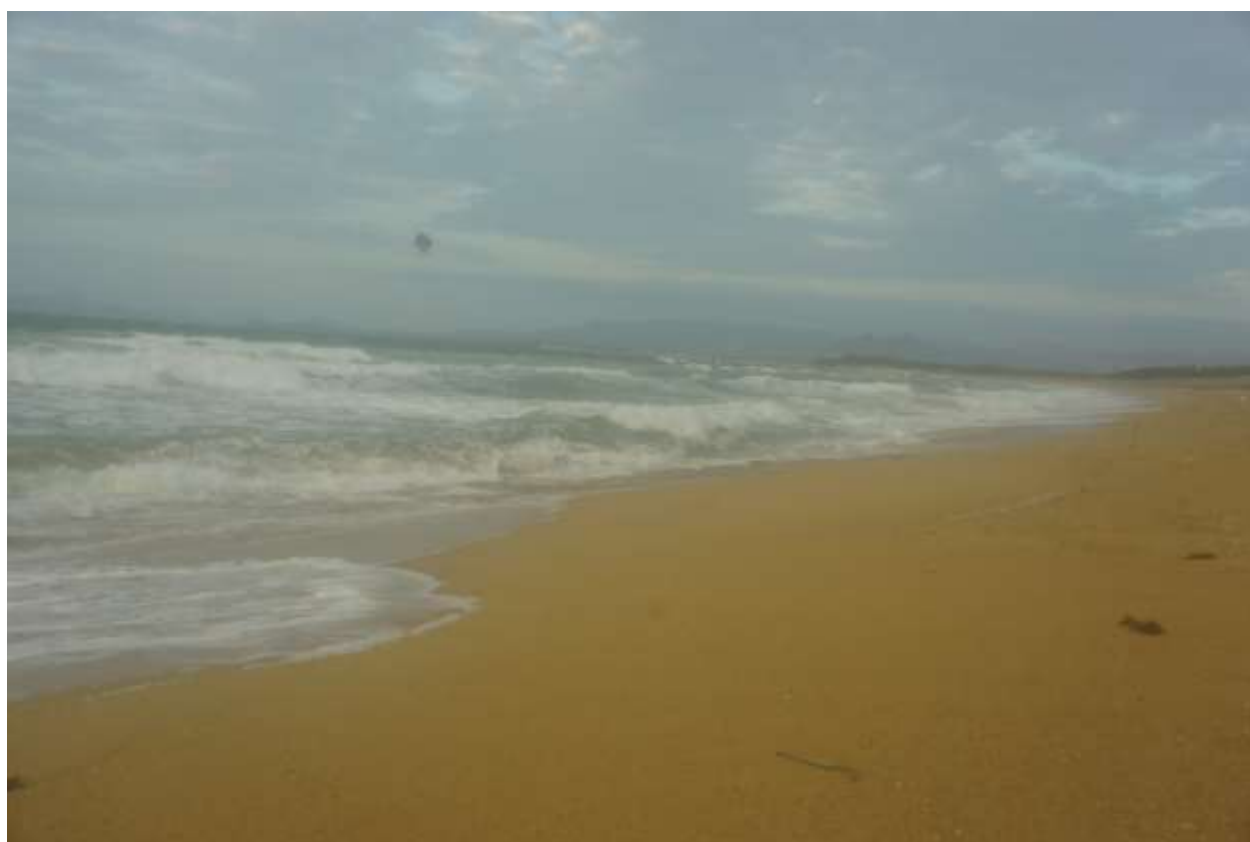
We had a nice but rather strenuous ride through the industrial and harbour areas of Fukuoka battling against the really strong wind. When we finally got out to the beach on the open sea, the wind almost blew us away. Waves were huge and spray and sand was being blown up the beach and across the road. Definitely too much wind for my 12m kite! We'd just have to hope that the wind would drop a bit towards the evening. We found a very nice patch of grass on the lee of the peninsula with a nice view over the bay to the city of Fukuoka. Perfect place to camp! We cooked spaghetti and had a little snooze. Later we headed back to the beach on the windward side of the peninsula. The wind had indeed dropped just a bit. I decided to give it a go, nervously set everything up making sure to fully depower the kite before launching it. It ended up being probably the best kitesurfing of my life. The conditions were very much borderline for the 12m kite. The wind was slightly cross shore, so I could kite straight into the waves shooting out over them, often finding myself airborne without even having done anything. Sometimes the waves broke over my head coming crashing down on me, but the force of the kite easily pulled me through the wave back out the other side. Riding towards the shore I tried catching the waves, surfing down their faces. Waves certainly add a completely new dimension to kitesurfing! Soon I found that I was out of breath and my leg muscles started to burn. The sun dipped behind the hills and I decided to head for shore, lost my balance right at the edge of the beach, lost the board and got dragged face first up the beach by the kite. I definitely couldn't end the day like that, so I go back onto the water, zig zagged around a bit, surfed down a wave heading for the beach, directed the kite up above my head so it lifted me up out of the water, kicked off the board and flew gracefully up onto the beach landing softly. THAT was more like it! After a nice hot coffee and some madeleines at a blessed Mini Mart we set up camp on the patch of grass where we had cooked spaghetti. It was a magic spot, right on the edge of the bay, perfectly sheltered from the wind with a magnificent view of the city lights of Fukuoka across the water.

























Su 28.8.2016, day 413. Last day in Japan. Organizing and relaxing. (Fukuoka, 32 Km)

There was quite a large typhoon called Lionrock, brewing up off the East coast of Japan. The wind the day before was due to him and for today he was supposed to bring rain and thunderstorms. We were prepared for a very early start if things started getting rough, but when we woke up just after 5am things were still quiet. We packed up and headed back towards Fukuoka city, hoping we would stay dry. The sky was very dark and we also had a few drops of rain, but it stayed dry right until we got to the city. It started to rain exactly as we were parking our bikes in front of a Starbucks. How lucky can you get?

And so we spent a very lazy rainy relaxed last day in Japan, ready for the next part of our journey that would take Siria home for a 3 week holiday from her holiday leaving me to travel all the way to Almaty in Kazakhstan with my bike and all my stuff all by myself... I certainly have three exciting weeks ahead of me!



