



The Narrow Road to the Deep North  
Matsuo Basho

MATSUO BASHO  
OKU NO HOSOMICHI  
THE NARROW ROAD TO  
THE DEEP NORTH

© www.tclt.org.uk

[In the translation, the term indicates further explanation or discussion of a particular crux. Click on the term for an immediate transfer to that discussion, and then on **RETURN** to come back to the translation].

# Table of Contents

The Narrow Road to the Deep North.....	4
Wikipedia Article about <i>The Narrow Road to the Deep North</i> .....	52
Wikipedia Article about Matsuo Basho .....	53
National Geographic article following Basho's trail .....	58
Maps of Basho's travels .....	63
Basho's Poems .....	64
Translations of <i>The Old Pond</i> .....	69

<出発まで>

月日は百代の過客にして行かふ年も又旅人也。舟の上に生涯をうかべ、馬の口とらえて老をむかふる物は日々旅にして旅を栖とす。古人も多く旅に死せるあり。予もいづれの年よりか片雲の風にさそはれて、漂白の思ひやまず、海濱にさすらへ、去年の秋江上の破屋に蜘蛛の古巣をはらひてやゝ年も暮、春立る霞の空に白川の関こえんと、そゞろ神の物につきて心をくるはせ、道祖神のまねきにあひて、取もの手につかず。もゝ引の破をつゞり、笠の緒付かえて、三里に灸すゆるより、松嶋の月先心にかゝりて、住る方は人に譲り、杉風が別荘に移るに、  
草の戸も住替る代ぞひなの家  
面八句を庵の柱に懸置。

The days and months are travelers of eternity, just like the years that come and go. For those who pass their lives afloat on boats, or face old age leading horses tight by the bridle, their journeying is life, their journeying is home. And many are the men of old who met their end upon the road.

How long ago, I wonder, did I see a drift of cloud borne away upon the wind, and ceaseless dreams of wandering become aroused? Only last year, I had been wandering along the coasts and bays; and in the autumn, I swept away the cobwebs from my tumbledown hut on the banks of the Sumida and soon afterwards saw the old year out. But when the spring mists rose up into the sky, the gods of desire possessed me, and burned my mind with the longing to go beyond the barrier at Shirakawa. The spirits of the road beckoned me, and I could not concentrate on anything. So I patched up my trousers, put new cords in my straw hat, and strengthened my knees with moxa. A vision of the moon at Matsushima was already in my mind. I sold my hut and wrote this just before moving to a cottage owned by Sampū:

even this grass hut  
could for the new owner be  
a festive house of dolls!

This was the first of an eight verse sequence, which I left hanging on a post inside the hut.

---

<旅立>

弥生も末の七日、明ぼのゝ空朧々として、月は在明にて光おさまれる物から不二の峯幽にみえて、上野谷中の花の梢又いつかはと心ぼそし。むつまじきかぎりは宵よりつどひて舟に乗て送る。千じゆと云所にて船をあがれば、前途三千里のおもひ胸にふさがりて幻のちまたに離別の涙をそゝく。

行春や鳥啼魚の目は泪

是を矢立の初として、行道なをすゝまず。人々は途中に立ならびて、後かげのみゆる迄はと見送なるべし。

It was the twenty-seventh day of the Third Month [16 May]. There was a wan, thinning moon, and in the first pale light of dawn, the summit of Mount Fuji could be dimly seen. I wondered if I should ever see the cherry trees of Ueno and Yanaka again. My closest friends, who had gathered together the night before, got on the boat to see me off. We disembarked at Senju, and my heart was overwhelmed by the prospect of the vast journey ahead. Ephemeral though I know the world to be, when I stood at the crossroads of parting, I wept goodbye.

the spring is passing –  
the birds all mourn and fishes'  
eyes are wet with tears

I wrote this verse to begin my travel diary, and then we started off, though it was hard to proceed. Behind, my friends were standing in a row, as if to watch till we were lost to sight.

---

<草加>

ことし元禄二とせにや、奥羽長途の行脚、只かりそめに思ひたちて呉天に白髪の恨を重ぬといへ共耳にふれていまだめに見ぬさかひ若生て帰らばと定なき頼の末をかけ、其日漸早加と云宿にたどり着にけり。瘦骨の肩にかゝれる物先くるしむ。只身すがらにと出立侍を、帟子一衣は夜の防ぎ、ゆかた雨具墨筆のたぐひ、あるはさがたき餞などしたるはさすがに打捨がたくて、路次の煩となれるこそわりなけれ。

So that year – the second year of Genroku [1689] – I had suddenly taken it into my head to make the long journey into the deep north, to see with my own eyes places that I had only heard about, despite hardships enough to turn my hair white. I should be lucky to come back alive, but I staked my fortune on that uncertain hope.

We barely managed to reach the post-town of Sōka by nightfall. My greatest burden was the pack I carried on my thin, bony shoulders. I had planned to set out travelling light, but had ended up taking a paper coat to keep out the cold at night, a cotton dressing gown, rainwear, and ink and brushes, as well as various farewell presents that I could not refuse and that had to be accepted as burdens on the way.

## &lt;室の八嶋&gt;

室の八嶋に詣す。同行曾良が曰、「此神は木の花さくや姫の神と申て富士一躰也。無戸室に入て焼給ふちかひのみ中に、火々出見のみこと生れ給ひしより室の八嶋と申。又煙を讀習し侍もこの謂也」。將このしろといふ魚を禁ず。縁記の旨世に傳ふ事も侍し。

We went to see the shrine of Muro-no-yashima [The Oven-like Chamber]. Sora, my travelling companion, told me its story: 'The shrine is dedicated to Konohana Sakuya Hime [Princess of Flowering Blossoms], the goddess worshipped at Mount Fuji. The name Muro-no-yashima refers to the chamber that the goddess entered and set on fire, to prove that her pregnancy was legitimate. The son she bore there was called Hohodemi [Born of the Flames]. This is why poems about the place often mention smoke.' This must also be the reason why a fish called *konoshiro* is never eaten here. When grilled, it smells like burning human flesh.

<仏五左衛門>

卅日、日光山の禁に泊る。あるじの云けるやう、「我名を佛五左衛門と云。萬正直を旨とする故に人かくは申侍まゝ、一夜の草の枕も打解て休み給へ」と云。いかなる仏の濁世塵土に示現して、かゝる桑門の乞食順礼ごときの人をたすけ給ふにやとあるじのなす事に心をとゞめてみるに、唯無智無分別にして正直偏固の者也。剛毅木訥の仁に近きたぐひ氣稟の清質尤尊ぶべし。

On the last night of the third month [19 May], we found lodgings at the foot of Mount Nikkō. The innkeeper introduced himself as Gozaemon the Buddha. 'I'm known as that because I put honesty first and foremost in everything I do. You can sleep here safe tonight with your minds at ease.' We wondered what kind of Buddha it was that had taken on human form in this troubled, filthy world to help two beggar pilgrims. I observed him carefully, and saw that, however ignorant or clumsy he might have seemed, he was indeed a man of stubborn honesty. He was a man close to the Confucian ideal of Perfection: strong, simple, straightforward. I found his purity of heart most admirable.



On the first day of the fourth month [20 May], we went to worship at the mountain shrine. In ancient times, the name of the mountain was written *Ni-kō* [the Mountain of Two Storms]; but when the great teacher Kūkai built a temple here, he changed the name to *Nik-ko* [Sunlight]. He must have had the power to see a thousand years beyond, for the radiance of the shrine now shines throughout the heavens. Its blessings flow over the land to the farthest corners, and all the people live in security and peace. I was awestruck, barely able to tell it in words:

how holy a place ...  
green leaves, young leaves, and through them  
the sunlight now bursts

Mount Kurokami [Mount Raven Hair], though veiled in mist, was still white with snow. Sora composed a poem:

I shaved off my hair  
and now at Kurokami  
I change to new clothes

Sora is his pen name. His real name is Kawai Sōgorō. He built a house beside the lower leaves of my bashō tree, and used to help me with the chores of chopping firewood and drawing water. He was delighted at the thought of seeing Matsushima and Kisagata, and came to keep me company and share the hardships of the road. The morning we left, he shaved his head, changed into a priest's black robes, and took the name of Sōgo [the Enlightened One]. That is why he wrote the Mount Kurokami poem. The words 'I change to new clothes' I find particularly effective.

A mile or so up the mountain was a waterfall. The water leaps forth from a hollow in the ridge and tumbles down a hundred feet into a dark green pool strewn with a thousand stones. You can squeeze between the rocks and the cascade, and see the waterfall from behind. Hence its name *Urami-no-taki* [Rear View Falls].

alone behind the  
waterfall a little while –  
now summer retreat

<那須>

那須の黒はねと云所に知人あれば是より野越にかゝりて直道をゆかんとす。遙に一村を見かけて行に、雨降日暮る。農夫の家を一夜をかりて、明れば又野中を行。そこに野飼の馬あり。草刈おのこになげきよれば、野夫といへどもさすがに情しらぬには非ず「いかゝすべきや、されども此野は縦横にわかれてうゐ／＼敷旅人の道ふみたがえん、あやしう侍れば、此馬のとゞまる所にて馬を返し給へ」とかし侍ぬ。ちいさき者ふたり馬の跡したひてはしる。独は小姫にて名を「かさね」と云。聞なれぬ名のやさしかりければ、

かさねとは八重撫子の名成べし 曾良

頓て人里に至れば、あたひを鞍つぼに結付て馬を返しぬ。

I had an acquaintance who lived in Kurobane in Nasu, so we decided to take the shortest route, straight across the plain. We took a bearing from a village in the distance, but as we walked, the rain began to fall and the darkness closed in. We took lodgings for the night at a farmhouse, and next morning started off again across the plain.

We came upon a horse grazing and a farmer cutting grass. We asked him the way. Although a simple, rustic man, he was full of sympathy. He pondered a while, then said, 'What would be the best thing to do? The trails here criss-cross all over the place, and strangers like you could easily get lost. That worries me. I'll let you have the horse. When he won't go any further, just send him back.' And with that, he leant us his horse.

Two small children followed us, running behind the horse. One of them, a little girl, was called Kasane [Double]. It was such an unusual and charming name that Sora wrote about it:

Kasane must be  
the name given the wild pink  
with double petals

Before long, we reached a village and turned the horse back home, with some money tied to the saddle.

<黒羽>

黒羽の館代浄坊寺何がしの方に音信る。思ひがけぬあるじの悦び、日夜語つゞけて、其弟桃翠など云が朝夕勤とぶらひ、自の家にも伴ひて、親属の方にもまねかれ日をふるまゝに、ひとひ郊外に逍遥して、犬追物の跡を一見し、那須の篠原わけて玉藻の前の古墳をとふ。それより八幡宮に詣。与一扇の的を射し時、「別しては我国氏神正八まん」とちかひしも此神社にて侍と聞ば、感應殊しきりに覚えらる。暮れば、桃翠宅に帰る。

修験光明寺と云有。そこにまねかれて行者堂を拝す。

夏山に足駄を拝む首途哉

We called on Jōbōji, the senior pro-governor of Kurobane . He was delighted to see us so unexpectedly, and kept us chatting away days and nights together. His younger brother, Tōsui, seized every chance to talk with us, and invited us to his own home, as well as introducing us to his relatives and friends. And so the time passed by.

One day, we took a stroll to the outskirts of the town, and saw the remains of the old dog-shooting grounds.\*

We pressed further out on to the plains to pay our respects at the tomb of Lady Tamamo, and then at the shrine of Hachiman. We were especially moved when we heard that it was to this god that Yoichi had cried, as he aimed his arrow at the fan.\*\*

As darkness fell, we returned to Tōsui's house. Nearby, there was a mountain-cult temple called Kōmyōji. We were invited there, and worshipped in the Hall of the Ascetic:

in summer mountains  
we say prayers before the shoes ...  
journey now begins

*\*dog-shooting grounds a reference to a game in which horse-riders competed to shoot a dog with blunted arrowheads.*

*\*\*as he aimed his arrow at the fan a celebrated challenge recorded in earlier history and literature. Nasu no Yoichi was commanded to shoot at a fan held up by a woman on a swaying boat some two hundred and fifty yards away. He prays to Hachiman, the guardian deity of the samurai, for success, declaring that he will kill himself should the arrow miss. But he hits his target.*

<雲岸寺> 当国雲岸寺のおくに佛頂和尚山居跡あり。  
 豎横の五尺にたらぬ草の庵 むすぶもくやし雨なかりせば  
 と松の炭して岩に書付侍りと、いつぞや聞え給ふ。其跡みんと雲  
 岸寺に杖を曳ば、人々すゝんで共にいざなひ、若き人おほく道の  
 ほど打さはぎて、おぼえず彼禁に到る。山はおくあるけしきにて  
 谷道遙に、松杉黒く苔したゞりて、卯月の天今猶寒し。十景尽る  
 所、橋をわたつて山門に入。さてかの跡はいづくのほどにやと後の山によぢのぼれば、  
 石上の小庵岩窟にむすびかけたり。妙禅師の死関、法雲法師の石室をみ  
 るがごとし。木啄も庵はやぶらず夏木立 と、とりあへぬ一句を柱に残侍し。

Behind Unganji temple in this province, up in the mountains, was a hermitage where the priest Butchō used to live. Butchō once told me that he had inscribed the following poem on a rock, in charcoal made from pine:

Oh how much I loathe  
 building a shelter at all,  
 even a grass-thatched  
 hut not five feet long or wide –  
 if only it never rained ...

I wanted to see what remained of the hut, and so, walking-staff in hand, I set out. A group of young people accompanied me on the way, chattering away happily, and before I knew it we had reached the foot of the mountain. It seemed so deep. A valley path stretched far into the distance, lined by darkly clustering pines and cedars. Dew dripped from the moss, and even though it was the Fourth Month [early summer], the air still felt cold. When we had passed all the Ten Sights,\* we crossed a bridge and the temple gate.

Eager to discover the site of the hermitage, I scrambled up the hill behind the temple to a tiny hut built upon a rock, leaning against a cave. It was like coming upon the Death Gate of the monk Miao, or the stone chamber of the monk Fayun. I left an impromptu verse on a post in the hut:

even woodpeckers  
 leave the hermitage untouched  
 in the summer trees

\* *all the Ten Sights* according to Bashō's companion, Sora, these sights were mainly prominent rocks, buildings, and clumps of plum and bamboo, within the temple precincts.

## &lt;殺生岩・蘆野&gt;

是より殺生石に行。館代より馬にて送らる。此口付のおのこ、短冊得させよと乞。やさしき事を望侍るものかなと、野を横に馬牽むけよほとゝぎす

殺生石は温泉の出る山陰にあり。石の毒気いまだほろびず。蜂蝶のたぐひ真砂の色の見えぬほどかさなり死す。

又、清水ながるゝの柳は蘆野の里にありて田の畔に残る。此所の郡守戸部某の此柳みせばやなど、折々にの給ひ聞え給ふを、いつくのほどにやと思ひしを、今日此柳のかげにこそ立より侍つれ。田一枚植て立去る柳かな

From Kurobane, I headed towards the Killing Stone on a horse lent to us by Jōbōji. The man leading the horse asked if I would write a poem for him. Pleasantly surprised that he had such artistic interests, I gave him this:

turn the horse's head  
towards the plain; pull there now!  
a cuckoo's calling ...

The Killing Stone stands in dark mountain shadow near a hot spring. The gases emanating from the rock were full of poison still. So many bees and butterflies and other insects lay dead in heaps around it, you couldn't tell the colour of the sand.

At Ashino, the weeping willow that Saigyō celebrated, 'where pure and crystal water flows', stands on the bank between two rice-fields. A local official there, a man called Kohō, had often said how much he would like to show me the tree, and I'd often wondered exactly where it stood. Now, I rested in its shade:

one whole field of rice  
had all been sown – before I  
left the willow-tree

## &lt;白川の関&gt;

心許なき日かず重るまゝに、白川の関にかゝりて旅心定めぬ。いかで都へと便求しも断也。中にも此関は三関の一にして、風騷の人心をとゞむ。秋風を耳に残し、紅葉を俤にして、青葉の梢猶あはれ也。卯の花の白妙に茨の花の咲そひて、雪にもこゆる心地ぞする。古人冠を正し、衣装を改し事など、清輔の筆にもとゞめ置れしとぞ。

卯の花をかざしに関の晴着かな 曾良

Day after day had passed in vague uneasiness; but now we approached the Barrier at Shirakawa, and, for the first time, I felt that our journey had truly begun. I could understand why the poet\* had felt at this spot that he wanted to send word to the people in the capital that he had crossed the Barrier.

As one of the Three Barriers to the north, Shirakawa has always appealed to poets and writers. Yet even as I delighted in the green leaves of the trees, an autumn wind seemed to sound in my ears, and crimson leaves danced in my mind's eye. The whiteness of deutzia, the white rambling roses, made us feel as if we were crossing the Barrier in snow. According to Kiyosuke,\*\* people of long ago straightened their hats as they crossed, and changed their clothes. Sora wrote:

sprigs of deutzia  
adorn our hats – formal dress  
for the barrier

*\*why the poet an allusion to a poem by Taira no Kanemori (d. 990), in which he expresses the wish to tell the people in the capital that he had crossed the Barrier. For him, as for Bashō, the Shirakawa Barrier clearly represented an emotional and psychological crossing-point, as well as a simple geographical frontier.*

*\*\*Kiyosuke a writer (1104-77), whose book on poetics records the tradition of changing clothes upon crossing the Shirakawa Barrier.*

<須賀川>

とかくして越行まゝにあぶくま川を渡る。左に会津根高く、右に岩城相馬三春の庄、常陸下野の地をさかひて山つらなる。かげ沼と云所を行に、今日は空曇て物影うつらず。が川の駅に等窮といふものを尋て、四五日とゞめらる。先白河の関いかにこえつるやと問。長途のくるしみ身心つかれ、且は風景に魂うばれ、懐旧に腸を断てはか%＼しう思ひめぐらさず。

風流の初やおくの田植うた

無下にこえんもさすがにと語れば、脇第三とつゞけて、三巻となしぬ。此宿の傍に、大なる栗の木陰をたのみて、世をいとふ僧有。椽ひろふ太山もかくやとしづかに覚られてものに書付侍る。其詞、栗といふ文字は西の木と書て西方浄土に便ありと、行基菩薩の一生杖にも柱にも此木を用給ふとかや。世の人の見付ぬ花や軒の栗

We passed the Barrier and crossed the Abukuma River. On our left, the peak of Aizu soared up high; on our right, the districts of Iwaki, Sōma and Miharu stretched out; behind us, the range of hills that separated the provinces of Hitachi and Shimotsuke. We passed Kagenuma [Shadow Pond], but the sky was overcast that day, and so there were no reflections.

At the post town of Sukagawa, we visited a poet called Tōkyū, who put us up for four or five days. The first thing he asked was, 'How did you feel as you crossed the Barrier at Shirakawa?' I replied that the hardships of our long journey had exhausted me in body and spirit.

Enchanted by the beauty of the landscape, and so much moved by the memories of the past that it awakened, I had not been able to compose a decent poem. Yet it would be a shame to let the crossing go unrecorded. So I wrote:

imagination's  
birth! a song for planting rice  
in the deep far north

From this opening, we added a second verse and then a third, until we had completed three sequences. On the outskirts of the town, in the shade of a huge chestnut tree, there lived a monk who had turned his back upon the world. The lonely quietness of his hermitage reminded me of another place deep in the mountains, where horse chestnuts had been gathered. I jotted down a few words:

The character for 'chestnut' means 'west tree', indicating its connection with the Paradise to the West. It's said that the priest Gyōgi used the wood all his life for his walking-sticks and the pillars of his house:

people in the world  
hardly notice these blossoms –  
chestnuts by the eaves

<あさか山>

等窮が宅を出て、五里計檜皮の宿を離れてあさか山有。路より近し。此あたり沼多し。かつみ刈比もやゝ近うなれば、いづれの草を花かつみとは云ぞと人々に尋侍れども、更知人なし。沼を尋、人にとひ、かつみ／＼と尋ありきて日は山の端にかゝりぬ。二本松より右にきれて、黒塚の岩屋一見し、福嶋に宿る。

Some twelve miles or so from Tōkyū's house, just beyond Hiwada, is Mount Asaka. It rises up close to the road, and there are many marshes round about. It was almost the season for picking *katsumi* iris. We kept on asking, 'Which plant is the flowering *katsumi*?' But no-one knew. We wandered about the marshes, asking everyone the same question, till the sun sank behind the rim of the hills.

We turned off to the right at Nihonmatsu, paid a hasty visit to the cave at Kurozuka, and stopped for the night at Fukushima.



<忍ぶの里>

あくれば、しのぶもち摺の石を尋て忍ぶのさに行。遥山陰の小里に石半土に埋てあり。里の童部の来りて教ける。昔は此山の上に侍しを往来の人の麦草をあらして此石を試侍をにくみて此谷につき落せば、石の面下ざまにふしたりと云。さもあるべき事にや

。

早苗とる手もとや昔しのぶ摺

The following morning, we set off to Shinobu in search of the Fern-print Rock. We found it half buried in the soil of a remote hamlet over-shadowed by a mountain. Some village children came up and told us that, in the old days, the stone had stood on top of the mountain. But the people who went up there to rub the cloth on the stone with ferns had torn off leaves of barley too. The farmers had become so annoyed, they had pushed the stone down into the valley – which was why it was now lying upside down. The story was not impossible:

hands planting seedlings  
were hands once rubbing patterns  
with ferns, long ago

<佐藤庄司旧跡>

月の輪のわたしを越て、瀬の上と云宿に出づ。佐藤庄司が旧跡は左の山際一里半計に有。飯塚の里鯖野と聞て尋／＼行に、丸山と云に尋あたる。是庄司の旧館なり。禁に大手の跡など人の教ゆるにまかせて泪を落し、又かたはらの古寺に一家の石碑を残す。中にも二人の嫁がしるし先哀也。女なれどもかひ／＼しき名の世に聞えつる物かなと袂をぬらしぬ。墮涙の石碑も遠きにあらず。寺に入て茶を乞へば、爰に義経の太刀弁慶が笈をとどめて什物とす。笈も太刀も五月にかざれ昏幟 五月朔日の事也。

We crossed the river by the ferry at Tsukinowa [Moon Halo] and arrived at a post-town called Senoue [Rapid's Head]. The ruined mansion where Satō Shōji had once lived was about four miles away on the left, close to the mountains. We were told it was at Sabano, in the village of Iizuka.

We asked directions as we went along, until we came to a place called Maruyama. This was where the warrior's house had stood. They told us that the Great Gate had been down at the foot of the mountain, and my eyes glazed with tears. Still standing at an old temple nearby were the tombstones of the family. The most moving were the memorials to the two young wives.\*

Women though they were, they left behind them such a name for courage. My sleeve was wet with tears. You do not have to go so very far away to find a tombstone that makes you weep. \*\*

We went inside the temple to ask for tea, and saw that, among its treasures, were the sword of Yoshitsune and the satchel-basket that Benkei carried:

both sword and satchel  
shown for Boys' Festive Day, when  
paper banners fly

It was the first day of the fifth month [18 June].

*\*the two young wives a reference to the widows of two warrior brothers, Satō Tsugunobu (1158-85) and Tadanobu (1161-86). After their deaths, to console their mother, the two widows are said to have donned soldiers' armour to pretend they were her sons returning in triumph.*

*\*\*a tombstone that makes you weep the tombstone in question was built by local people in honour of Yang-hu (221-78), an especially respected governor. All who saw it could not help weeping there.*

## &lt;飯塚&gt;

其夜飯塚にとまる。温泉あれば湯に入て宿をかるに、土坐に筵を敷てあやしき貧家也。灯もなければゐろりの火かげに寝所をまうけて臥す。夜に入て雷鳴、雨しきりに降て、臥る上よりもり、蚤蚊にせゝられて眠らず。持病さへおこりて消入計になん。短夜の空もやう／＼明れば、又旅立ぬ。猶夜の余波心すゝまず、馬かりて桑折の駅に出る。遥なる行末をかゝえて、斯る病覚束なしといへど、羈旅辺土の行脚、捨身無常の觀念、道路にしなん、是天の命なりと氣力聊とり直し路縦横に踏で伊達の大木戸をこす。

We stayed the night at Iizuka. We bathed in the hot springs there, and then rented a room. The inn turned out to be a wretched hovel, with straw mats spread over the dirt floor. There wasn't even a lamp, so we made up our beds in the light from a hearth fire and lay down. Throughout the night, the thunder rumbled, and the rain poured down in torrents. What with the roof leaking down on us just where we lay, and the fleas and mosquitoes biting, I couldn't sleep at all. To make matters worse, my old complaint flared up again, causing such pain I almost fainted. The short summer night came to an end at last, and we set off again. I hired a horse to the post-station of Kōri, still feeling the after-effects of the night before. I was worried about my sickness, when such a great distance still remained ahead. But I told myself that, when I'd started on this journey to the remotest regions, I'd been aware of giving up all worldly things and facing life's transience. If I should die on the road, that would be Heaven's will. Such thoughts helped restore my spirits a little, and I passed through the Great Gate of Date with some boldness in my step.

<笠嶋>

燈摺白石の城を過、笠嶋の郡に入れば、藤中将実方の塚はいつく  
のほどならんと人にとへば、是より遥右に見ゆる山際の里をみの  
わ笠嶋と云。道祖神の社、かた見の薄今にありと教ゆ。此比の五  
月雨に道いとあしく、身つかれ侍れば、よそながら眺やりて過る  
に、蓑輪笠嶋も五月雨の折にふれたりと、  
笠嶋はいつこさ月のぬかり道  
岩沼に宿る。

Passing by Abumizuri and Shiroishi castles, we arrived at the district of Kasajima, and inquired about the grave of the governor Sanekata, of the Fujiwara family. A man told us, 'Those villages you can see at the foot of the mountain way off to the right are Minowa and Kasajima. The shrine to the spirits of the road and the memorial of pampas-grass are still there.'

After the heavy rains of previous days, the road was in an awful state, and I was so tired that we contented ourselves with simply looking that way as we trudged on. The names Minowa [Raincoat] and Kasajima [Umbrella] were so well suited to the rainy season that I wrote this verse:

so whereabouts is  
Rain-Hat isle? how far along  
muddy roads of June

We stayed the night at Iwanuma.

## &lt;武隈&gt;

武隈の松にこそめ覚る心地はすれ。根は土際より二木にわかれて、昔の姿うしなはずとしらる。先能因法師思ひ出、往昔むつのかみにて下りし人、此木を伐て、名取川の橋杭にせられたる事などあればにや。松は此たび跡もなしとは詠たり。代々あるは伐、あるひは植継などせしと聞に、今将千歳のかたちとゝのほひて、めでたき松のけしきになん侍し。

武隈の松みせ申せ遅桜と拳白と云ものゝ餞別したりければ、桜より松は二木を三月越シ

The Pine of Takekuma is truly an amazing sight. The trunk forks into two just above the ground, confirming that this is just how the old tree must have looked. I thought immediately of the priest Nōin. Long ago, a nobleman, newly appointed to serve as Governor of Mutsu, had felled the tree and used the wood as pilings for a bridge over the Natori River. Nōin wrote in a poem, 'No trace is left now of the pine'. I was told that, generation after generation, the pine had been felled, yet a new one replanted. After perhaps a thousand years, the present pine is still quite perfect in shape.

When I had started my journey, Kyohaku had given me a poem as a farewell present:

late cherry blossoms ...  
let my master see the pine  
at Takekuma

I now wrote in reply:

since the cherries bloomed  
I've longed to see the twin pine ...  
three long months have passed

<仙台>

名取川を渡りて仙台に入。あやめふく日也。旅宿をもとめて四五日逗留す。爰に画工加衛門と云ものあり。聊心ある者と聞て知る人になる。この者年比さだかならぬ名ところを考置侍ればとて、一日案内す。宮城野の萩茂りあひて、秋の景色思ひやらるゝ。玉田よこ野つゝじが岡はあせび咲ころ也。日影ももらぬ松の林に入て爰を木の下と云とぞ。昔もかく露ふかければこそ、みさぶらひみかさとはよみたれ。薬師堂天神の御社など拝て、其日はくれぬ。猶、松嶋塩がまの所〃画に書て送る。且、紺の染緒つけたる草鞋二足錢す。さればこそ風流のしれもの、爰に至りて其实を顕す。あやめ艸足に結ん草鞋の緒

We crossed the river Natori and went into Sendai. It was the day when people hang blue irises beneath the eaves. We found an inn where we stayed for four or five days. In the town, there was a painter called Kaemon. I had heard he was a man of truly artistic taste, and I got to know him. He told me he had spent several years tracing places mentioned in poetry that had become hard to locate; and one day, he took us to see some of them. The fields of Miyagino were thick with bush clover, and I could imagine the sight in autumn. It was the season when the pieris flowered around Tamada, Yokono and Tsutsuji-ga-oka. We walked through a pine forest so thick that sunlight could not penetrate at all, and were told its name, Konoshita [Under-the-Trees]. The dripping dew must have been heavy there even in ancient times, for in one poem, a servant is asked to tell his lord to take an straw hat. We offered prayers at Yakushidō Shrine and the Shrine at Tenjin before the day drew to a close.

As parting gifts, Kaemon presented us with sketches of Matsushima and Shiogama and various other local places. He also gave us two pairs of straw sandals, with straps deep iris-blue. These presents showed how much a man of cultivated taste he was:

I will bind iris  
blossoms round about my feet –  
straps for my sandals

## &lt;壺の碑&gt;

かの画図にまかせてたどり行ば、おくの細道の山際に  
十符の菅有。今も年々十符の菅菰を調て国守に献ずと云り。

## 壺碑

市川村多賀城に有

つぼの石ぶみは高サ六尺餘横三尺計歟。苔を穿て文字幽也。四維  
国界之数里をしるす。此城、神亀元年、按察使鎮守府將軍大野朝  
臣東人之所置也。天平宝字六年、参議東海東山節度使、同將軍惠  
美朝臣獲修造而十二月朔日と有。聖武皇帝の御時に当れり。

むかしよりよみ置る哥枕、おほく語傳ふといへども、山崩川落て  
、跡あらたまり、石は埋て土にかくれ、木は老て若木にかはれば  
、時移り代変じて、其跡たしかならぬ事のみを、爰に至りて疑な  
き千歳の記念、今眼前に古人の心を閲す。行脚の一徳、存命の悦  
び、羈旅の労をわすれて泪も落るばかり也。

Following the drawings that Kaemon had provided, we came to the *tofu* sedge, growing at the foot of the mountains where the Narrow Road to the Deep North runs. The local people apparently still make ten-stranded matting each year for presentation to the provincial Governor. We found the Tsubo stone monument at Tagajō in the village of Ichikawa. The stone is a little over six feet high and about three feet wide.

Once the moss covering the stone had been scraped away, letters could be faintly seen beneath, recording the distances to all four corners of the country. There was an inscription also:

*This castle was built in the first year of Jinki [724] by Ōno-no- Azumabito, Inspector and Governor General. It was repaired in the sixth year of Tempyō-hōji [762] by Emi-no-asomi-Asakari, Councillor, Governor of the Eastern Sea and Eastern Mountain districts, and Governor General. First day of the twelfth month*

So the founding took place during the reign of the Emperor Shōmu. Of all the many places celebrated in poetry since ancient times, most have vanished. Mountains have crumbled, rivers taken new courses, and roads new routes. Stones have been buried and hidden in the earth, and old trees have given way to saplings. Time passes and the world changes. But here, before my eyes, was a monument that had endured a thousand years. I felt that I could understand the feelings of the people of the past. 'This,' I thought, 'is the traveller's reward. This is the joy of having lived so long.' I forgot the hardships of the road, and was moved to tears.

## &lt;末の松山&gt;

それより野田の玉川沖の石を尋ぬ。末の松山は寺を造りて末松山といふ。松のあひ／＼皆墓はらにて、はねをかはし枝をつらぬる契の末も終はかくのごときと悲しさも増りて、塩がまの浦に入相のかねを聞。五月雨の空聊はれて、夕月夜幽に、籬が嶋もほど近し。蟹の小舟こぎつれて、肴わかつ声／＼に、つなでかなしもとよみけん心もしられて、いとゞ哀也。其夜、目盲法師の琵琶をならして奥上るりと云ものをかたる。平家にもあらず、舞にもあらず。ひなびたる調子うち上て、枕ちかうかしましけれど、さすがに辺土の遺風忘れざるものから、殊勝に覚る。

We stopped along the Tama River at Noda and at Oki-no-ishi [the Great Stone in the Lake], both made famous in poetry. On Sue-no-matsuyama [the Endless Pines], a temple with the same name, *Masshōzan*,\* had been built. Everywhere among the pine trees, graves were spread. They filled me with a great sadness, reminding me that all the vows to be 'a single pair of wings or intertwining branches' \*\* came in the end to this. As we came to Shiogama Bay, the evening bell was tolling.

The sky had cleared a little after steady rain. Under the faint rays of the evening moon, the island of Magaki could be seen not far from shore. A line of small fishing boats came rowing in. I could hear the voices of the fishermen as they divided up their catch. And I understood now what the poet meant who wrote, 'It catches the heart – a fishing boat pulled to shore'. That night, I listened to a blind singer reciting a north-country ballad to the accompaniment of his lute. It was not like the stories of Heike, or traditional dancing songs. He was performing close to my bed, and I found the rustic tones of his voice very noisy. But then I realized how admirable it was that such fine old customs were still preserved in this distant land.

\**Masshōzan* the Sinitified reading of Sue-no-matsuyama.

\*\**a single pair of wings or intertwining branches'* a quotation from a celebrated poem by Po Chü-i, 'Song of Everlasting Regret'. The images are clearly metaphors for everlasting love.



## &lt;塩釜明神&gt;

早朝塩がまの明神に詣。国守再興せられて、宮柱ふとしく彩椽きらびやかに石の階、九仞に重り、朝日あけの玉がきをかゞやかす。かゝる道の果塵土の境まで、神靈あらたにましますこそ、吾国の風俗

なれどいと貴けれ。神前に古き宝燈有。かねの戸びらの面に文治三年和泉三郎寄進と有。五百年來の佛今目の前にうかびて、そゞろに珍し。渠は勇義忠孝の士也。佳命今に至りて、したはずといふ事なし。誠人能道を勤、義を守べし。名もまた是にしたがふと云り。日既午にちかし。船をかりて松嶋にわたる。其間二里餘、雄嶋の磯につく。

Early the next morning, we visited the Shrine at Shiogama, which had been restored by the governor of the province. Its pillars stood huge and majestic, brightly painted rafters sparkled, and stone steps rose up flight after flight. The crimson fencing was dazzling in the morning sunlight. How wonderful it was, I thought, that in this land of ours, the divine powers of the gods should show themselves even in so remote a place as this.

In front of the sanctuary, there was an old lantern with an inscription on its iron door, 'Presented by Izumi-no-Saburō in the third year of Bunji [1187]'. It was strange how these words brought back things unchanged for over five hundred years. Izumi-no-Saburō had been a brave and honourable soldier, a loyal and loving son. His fame has lasted to the present day, and there is no one now who does not honour him. How true it is that, if men strive to walk in the way of truth and uphold righteousness, fame will follow of itself.

It was nearly noon. We hired a boat and crossed to Matsushima. After five miles on the water, we landed on the beach of the island of Ojima.

No matter how often it has been said, Matsushima is the most beautiful place in all Japan, and can easily hold its own against T'ung-t'ing or the Western Lake in China. The sea surges in from the southeast into a bay seven miles across, its waters brimming full like the Zhejiang River in China. There are more islands than anyone could count. Some rise up steeply, as through thrusting towards the skies; some are flat, and seem to crawl on their stomachs into the waves. Some seem piled double, or even three layers high. To the left, they appear separate; to the right, joined together. Some look as if they carried others on their backs, and some as if they held them in their arms, like a parent caring for a little child or grandchild. The pines are of the deepest green, and their branches, constantly buffeted by the winds from the sea, seem to have acquired a twisted shape quite naturally. The scene suggests the serene charm of a lovely woman's face. Matsushima truly might have been created by Ōyamazumi [God of the Mountains] in the Great Age of the Gods. What painter or what writer could ever capture fully the wonder of this masterpiece of nature?

The Island of Ojima [Male Island] juts out from the mainland into the sea. Here are the remains of the priest Ungo's retreat, and the rock on which he used to meditate. I glimpsed a few other recluses among the pines as well. We saw smoke rising from a fire of twigs and pine cones at one quiet, thatched hut. We did not know what kind of man the occupant might be, and yet we felt drawn towards the spot. As we approached, the moon shone down upon the water, transforming the scene from how it had appeared by day.

We returned to the shore and found lodgings, a second-storey room with open windows that looked out over the bay. As we lay there in the midst of breeze and cloud, I felt a marvellous exhilaration. Sora wrote:

Matsushima, oh ...  
you will need cranes' wings to fly  
little cuckoo bird

I was silent. I tried to sleep but could not. When I had left my old cottage, I had been presented by Sodō with a poem in Chinese about Matsushima, and a *tanka* by Hara Anteki about Matsu-garashima [Bay Isle of Pines].

I took them out of my bag as my companions for the night. I had some *hokku* too, composed by Sanpū and Jokushi.

十一日、瑞岩寺に詣。当寺三十二世の昔、真壁の平四郎出家して、入唐帰朝の後開山す。其後に雲居禪師の徳化に依て、七堂薨改りて、金壁莊嚴光を輝、仏土成就の大伽藍とはなれりける。彼見仏聖の寺はいづくにやとしたはる。

On the eleventh, we visited the temple at Zuigan. Long, long ago – thirty- two generations before the present – Makabe no Heishirō had entered Buddhist orders, gone to China to study, and then returned to found the temple. Later, under the goodly influence of the monk Ungo, its seven halls had been rebuilt. Now the temple was a great centre of worship, with dazzling golden walls – a true paradise on earth. Yet still I wondered where the holy man Kenbutsu's temple might have been.

## &lt;石の巻&gt;

十二日、平和泉と心ざし、あねはの松緒だえの橋など聞傳て、人跡稀に雉兔蕨ぜうの往かふ道、そこともわかず、終に路ふみたがえて石の巻といふ湊に出。こがね花咲とよみて奉たる金花山海上に見わたし、数百の廻船入江につどひ、人家地をあらそひて、竈の煙立つゞけたり。思ひがけず斯る所にも来れる哉と、宿からんとすれど、更に宿かす人なし。漸まどしき小家に一夜をあかして、明れば又しらぬ道まよひ行。袖のわたり尾ぶちの牧まのゝ萱はらなどよそめにみて、遥なる堤を行。心細き長沼にそふて、戸伊摩と云所に一宿して、平泉に到る。其間廿余里ほどゝおぼゆ。

On the twelfth, we set out for Hiraizumi, choosing a little-travelled track used only by hunters, grass-cutters and woodchoppers. We had intended to go by way of the famous Pine of Anewa and the Bridge of Odae, but blundering along, we lost our way and ended up at the port town of Ishinomaki. Far off across the water, we could see Kinkazan, the mountain where a poem had evoked 'the flowers of gold in bloom'.

Hundreds of merchant ships clustered in the bay, houses jostled against each other, and smoke rose up everywhere from cooking fires. Astonished to have stumbled on such a place, we looked for lodgings, but no-one had a room to spare, so we spent the night in a wretched little hut.

Early next morning, we again set out on an uncertain journey on unfamiliar roads. As we followed an embankment that stretched on and on interminably, we could see in the distance Sode-no-watari [Sleeve Crossing], Obuchi-no-maki [Horse Pastures], and Mano-no-kayahara [Vine Fields of Mano], all celebrated in verse. We skirted round a long, depressing marsh to a place called Toima, where we spent the night. Then we went on to Hiraizumi. We must have covered over fifty miles.

The glory of three generations of the Fujiwara passed as if in a dream. Their Great Gate lies in ruins, two miles this side of the castle. The land where Hidehira's mansion stood has now returned to paddy fields. Only Mount Kinkeizan [Gold Cockrel Mountain] looks the same as in the past. We climbed up Takadachi [Palace on the Heights] first. From there, we could see the Kitakami, a mighty river that flows down from Nanbu, and also the Koromo, a river that circles round Izumi Castle before it empties into the big river below Takadachi. Yasuhira's castle stands beyond the Koromo Barrier, seemingly to protect the Nanbu gateway from invasion by the Ainu. There at Takadachi, Yoshitsune and a chosen band of loyal men tried to entrench themselves – but their heroic actions turned in the twinkling of an eye to nothing more than clumps of grass:

The country is destroyed; yet mountains and rivers remain.  
Spring comes to the castle; the grass is green again.

With my hat as a seat, and these lines running through my head, I stayed there weeping till time seemed no more.

mounds of summer grass –  
the place where noble soldiers  
one time dreamed a dream  
in deutzia flowers  
Kanefusa seems to me –  
oh, such white, white hair  
(Sora)

The two halls we had heard so much about were both open. In the Sutra Hall stood the statues of the three generals of Hiraishumi; in the Golden Hall, their coffins and three sacred images. The Golden Hall's seven precious things \* had been scattered and lost, the gem-studded doors ravaged by the winds, the gold-fretted pillars rotted by the frosts and snow. The temple would certainly have collapsed and turned to nothing more than grass, had not new walls been built around, and a tiled roof put on against the wind and rain. A memorial of a thousand years has, for a little time, been preserved.

so the rains of spring  
fall and fall, yet leave untouched  
this bright Hall of Gold

\***the Golden Hall's seven precious things** so designated in Buddhism, according to Hiroaki Sato. The allusions are to gold, silver, emerald, glass, giant clam, coral, and agate.

<尿前の関>

南部道遥にみやりて、岩手の里に泊る。 小黒崎みづの小嶋を過て、なるこの湯より、尿前の関にかゝりて、出羽の国に越んとす。此路旅人稀なる所なれば、関守にあやしめられて、漸として関をこす。大山をのぼつて日既暮ければ、封人の家を見かけて舎を求む。三日風雨あれて、よしなき山中に逗留す。蚤虱馬の尿する枕もとあるじの云、是より出羽の国に大山を隔て、道さだかならざれば、道しるべの人を頼て越べきよしを申。さらばと云て人を頼侍れば、究境の若者反脇指をよこたえ、櫛の杖を携て、我／＼が先に立て行。けふこそ必あやうきめにもあふべき日なれと、辛き思ひをなして後について行。あるじの云にたがはず、高山森々として一鳥声きかず、木の下闇茂りあひて夜る行がごとし。雲端につちふる心地して、篠の中踏分／＼、水をわたり岩に蹶て、肌につめたき汗を流して、最上の庄に出づ。かの案内せしおのこの云やう此みち必不用の事有。恙なうをくりまいらせて、仕合したりとよろこびてわかれぬ。跡に聞てさへ胸とどろくのみ也。

The road to Nanbu stretched far away towards the north, so we turned back and spent the night at the village of Iwade. From there, we passed by Ogurazaki and Mizu-no-ojima, and from the hot springs at Narugo, headed for the Barrier at Shitomae, intending to cross into Dewa Province.

The road was so little used by travellers that the guards at the checkpoint examined us suspiciously, and we barely managed to get through. As we toiled upwards on the mountain, the darkness began to fall, so when we saw a house belonging to a border guard, we asked for shelter. For three whole days, the wildest storm raged on, and trapped us there, among the dreary mountains:

Fleas and lice all round –  
and now a horse that piddles  
right by my pillow

Our host told us that the road into Dewa was an ill-marked trail through high mountains; we would be wise to hire a guide to show us the way. We agreed, and hired a strapping young man, who strode ahead with a scimitar at his side and an oak staff in his hand. As we followed him, we worried that this would be the day we were sure to run into danger. Just as our host had said, the mountains were high and densely wooded.

Not a single bird-cry could be heard. It was dark beneath the canopy of trees, so dark it was like walking in the night. Feeling as if 'dust was raining from the edges of the clouds', we groped our way through thickets of bamboo, waded across streams, stumbled over rocks, all the while in a cold sweat of fear, until at last we reached the town of Mogami. In high spirits, our guide then told us that unpleasant things were always happening on the trail we'd followed. He'd been lucky to bring us through in safety. Even though the danger was now past, his words made our hearts still pound.

*\*'dust was raining from the edges of the clouds' a phrase from a poem by Tu Fu (712-770).*

## &lt;尾花沢&gt;

尾花沢にて清風と云者を尋ぬ。かれは富るものなれども、志いや  
しからず。都にも折々かよひてさすがに旅の情をも知たれば、日  
比とゞめて、長途のいたはり、さま%＼にもてなし侍る。

涼しさを我宿にしてねまる也  
這出よかひやが下のひきの声  
まゆはきを俤にして紅粉の花  
蠶飼する人は古代のすがた哉 曾良

At Obanazawa, we called on Seifū, a man whose wealth did not eclipse his fine taste. As a frequent visitor to the capital, he knew what it felt like to be a traveller; and he made us stay for several days, showering us with all kinds of hospitality, to make us forget the hardships of our long journey.

the lovely coolness  
of this lodging – I sit here  
wholly at my ease  
come on, crawl out now!  
beneath the silkworm nursery  
croaking of a toad  
so they bring to mind  
a lady's small eyebrow brush –  
these saffron blossoms  
the silkworm nurses –  
figures that bring back to mind  
a time long ago  
(Sora )

## &lt;立石寺&gt;

山形領に立石寺と云山寺あり。慈覚大師の開基にて、殊清閑の地也。一見すべきよし、人々のすゝむるに依て、尾花沢よりとつて返し、其間七里ばかり也。日いまだ暮ず。棧の坊に宿かり置て、山上の堂にのぼる。岩に巖を重て山とし、松柏年旧土石老て苔滑に、岩上の院々扉を閉て物の音きこえず。岸をめぐり、岩を這て仏閣を拝し、佳景寂寞として心すみ行のみおぼゆ。

閑さや岩にしみ入蟬の声

In the province of Yamagata, there is a mountain temple called Ryūshaku-ji. Founded by the Great Teacher Jikaku, it is a wonderfully serene and tranquil place. We had been urged to go there, and so had retraced our steps from Obanazawa, a distance of some seventeen miles.

It was still daylight when we arrived. We reserved a lodging in the pilgrims' hostel at the foot of the mountain, and then climbed up to the temple on the summit. The mountain was made up of boulder upon boulder, with ancient pines and cypresses upon its slopes. Moss lay like velvet upon the soil and stones. At the summit, the temple doors were closed, and not one single sound was to be heard. But we skirted round the cliffs and scrambled over the rocks, and reached the temple precincts. The quiet and lonely beauty of the place seemed to purify our hearts:

the utter silence ...

cutting through the very stone

a cicada's rasp



## &lt;最上川&gt;

最上川のらんと、大石田と云所に日和を待。爰に古き俳諧の種こぼれて、忘れぬ花のむかしをしたひ、芦角一声の心をやはらげ、此道にさぐりあしゝて、新古ふた道にふみまよふといへども、みちしるべする人しなければとわりなき一巻残しぬ。このたびの風流爰に至れり。

最上川はみちのくより出て、山形を水上とす。こてんはやぶさなど云おそろしき難所有。板敷山の北を流て、果は酒田の海に入。左右山覆ひ、茂みの中に船を下す。是に稲つみたるをやいな船といふならし。白糸の瀧は青葉の隙／＼に落て仙人堂岸に臨て立。水みなぎつて舟あやうし。  
五月雨をあつめて早し最上川

We hoped to sail down the Mogami River, and waited for the weather to clear at a place called Ōishida. I was told that the seeds of the old *haikai* poetry had been scattered here, and that people still cherished the memory of those unforgotten flowers from the past. The rustic notes of simple reeds and horns could still bring music to their hearts. They had tried, they said, to grope their way towards the right path. But without a guide, they had found it difficult to choose between the old styles and the new. I could scarcely leave without composing with them a sequence of poems. The poetry-making of my journey had reached even here. The Mogami River has its source deep in the northern mountains, and its upper reaches run through Yamagata. The Goten [Go-stones] and Hayabusa [Falcon] rapids are just two of the terrifying dangers on its course. It skirts Mount Itajiki on the north and finally enters the sea at Sakata. Our boat cascaded down through thick foliage, with mountains overhanging us on either side. It was probably the same kind of boat that the old poem described as 'rice boats', though those were laden with grain. Through breaks in the green leaves, we could see the Shiraito [White Thread] Falls. The Sennindō [Mountain Wizard] Hall stands there too, right at the water's edge. The river was wollen, and our journey dangerous:

gathering the rains  
of summer, how swift it is –  
Mogami River.

On the third day of the sixth month [19 July], we climbed Mount Haguro. There we visited a man called Zushi Sakichi, who obtained for us an audience with the chief priest, Egaku. He put us up in the Minamidani [Southern Valley] temple, and treated us with the greatest kindness. On the fourth day, there was a *haikai* gathering at the high priest's residence:

oh what sweet delight ...  
the cool fragrances of snow  
in southern valley

On the fifth day, we went to worship at Haguro shrine. It was founded by the Great Teacher Nōjo, though nobody now knows at what period he lived. The *Engi Book of Ceremonies* mentions a shrine called 'Satoyama in Dewa Province'. But it is possible that *sato* is a copyist's error for *kuro*. Perhaps, too, Haguroyama is an abbreviation of Ushū Kuroyama. According to the local guide-book, the name *Dewa* [present feathers] derives from the custom in this province of offering birds' feathers as a tribute.

Haguro, together with Gassan and Yudono mountains, make up the Three Mountains of Dewa. The temple here is affiliated with Tōeizan Kan'eiji Temple in Edo. Lit by the bright moon of Tendai concentration and insight, it holds up the lamp of perfection and enlightenment. The monks' quarters stand row upon row; and the ascetics practise their discipline with zeal. You cannot but feel both reverence and awe before the miraculous power of this holy place. It will flourish forever, this magnificent mountain.

On the eighth day, we climbed Gassan [Moon Mountain]. Wearing paper necklaces, with white turbans round our heads, we toiled upwards for twenty miles, led by a sturdy mountain guide, through clouds and mists, over ice and snow. We wondered if we would not soon share the paths followed by the sun and moon. Breathless and numb with cold, we finally reached the summit, just as the sun was setting and the moon rising. Spreading out a bed of bamboo-grass, with bamboo leaves as pillows, we lay down and waited for the dawn. As the sun rose and burned away the clouds, we started down towards Yudono.

Close to the valley, we passed what had been a smithy. The sword-smiths of the province had used the holy waters here to purify themselves and forge their celebrated swords, which finally they would engrave with the name 'Gassan' [Moon Mountain]. I remembered that swords used to be tempered, too, at the Dragon Springs in China. Inspired by the

終月山と銘を切て世に賞せらる。彼龍泉に劍を淬とかや。干将莫耶のむかしをしたふ。道に堪能の執あさからぬ事しられたり。岩に腰かけてしばしやすらふほど、三尺ばかりなる桜のつぼみ半ばひらけるあり。ふり積雪の下に埋て、春を忘れぬ遅ざくらの花の心わりなし。炎天の梅花爰にかほるがごとし。行尊僧正の哥の哀も爰に思ひ出て、猶まさりて覚ゆ。惣而此山中の微細、行者の法式として他言する事を禁ず。仍て筆をとめて記さず。坊に帰れば、阿闍利の需に依て、三山順札の句ヲ短冊に書。涼しさやほの三か月の羽黒山雲の峯幾つ崩て月の山語られぬ湯殿にぬらす袂かな 湯殿山錢ふむ道の泪かな 曾良

ancient example of Kan-chiang and Mo-yeh\*, those sword-smiths had shown, I came to realise, how completely dedicated they had been to perfecting their craft. As I sat on a rock resting a while, I noticed a cherry tree, barely three feet high, with buds half-open. It was moving that, for all the snow it had been buried under, this late cherry blossom had not forgotten spring. It was like 'plum blossoms in the scorching sun'\*\*, perfuming the air. The memory of Archbishop Gyōson's touching poem moved me even more.

It is a rule among ascetics not to reveal details about Mount Yudono to other people, so now I must lay down my brush and say no more. When we returned to our lodgings, Egaku asked me to write out on poem cards the verses inspired by our pilgrimage to the Three Mountains:

such lovely coolness...  
palely now the crescent moon  
on Mount Haguro  
how many cloud peaks  
have come tumbling down upon  
the moon's own mountain  
I cannot speak of Mount Yudono –  
yet see how wet my sleeve is now

And Sora wrote:

Yudono Mountain –  
as I walk through pilgrims' coins  
tears come to my eyes

\**ancient example of Kan-chiang and Mo-yeh* a husband and wife team, who were the most famous swordsmiths in ancient China.

\*\**'plum blossoms in the scorching sun'* an allusion to two lines which compare the poetry of Ch'en Yü-I (1090-1138) to the blossoms of plum trees under a scorching sun.

<酒田>

羽黒を立て、鶴が岡の城下、長山氏重行と云物のふの家にむかへ  
られて、誹諧一卷有。左吉も共に送りぬ。川舟に乗て酒田の湊に  
下る。淵庵不玉と云医師の許を宿とす。あつみ山や吹浦かけて夕すゞみ  
暑き日を海にいれたり最上川

After leaving Haguro, we went to the castle town of Tsurugaoka, where we were the guests of a samurai called Nagayama Shigeyuki. We composed a poetry sequence at his house. Sakichi came with us all the way. We boarded a river boat and went downstream to the port of Sakata. There, we stayed at the house of a physician named En'an Fugyoku:

from Hot Springs Mountain  
all the way to Windy Bay –  
the cool of evening  
the blistering sun  
is gathered in the sea by  
Mogami River

We had already enjoyed so many splendid sights of rivers and mountains, sea and land; but now I could think of nothing but seeing Kisakata. We travelled northeast from the port of Sakata, climbing over hills, following the coastline, trudging through the sand – a journey of some twenty-five miles. Towards sunset, a wind from the sea began to whip up the sand, and a misty rain started to fall, blotting Mount Chōkai from view.

Groping our way in the darkness, I was sure that, if the view was quite outstanding in the rain, it would prove even more beautiful when the weather had cleared. We squeezed into a fisherman's thatched hut, and waited for the rain to stop.

The next day dawned clear, and as the bright morning sun rose, we took a boat out on the lagoon of Kisakata. We went first to Nōinjima, to visit the spot where Nōin had lived for three years in seclusion. On the opposite shore, where we next landed the boat, we saw the old cherry tree that stood as a memorial to Saigyō, who had written of fishing boats 'rowing above the cherry blossoms'. Near the water's edge was a tomb that was said to be Empress Jingū's, with a temple nearby called Kanmanju-ji [Ebb-and-Flow-Pearls Temple]. I had never heard before that she had come this way, and wondered if the story were true.

As we sat in a room at the front of the temple and rolled up the screens, the entire landscape unfolded before us. To the south, Mount Chōkai propped up the sky, its image reflected in the water. To the west, the Muyamuya Barrier blocked the road. To the east, the road to Akita stretched out on an embankment far into the distance. To the north was the sea, whose waves broke into the lagoon at a place called Shiogoshi [Tide-Crossing].

Kisakata, which is little more than two miles long and wide, reminded me of Matsushima; but there was a difference. Whereas Matsushima seemed to smile, Kisakata had a gloomy, bitter air. The lonely, melancholy scene evoked a troubled human soul:

Kisakata rain –  
Seishi lying all asleep with  
wet mimosa flowers  
crossing of the tides ...  
a crane, its long legs splashing –  
ah how cool the sea

祭礼

象潟や料理何くふ神祭 曾良 蚕の家や戸板を敷て夕涼みのゝ国の商人低耳  
岩上に雉鳩の巣をみる 波こえぬ契ありてやみさごの巣 曾良

*Festival*

in Kisakata –

what special food is eaten  
at the festival?

(Sora)

a fisherman's hut –

boards upon the sand, they taste  
the cool of evening

(Teiji, a Mino merchant)

Seeing an osprey nest upon a rock:

did they make a vow

that waves should never hit there –

those nesting ospreys?

(Sora)

## &lt;越後路&gt;

酒田の余波日を重て、北陸道の雲に望、遙々のおもひ胸をいたましめて加賀の府まで百卅里と聞。鼠の関をこゆれば、越後の地に歩行を改て、越中の国一ぶりの関に到る。此間九日、暑湿の勞に神をなやまし、病おこりて事をしるさず。文月や六日も常の夜には似ず荒海や佐渡によこたふ天河

I was so loath to leave Sakata that we lingered there for several days. But then we set out towards the distant clouds on the Hokuriku [Northern Land] Road. The prospect of yet another long journey ahead filled me with dread. It was said to be well over three hundred miles to Kanazawa, the capital of Kaga Province. Once past the Barrier of Nezu, we continued our journey through Echigo Province as far as the Barrier of Ichiburi in Etchū. The heat and the rain during these nine days of travel wore me out completely, and I felt too ill to write anything:

so in the seventh month  
the sixth day does not bring in  
a usual night\*

billow-crested seas!  
flowing towards Sado Isle  
heaven's Milky Way

*\*the sixth day does not bring in / a usual night* The seventh night of the seventh month was Tanabata, a festival that celebrated the meeting of two stars in the sky once a year. The anticipation of both festival and meeting, Bashō implies, means that the night before is also a special time.

<市振>

今日は親しらず子しらず犬もどり駒返しなど云北国一の難所を越  
てつかれ侍れば、枕引よせて寝たるに、一間隔て面の方に若き女  
の声二人計ときこゆ。年老たるおのこの声も交て物語するをきけ  
ば、越後の国新潟と云所の遊女成し。伊勢参宮するとて、此関ま  
でおのこの送りて、あすは古郷にかへす文したゝめてはかなき言  
伝などしやる也。白浪のよする汀に身をはふらかし、あまのこの  
世をあさましう下りて、定めなき契、日々の業因いかにつたなし  
と、物云をきく／＼寝入て、あした旅立に、我々にむかひて、行  
衛しらぬ旅路のうさ、あまり覚束なう悲しく侍れば、見えがくれ  
にも御跡をしたひ侍ん。衣の上の御情に大慈のめぐみをたれて結  
縁せさせ給へと泪を落す。不便の事には侍れども、我／＼は所〃  
にてとゞまる方おほし。只人の行にまかせて行べし。神明の加護  
かならず恙なかるべしと云捨て出つゝ、哀さしばらくやまざりけらし。  
一家に遊女もねたり萩と月 曾良にかたれば、書とゞめ侍る。

Today we passed along the most dangerous stretches of road in the whole of the north country – places with names like 'Children Forget Parents', 'Parents Forget Children', 'Dogs Turn Back', 'Horse Sent Back'. I was so exhausted that, by nightfall, I pulled my pillow close to me and tried to sleep. But from one room beyond us at the front of the house, I could hear young women's voices – two of them, it seemed – talking to an old man whose voice mingled with theirs. As I listened, I gathered that they were prostitutes from Niigata in Echigo Province. They were on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Ise, and the old man had escorted them as far as this barrier. They would be sending him back to Niigata next morning, and were giving him letters and trivial messages to take back with him. Adrift 'on the shore where white waves roll in', these fishermen's daughters' had fallen low in the world, exchanging fleeting vows, committing daily sins. What awful karma had doomed them to such wretchedness? And then I fell asleep, their whispers in my ears. Next morning, as we were preparing to leave, the two women came up to us. 'We're really very anxious at starting on this hard journey on unknown roads. Will you let us follow you? We'll stay well out of sight. You're dressed like priests. Please show us the Buddha's compassion, and lead us to believe.' They were in tears. 'I'm sorry for you', I responded, 'but we'll be stopping a great many times. Just stay with others going your way. The gods will protect you and see you there safely.' We started off straightway, but it was some time before I could stop feeling sympathy for them.

beneath this same roof  
prostitutes were sleeping too –  
clover and the moon

I spoke these lines to Sora, who wrote them down.



<黒部>

くろべ四十八が瀬とかや、数しらぬ川をわたりて、那古と云浦に出。擔箆の藤浪は春ならずとも、初秋の哀とふべきものをと人に尋れば、是より五里いそ伝ひして、むかふの山陰にいり、蟹の苦ぶきかすかなれば、蘆の一夜の宿かすものあるまじといひをどされて、かゞの国に入。

わせの香や分入右は有磯海

People speak of the 'forty-eight channels' of the Kurobe River, and indeed we had to cross countless streams before we reached the bay at Nago. Although it was not spring, we were urged not to miss the wisteria at Tako in early autumn. We asked a man the way and were told, 'You'll have to follow the shore for about ten miles, and then you'll find Tako in the hollow of those mountains. There're just a few miserable thatch-covered huts there. They belong to fishermen. You won't find anyone to put you up for the night.' Frightened away by his comments, we went on into Kaga Province:

scent of early rice –  
to the right, as we push through,  
the Ariso Sea

<金沢>

卯の花山くりからが谷をこえて金沢は七月中の五日也。爰に大坂  
よりかよふ商人何處と云者有。それが旅宿をともにす。一笑と云ものは、此道にすける  
名のほの%＼聞えて、世に知人もしに、去年の冬早世したりとて、其兄追善を催すに  
塚も動け我泣声は秋の風 ある草庵にいざなはれて 秋涼し手毎にむけや瓜茄子  
途中吟 あか／＼と日は難面もあきの風

After crossing Mount Unohana and Kurikara Valley, we reached Kanazawa on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. We shared lodgings with a merchant named Kasho, who had come up from Ōsaka. A man by the name of Isshō, who had begun to gain some reputation for his devotion to poetry, had been living in Kanazawa; but he had died young the previous winter. His brother arranged a haikai gathering in his memory:

the gravemound should move!  
my crying voice is echoed  
in the autumn wind

On being invited to a thatched hut:

the cool of autumn –  
our hands are busy peeling  
melon and eggplant

Composed on the road:

the red, blazing red,  
of the pitiless sun – yet  
autumn in the wind

<大田神社>

小松と云所にてしほらしき名や小松吹萩すゝき

此所太田の神社に詣。真盛が甲錦の切あり。往昔源氏に属せし時、義朝公より給はらせ給とかや。げにも平士のものにあらず。目

より吹返しまで、菊から草のほりもの金をちりばめ龍頭に鍬形

打たり。真盛討死の後、木曾義仲願状にそへて此社にこめられ侍よし、樋口の次郎が使せし事共、まのあたり縁記にみえたり。むざんやな甲の下のきり%＼す

At a place called Komatsu [Young Pines]:

what a lovely name!

the wind blows through young pines, bush

clover, pampas grass

In Komatsu, we went to worship at the Tada Shrine, where we saw Sanemori's helmet and a piece of his brocade tunic. We were told that long ago, while he was serving the Monomoto clan, the helmet had been a gift from Lord Yoshitomo. Indeed, it was no ordinary warrior's headgear. From visor to earflaps, it was engraved with a chrysanthemum arabesque design inlaid with gold, and the front was crowned with a dragon's head and a pair of horns. The shrine chronicles vividly tell how Kiso no Yoshinaka, after killing Sanemori in battle, offered the helmet with a petition to the shrine, and how Higuchi no Jirō acted as messenger.

the pity of it ...

trapped underneath a helmet

a cricket chirping

<那谷>

山中の温泉に行ほど、白根が嶽跡にみなしてあゆむ。左の山際に観音堂あり。花山の法皇三十三所の順礼とげさせ給ひて後、大慈悲の像を安置し給ひて那谷と名付給ふとや。那智谷組の二字をわかち侍しとぞ。奇石さま%＼に古松植ならべて、萱ぶきの小堂岩の上に造りかけて、殊勝の土地也。石山の石より白し秋の風

As we walked towards the hot springs at Yamanaka, we could still see the peak of Shirane over our shoulders. A temple dedicated to Kannon stood to our left, at the foot of a mountain. We were told the temple had been founded by the retired Emperor Kazan. After he had completed a pilgrimage to the Thirty-Three Spiritual Places, he installed a statue here of the All-Compassionate, All-Merciful Kannon, and gave the place the name 'Nata', combining the 'na' of Nachi with the 'ta' of Tanigumi. There were many strangely shaped rocks, rows of ancient pines, and a small thatched temple atop a massive boulder. It was a place of marvelous beauty.

whiter far than all  
the stones of Ishiyama –  
the autumnal wind

<山中>

温泉に浴す。其功有明に次と云。山中や菊はたおらぬ湯の匂  
あるじとする物は久米之助とていまだ小童也。かれが父誹諧を好  
み、洛の貞室若輩のむかし爰に來りし比、風雅に辱しめられて、  
洛に歸て貞徳の門人となつて世にしらる。功名の後、此一村判詞  
の料を請ずと云。今更むかし語とはなりぬ。  
曾良は腹を病て、伊勢の国長嶋と云所にゆかりあれば、先立て行に、  
行行てたふれ伏とも萩の原 曾良  
と書置たり。行ものゝ悲しみ残ものゝうらみ隻鳥のわかれて雲に  
まよふがごとし。予も又今日よりや書付消さん笠の露

We bathed in the hot springs, which were said to be second only to  
Ariake in effectiveness  
at Yamanaka,  
no need for chrysanthemums –  
the scent of hot springs

The innkeeper, who was still a youth, was called Kumenosuke. His father had been very fond of poetry, and had put the poet Teishitsu to shame by his superior knowledge, when the master had come here from Kyōto as a young man. Teishitsu went back to the city, studied under Teitoku, and later gained recognition. But even after he became famous, it is said, he would never accept any payment for correcting verses written by anyone from this village. This is an old, old story. Sora had developed a stomach complaint, and he went ahead to Nagashima in Ise Province, where he had relatives. He left me this verse:

onwards I must go –  
if I should fall, let it be  
amidst bush clover

The sorrow of the one who went ahead, and the sadness of the one who remained behind, seemed like two lapwings parting from each other and losing their way in the clouds. I too wrote a verse: from this day the words inside my hat will vanish with the dew of tears\*

\* *the words / inside my hat* Travelling companions, such as Bashō and Sora, often wrote standard inscriptions, such as 'two travellers alone in all the world', inside their hats. Bashō's sorrow at Sora's departure will erase those words.

## &lt;全昌寺&gt;

大聖持の城外、全昌寺といふ寺にとまる。猶加賀の地也。曾良も前の夜此寺に泊て、終宵秋風聞やうらの山残す。一夜の隔、千里に同じ。吾も秋風を聞て衆寮に臥ば、明ぼのゝ空近う読経声すむまゝに、鐘板鳴て食堂に入。けふは越前の国へと心早卒にして、堂下を下るを若き僧ども紙硯をかゝえ、階のもとまで追来る。折節庭中の柳散れば、庭掃て出るや寺に散柳とりあへぬさまして草鞋ながら書捨つ。

Still in Kaga Province, I stayed at Zenshōji, a temple outside the castle town of Daishōji. Sora had stayed there the night before, and had left this poem for me:

throughout the long night  
listening to the autumn wind  
in the hills behind

We had been only one night apart, yet it seemed like a thousand miles. That night, I too lay sleepless in the guest room, listening to the autumn wind. Towards dawn, I could clearly hear the sound of voices chanting a sutra. A gong was struck, and I went into the refectory. Eager to get to Echizen Province that day, I left the hall as soon as possible, but some young monks ran after me to the foot of the stairs, paper and inkstone in their hands. The willow in the garden had scattered some of its leaves, and so I wrote:

let's sweep the garden  
then set out – in the temple  
the willow leaves fall

Straw sandals on, I dashed off this impromptu verse.

## &lt;汐越の松&gt;

越前の境、吉崎の入江を舟に棹して汐越の松を尋ぬ。終宵嵐に波をはこばせて  
 月をたれたる汐越の松 西行  
 一首にて数景尽たり。もし一辨を加るものは、無用の指を立る  
 がごとし。丸岡天竜寺の長老古き因あれば尋ぬ。又金沢の北枝といふもの、  
 かりそめに見送りて、此處までしたひ来る。所々の風景過さず思  
 ひつゞけて、折節あはれなる作意など聞ゆ。今既別に望みて、  
 物書て扇引さく余波哉 十丁山に入て永平寺を礼す。道元禅師の御寺也。邦機千里を避  
 て、かゝる山陰に跡をのこし給ふも貴きゆへ有とかや。

I crossed Lake Yoshizaki by boat, the border of Echizen province, and went to visit the  
 Shiogoshi [Tide-Crossing] Pines.

throughout the long night  
 the waves are lashed by a storm  
 that drives them to shore –  
 and moonlight drips from their boughs,  
 the pines of Shiogoshi

In this single poem, Saigyō crystallises the essence of the scene at Shiozaki. To add even a single  
 word would be like adding an extra useless finger to a hand.

At Maruoka, I called upon an old friend, the abbot of the Tenryū Temple. A man called Hokushi,  
 from Kanazawa, had intended to accompany me for a short distance, but he had finally come all  
 the way to Maruoka, unable to say goodbye. No sight on the journey had escaped his notice, and  
 he wrote some moving poems. Now that we were parting, I wrote:

I've scribbled words, but  
 how to tear the fan apart –  
 goodbyes are so hard\*

I went three or four miles into the mountains to worship at Eiheiji, the temple of the Zen Master  
 Dōgen. I understand that he had some profound reason for avoiding the vicinity of the capital  
 and for building his temple in such remote mountains as these.

*\*how to tear the fan apart now that summer had ended, a fan was no longer needed. In spite of this, Bashō seems to  
 have impulsively scribbled some words on a fan, which made it all the more difficult to throw it away.*

<福井>

福井は三里計なれば、夕飯したゝめて出るに、たそがれの路たど／＼し。爰に等裁と云古き隠士有。いづれの年にか江戸に來りて予を尋。遙十とせ餘り也。いかに老さらぼひて有にや、將死けるにやと人に尋侍れば、いまだ存命してそこ／＼と教ゆ。市中ひそかに引入て、あやしの小家に夕顔へちまのはえかゝりて、鶏頭は木ゝに戸ぼそをかくす。さては此うちにこそと門を叩ば、侘しげなる女の出て、いづくよりわたり給ふ道心の御坊にや。あるじは此あたり何がしと云ものゝ方に行ぬ。もし用あらば尋給へといふ。かれが妻なるべしとしらる。むかし物がたりにこそかゝる風情は侍れと、やがて尋あひて、その家に二夜とまりて、名月はつるがのみなどにとたび立。等裁も共に送らんと裾おかしうからげて、路の枝折とうかれ立。

Although Fukui was only six or seven miles away, I did not set out until after supper, and it was an uncertain journey along the twilight road. Fukui was where Tōsai had long been living as a recluse. He had come to Edo and visited me once – I was not sure exactly when, but it must have been more than ten years previously. I assumed he must be very old and feeble now, perhaps even dead. But when I asked about him, I was told that he was still alive in such-and-such a place. I found his wretched, tiny house in an out-of-the-way corner of the town. Moonflowers and bottle-gourds covered the walls, and the door was hidden beneath cockscomb and broom grass. This must be it, I thought, and rapped on the gate. A woman of humble appearance came out and asked: 'Where have you come from, your reverence? The master's gone to visit someone in the neighborhood. If you've got business with him, please search him out there.' I assumed she was his wife. It was just like a scene from that old novel,\* I thought, as I went in search of him. I found him without trouble, and spent two nights in his house, after which I got ready to set out again, hoping to see the full moon over Tsuruga Harbour. Tōsai offered to keep me company and, with his kimono skirts tucked jauntily into his sash, set out in high spirits as my guide.

*\*that old novel seemingly an allusion to a sentence in Murasaki Shikibu's eleventh-century The Tale of Genji, in which Genji muses, "I've heard something like this only in an old story", Genji thought, mystified."*



## &lt;敦賀&gt;

漸白根が嶽かくれて、比那が嵩あらはる。あさむづの橋をわたりて、玉江の蘆は穂に出にけり。鶯の関を過て湯尾峠を越れば、燧城、かへるやまに初鴈を聞て、十四日の夕ぐれつるがの津に宿をもとむ。その夜、月殊晴たり。あすの夜もかくあるべきにやといへば、越路の習ひ、猶明夜の陰晴はかりがたしと、あるじに酒すゝめられて、けいの明神に夜参す。仲哀天皇の御廟也。社頭神さびて、松の木の間に月のもり入たる。おまへの白砂霜を敷るがごとし。往昔遊行二世の上人、大願発起の事ありて、みづから草を刈、土石を荷ひ泥濘をかはかせて、参詣往来の煩なし。古例今にたえず。神前に真砂を荷ひ給ふ。これを遊行の砂持と申侍ると、亭主かたりける。月清し遊行のもてる砂の上十五日、亭主の詞にたがはず雨降。名月や北国日和定なき

Shinane Mountain gradually disappeared from sight as Mount Hina came into view. We crossed the bridge at Azamuzu, and saw the reeds at Taema in bloom. Beyond the Barrier at Uguisu [Song Birds] and over Yunō Pass, we came to Hiuchi Castle. At Mount Kaeru, I heard the cries of the first wild geese of autumn. Towards twilight on the fourteenth day, I found lodgings at the port of Tsuruga. That night, the moon was particularly clear and bright. 'Will it be fine tomorrow night for the full moon?' I asked the innkeeper. 'In these northern lands,' he replied, offering me some wine, 'who knows from one night to the next whether it'll be cloudy or fine?'

That night, we went to the Shrine at Kehi, the place where the Emperor Chūai is worshipped. A sense of holiness pervaded everything. In the moonlight that filtered in between the pine trees, the white sand in front of the sanctuary glistened as if covered with frost. The innkeeper told me, 'Once, long ago, the second Pilgrim-Priest made a great vow. He himself cut grass and carried earth and rock to dry up the surrounding marsh, so that it would be easier for worshippers to come and go.' The practice is still observed. Every priest still carries sand to sprinkle before the shrine – a custom called the 'sand-carrying of the Pilgrim-Priest'.

pure light of the moon  
glistening on the grains of sand  
brought by the pilgrims

On the fifteenth, just as the innkeeper had said it might, it rained.

night of the full moon!  
the weather in the north land  
so often changes

## &lt;種の浜&gt;

十六日、空霽たればますほの小貝ひろはんと種の濱に舟を走す。海上七里あり。天屋何某と云もの、破籠小竹筒などこまやかにしゝめさせ、僕あまた舟にとりのせて、追風時のまに吹着ぬ。濱はわづかなる海士の小家にて侘しき法花寺あり。爰に茶を飲酒をあたくめて、夕ぐれのわびしさ感に堪たり。寂しさや須磨にかちたる濱の秋波の間や小貝にまじる萩の塵 其日のあらまし、等裁に筆をとらせて寺に残す。

On the sixteenth, the skies cleared, and so we went by boat to Iro-no-hama Beach to gather some little clam shells. It was about seventeen miles across the water. A man called Ten'ya had prepared all kinds of refreshments for us – lunch baskets and bamboo flasks of *sake* – and had ordered several of his servants to go with us in the boat. In no time at all, a tail wind blew us to the shore. On the beach, there were only a few fishermen's shacks and a forlorn Nichiren temple where we drank tea and warmed up *sake*. As evening began to fall, the sense of isolation was unbearable.

oh what loneliness ...  
 more desolate than Suma  
 this beach in autumn  
 between each wave-break ...  
 mixed with small shells, the debris  
 of bush-clover flowers

I asked Tōsai to write a description of what had happened that day, and left it at the temple.

<大垣>

路通も此みなとまで出むかひて、みのゝ国へと伴ふ。駒にたすけられて、大垣の庄に入  
ば、曾良も伊勢より来り合、越人も馬をとせて、如行が家に入集る。前川子荊口父子、  
其外したしき人々 日夜とぶらひて、蘇生のものにあふがごとく、且悦び且いたはる  
。旅の物うさもいまだやまざるに、長月六日になれば、伊勢の遷  
おがまんと、又舟にのりて 蛤のふたみにわかれ行秋ぞ

Rotsū came to Tsuraga to welcome me back, and we travelled together to Mino Province. Our  
journey was made easier by having horses to ride. When we arrived at Ōgaki, Sora joined us  
from Ise. Etsujin had also galloped in on horseback, and we all gathered together at Jokō's house.  
All day and night, my closest friends – Zensenji, Keikō, Keikō's sons, and others – came to visit.  
They seemed as happy and concerned as if I had just returned from the dead.

Despite my travel weariness, I set out on the sixth day of the ninth month [18 October] to witness  
the rebuilding of the Great Shrine at Ise. As I stepped again into a boat, I wrote:

so, to Futami,  
like a clam ripped from its shell ...  
autumn's deepening now

# The Narrow Road to the Deep North

*Oku no Hosomichi* (奥の細道, originally おくのほそ道, meaning "Narrow road to/of the interior"), translated alternately as *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* and *The Narrow Road to the Interior*, is a major work by the Japanese poet Matsuo Bashō considered "one of the major texts of classical Japanese literature."



The text is written in the form of a travel diary and was penned as Bashō made an epic and dangerous journey on foot through the Edo Japan of the late 17th century. While the poetic work became seminal of its own account, the poet's travels in the text have since inspired many people to follow in his footsteps and trace his journey for themselves. In one of its most memorable passages, Bashō suggests that "every day is a journey, and the journey itself home."

Of *Oku no Hosomichi*, Kenji Miyazawa once suggested, "It was as if the very soul of Japan had itself written it".



## Plot

*Oku no Hosomichi* was written based on a journey taken by Bashō in the late spring of 1689. He and his traveling companion Kawai Sora (河合曾良) departed from Edo (modern-day Tokyo) for the northerly interior region known as Oku, propelled mostly by a desire to see the places about which the old poets wrote<sup>[6]</sup> in an effort to "renew his own art".<sup>1</sup> Specifically, he was emulating Saigyō, whom Bashō praised as the greatest waka poet; Bashō made a point of visiting all the sites mentioned in Saigyō's verse. Travel in those days was very dangerous, but Bashō was committed to a kind of poetic ideal of wandering. He traveled for about 156 days altogether, covering thousands of miles mostly on foot. Of all of Bashō's works, this is the best known.

This poetic diary is in the form known as haibun, a combination of prose and haiku. It contains many references to Confucius, Saigyō, ancient Chinese poetry, and even *The Tale of the Heike*. It manages to strike a delicate balance between all the elements to produce a powerful account. It is primarily a travel account, and Bashō vividly relates the unique poetic essence of each stop in his travels. Stops on his journey include the Tokugawa shrine at Nikkō, the Shirakawa barrier, the islands of Matsushima, Hiraizumi, Sakata, Kusakata, and Etchū. He and Sora parted at Yamanaka, but at Ōgaki he briefly met up with a few of his other disciples before departing again to the Ise Shrine and closing the account.

After his journey, he spent five years working and reworking the poems and prose of *Oku no Hosomichi* before publishing it. Based on differences between draft versions of the account,

Sora's diary, and the final version, it is clear that Bashō took a number of artistic liberties in the writing. An example of this is that in the *Senjūshū* ("Selection of Tales") attributed to Saigyō, the narrator is passing through Eguchi when he is driven by a storm to seek shelter in the nearby cottage of a prostitute; this leads to an exchange of poems, after which he spends the night there. Bashō similarly includes in *Oku no Hosomichi* a tale of him having an exchange with prostitutes staying in the same inn, but Sora mentions nothing.

## Philosophy behind the text



Nobuyuki Yuasa notes that Bashō studied Zen meditation under the guidance of the Priest Buccho, though it is uncertain whether Bashō ever attained enlightenment. The Japanese Zen scholar D. T. Suzuki has described Bashō's philosophy in writing poetry as one requiring that both "subject and object were entirely annihilated" in meditative experience. Yuasa likewise writes: "Bashō had been casting away his earthly attachments, one by one, in the years preceding the journey, and now he had nothing else to cast away but his own self which was in him as well as around him. He had to cast this self away, for otherwise he was not able to restore his true identity (what he calls the 'everlasting self which is poetry')." Thus, Yuasa notes "*The Narrow Road to the Deep North* is Bashō's study in eternity, and in so far as he has succeeded in this attempt, it is also a monument he has set up against the flow of time."

## Matsuo Bashō



**Matsuo Bashō** (松尾 芭蕉?, 1644 – November 28, 1694), born **Matsuo Kinsaku** (松尾 金作?), then **Matsuo Chūemon Munafusa** (松尾 忠右衛門 宗房?), was the most famous poet of the Edo period in Japan. During his lifetime, Bashō was recognized for his works in the collaborative *haikai no renga* form; today, after centuries of commentary, he is recognized as a master of brief and clear haiku. His poetry is internationally renowned, and within Japan many of his poems are reproduced on monuments and traditional sites.

Bashō was introduced to poetry at a young age, and after integrating himself into the intellectual scene of Edo he quickly became well-known throughout Japan. He made a living as a teacher, but renounced the social, urban life of the literary circles and was inclined to wander throughout the country, heading west, east, and far into the northern wilderness to gain

inspiration for his writing. His poems were influenced by his firsthand experience of the world around him, often encapsulating the feeling of a scene in a few simple elements.

## Early life

Basho was born in 1644, near Ueno, in Iga Province. His father may have been a low-ranking samurai, which would have promised Bashō a career in the military, but not much chance of a notable life. It was traditionally claimed by biographers that he worked in the kitchens. However, as a child, Bashō became a servant to Tōdō Yoshitada (藤堂 良忠?), who shared with Bashō a love for *haikai no renga*, a form of collaborative poetry composition. The sequences were opened with a verse in 5-7-5 mora format; this verse was named a *hokku*, and would later be renamed *haiku* when presented as a stand-alone work. The *hokku* would be followed by a related 7-7 mora verse by another poet. Both Bashō and Yoshitada gave themselves *haigō* (俳号?), or *haikai* pen names; Bashō's was Sōbō (宗房?), which was simply the on'yomi reading of his adult name of **Matsuo Munefusa** (松尾 宗房?). In 1662 the first extant poem by Bashō was published; in 1664 two of his *hokku* were printed in a compilation, and in 1665 Bashō and Yoshitada composed a one-hundred-verse *renku* with some acquaintances.

Yoshitada's sudden death in 1666 brought Bashō's peaceful life as a servant to an end. No records of this time remain, but it is believed that Bashō gave up the possibility of samurai status and left home. Biographers have proposed various reasons and destinations, including the possibility of an affair between Bashō and a Shinto *miko* named Jutei (寿貞?), which is unlikely to be true. Bashō's own references to this time are vague; he recalled that "at one time I coveted an official post with a tenure of land", and that "there was a time when I was fascinated with the ways of homosexual love", but there is no indication whether he was referring to real obsessions or even fictional ones. He was uncertain whether to become a full-time poet; by his own account, "the alternatives battled in my mind and made my life restless". His indecision may have been influenced by the then still relatively low status of *renga* and *haikai no renga* as more social activities than serious artistic endeavors. In any case, his poems continued to be published in anthologies in 1667, 1669, and 1671, and he published his own compilation of work by him and other authors of the Teitoku school, *Seashell Game* (貝おほひ *Kai Ōi*?), in 1672. In about the spring of that year he moved to Edo, to further his study of poetry.

## Rise to fame

In the fashionable literary circles of Nihonbashi, Bashō's poetry was quickly recognized for its simple and natural style. In 1674 he was inducted into the inner circle of the *haikai* profession, receiving secret teachings from Kitamura Kigin (1624–1705). He wrote this *hokku* in mock tribute to the Shogun:

*kabitan mo / tsukubawasekeri / kimi ga haru*  
the Dutchmen, too, / kneel before His Lordship— / spring under His reign. [1678]

He gave himself the *haigō* of Tōsei and by 1680 he had a full-time job teaching twenty disciples, who published *The Best Poems of Tōsei's Twenty Disciples* (桃青門弟独吟二十歌仙 *Tōsei-montei Dokugin-Nijukasen*?), advertising their connection to Tōsei's talent. That winter, he took the surprising step of moving across the river to Fukagawa, out of the public eye and towards a more reclusive life. His disciples built him a rustic hut and planted a banana tree (芭蕉 *bashō*?) in the yard, giving Bashō a new *haigō* and his first permanent home. He appreciated the plant very much, and was not happy to see Fukagawa's native miscanthus growing alongside it:

*bashō uete / mazu nikumu ogi no / futaba kana*  
by my new banana plant / the first sign of something I loathe— / a miscanthus bud!  
[1680]

Despite his success, Bashō grew dissatisfied and lonely. He began to practise Zen meditation, but it seems not to have calmed his mind. In the winter of 1682 his hut burned down, and shortly afterwards, in early 1683, his mother died. He then traveled to Yamura, to stay with a friend. In the winter of 1683 his disciples gave him a second hut in Edo, but his spirits did not improve. In 1684 his disciple Takarai Kikaku published a compilation of him and other poets, *Shriveled Chestnuts* (虚栗 *Minashiguri*?). Later that year he left Edo on the first of four major wanderings.

Traveling in medieval Japan was immensely dangerous, and at first Bashō expected to simply die in the middle of nowhere or be killed by bandits. As the trip progressed, his mood improved and he became comfortable on the road. He met many friends and grew to enjoy the changing scenery and the seasons. His poems took on a less introspective and more striking tone as he observed the world around him:

*uma wo sae / nagamuru yuki no / ashita kana*  
even a horse / arrests my eyes—on this / snowy morrow [1684]

The trip took him from Edo to Mount Fuji, Ueno, and Kyoto. He met several poets who called themselves his disciples and wanted his advice; he told them to disregard the contemporary Edo style and even his own *Shriveled Chestnuts*, saying it contained "many verses that are not worth discussing". He returned to Edo in the summer of 1685, taking time along the way to write more *hokku* and comment on his own life:

*toshi kurenu / kasa kite waraji / hakinagara*  
another year is gone / a traveler's shade on my head, / straw sandals at my feet [1685]

When Bashō returned to Edo he happily resumed his job as a teacher of poetry at his *bashō* hut, although privately he was already making plans for another journey. The poems from his journey were published as *Account of Exposure to the Fields* (野ざらし紀行 *Nozarashi kikō*?). In early 1686 he composed one of his best-remembered haiku:

*furu ike ya / kawazu tobikomu / mizu no oto*  
an ancient pond / a frog jumps in / the splash of water [1686]



Historians believe this poem became instantly famous: in April, the poets of Edo gathered at the *bashō* hut for a *haikai no renga* contest on the subject of frogs that seems to have been a tribute to Bashō's *hokku*, which was placed at the top of the compilation. Bashō stayed in Edo, continuing to teach and hold contests, with an excursion in the autumn of 1687 when he traveled to the countryside for moon watching, and a longer trip in 1688 when he returned to Ueno to celebrate the Lunar New Year. At home in Edo, Bashō sometimes became reclusive: he alternated between rejecting visitors to his hut and appreciating their company. At the same time, he enjoyed his life and had a subtle sense of humor, as reflected in his *hokku*:

*iza saraba / yukimi ni korobu / tokoromade*  
 now then, let's go out / to enjoy the snow... until / I slip and fall! [1688]

## *Oku no Hosomichi*



Bashō's private planning for another long journey culminated on May 16, 1689 (Yayoi 27, Genroku 2), when he left Edo with his student and apprentice Kawai Sora (河合 曾良?) on a journey to the Northern Provinces of Honshū. Bashō and Sora headed north to Hiraizumi, which they reached on June 29. They then walked to the western side of the island, touring Kisakata on July 30, and began hiking back at a leisurely pace along the coastline. During

this 150-day journey Bashō traveled a total of 600 *ri* (2,400 km) through the northeastern areas of Honshū, returning to Edo in late 1691.

By the time Bashō reached Ōgaki, Gifu Prefecture, he had completed the log of his journey. He edited and redacted it for three years, writing the final version in 1694 as *The Narrow Road to the Interior* (奥の細道 *Oku no Hosomichi*?). The first edition was published posthumously in 1702. It was an immediate commercial success and many other itinerant poets followed the path of his journey. It is often considered his finest achievement, featuring *hokku* such as:

*araumi ya / Sado ni yokotau / amanogawa*  
 the rough sea / stretching out towards Sado / the Milky Way [1689]



## Last years

On his return to Edo in the winter of 1691, Bashō lived in his third *bashō* hut, again provided by his disciples. This time, he was not alone; he took in a nephew and his female friend, Jutei, who were both recovering from illness. He had a great many visitors.

Bashō continued to be uneasy. He wrote to a friend that "disturbed by others, I have no peace of mind". He made a living from teaching and appearances at *haikai* parties until late August of 1693, when he shut the gate to his *bashō* hut and refused to see anybody for a month.



Finally, he relented after adopting the principle of *karumi* or "lightness", a semi-Buddhist philosophy of greeting the mundane world rather than separating himself from it. Bashō left Edo for the last time in the summer of 1694, spending time in Ueno and Kyoto before his arrival in Osaka. He became sick with a stomach illness and died peacefully, surrounded by his disciples. Although he did not compose any formal death poem on his deathbed the following, being the last poem recorded during his final illness, is generally accepted as his poem of farewell:

*tabi ni yande / yume wa kareno wo / kake meguru*  
falling sick on a journey / my dream goes wandering / over a field of dried grass [1694]

## Influence and literary criticism

Rather than sticking to the formulas of *kigo* (季語?), which remain popular in Japan even today, Bashō aspired to reflect his real environment and emotions in his *hokku*. Even during his lifetime, the effort and style of his poetry was widely appreciated; after his death, it only increased. Several of his students compiled quotations from him about his own poetry, most notably Mukai Kyorai and Hattori Dohō.

During the 18th century, appreciation of Bashō's poems grew more fervent, and commentators such as Ishiko Sekisui and Moro Nanimaru went to great length to find references in his *hokku* to historical events, medieval books, and other poems. These commentators were often lavish in their praise of Bashō's obscure references, some of which were probably literary false cognates. In 1793 Bashō was deified by the Shinto bureaucracy, and for a time criticizing his poetry was literally blasphemous.

It was not until the late 19th century that this period of unanimous passion for Bashō's poems came to an end. Masaoka Shiki, arguably Bashō's most famous critic, tore down the long-standing orthodoxy with his bold and candid objections to Bashō's style. However, Shiki was also instrumental in making Bashō's poetry accessible to leading intellectuals and the Japanese public at large. He invented the term *haiku* (replacing *hokku*) to refer to the freestanding 5-7-5 form which he considered the most artistic and desirable part of the *haikai no renga*.

Critical interpretation of Bashō's poems continued into the 20th century, with notable works by Yamamoto Kenkichi, Imoto Nōichi, and Ogata Tsutomu. The 20th century also saw translations of Bashō's poems into languages and editions around the world. His position in Western eyes as the *haiku* poet *par excellence* gave him great influence, and by virtue of Western preference for *haiku* over more traditional forms like the *tanka* or *renga*, have rendered him the archetype of Japanese poets and poetry, with some western scholars even believing that he invented haiku. The impressionistic and concise nature of his verse influenced particularly Ezra Pound and the Imagists, and later the poets of the Beat Generation. Claude-Max Lochu, on his second visit to Japan, created his own "travel painting", inspired by Bashō's use of travel as inspiration. Robbie Basho and Steffen Basho-Junghans were also influenced by him.



## On the Poet's Trail

**Footsteps fall softly  
Following the path  
Of Japan's haiku master.**

By Howard Norman for National Geographic  
Photograph by Michael Yamashita

"Each day is a journey, and the journey itself home," the poet Matsuo Basho wrote more than 300 years ago in the first entry of his masterpiece, *Oku no Hosomichi*, or *Narrow Road to a Far Province*. The words are on my mind as I prepare to walk in the footsteps of this revered poet, along his narrow road—the 1,200-mile route he followed through Japan in 1689. I confess that even to imagine doing so is a bit daunting. My late friend Helen Tanizaki, a linguist born and raised in Kyoto, told me, "Everyone I went to school with could recite at least one of Basho's poems by heart. He was the first writer we read in any exciting or serious way." Today thousands of people pilgrimage to Basho's birthplace and burial shrine and travel parts of Basho's Trail. After three centuries his *Narrow Road*, in print in English and many other languages, still speaks to readers around the world.

Given the pernicious clamor and uncertainties of our own times, it's easy for a modern reader to identify with the vague unease that Basho sometimes complained of. Whatever its source—Basho lived a turbulent life in a changing Japan—his melancholy was an intensifying element in much of his writing and an important part of what, in the end, propelled him on his journeys.

Few details are known about Basho's early life, but he is thought to have been born in 1644 in the castle town of Ueno, southeast of Kyoto. His father, a minor samurai, may have earned his keep teaching children to write. Many of Basho's siblings probably became farmers.

Basho, however, acquired a taste for literature, perhaps from the son of the local lord, whose service he joined. He learned the craft of poetry from Kigin, a prominent Kyoto poet, and early in his life was exposed to two lasting influences: Chinese poetry and the tenets of Taoism. After his master died, Basho began spending time in Kyoto, practicing a form called *haikai*, consisting of linked verses.

In Basho's time, the first verse in *haikai* was evolving into a poetic idiom of its own—haiku, whose unrhymed phrases of five, seven, and five syllables are meant to capture the essence of nature. Basho published his first haiku under various names, each having some personal significance. One, Tosei, or "green peach," was an homage to the Chinese poet Li Po ("white plum").

In his late 20s Basho moved to Edo (now old Tokyo), a newly established city in great social flux, with a fast-growing population, robust trade, and, for Basho, literary opportunity. Within a few years he had gathered the coterie of students and patrons who formed what came to be known as the Basho School.

In 1680 one of his students built the poet a small house near the River Sumida, and soon after, when another presented him with a stock of *basho* tree (a species of banana), the poet started writing under the name that has endured: Basho. Credible accounts of his life hold that during this period he was plagued with spiritual doubt and took up the study of Zen Buddhism. His despair only deepened in 1682, when his house burned to the ground in a fire that obliterated much of Edo. He wrote:

*Tired of cherry,  
Tired of this whole world,  
I sit facing muddy sake  
And black rice.*

In 1684 Basho made a months-long journey westward from Edo, which occasioned his first travel account, *Journal of a Weather-Beaten Skeleton*. In Basho's day travel was by foot and lodging was primitive. But despite these rigors he set out again in 1687 and a third time in 1687-1688, journeys recounted in *Kashima Journal* and *Manuscript in a Knapsack*. Both were written in a genre that Basho profoundly refined—*haibun*, a mixture of haiku and prose. The poetic travel works and the strenuous sojourns that inspired them added luster to Basho's reputation.

Yet in the autumn of 1688, in his mid-40s, Basho confided to friends that he still felt the world was too much with him. Exhausted from the incessant demands of students and of his literary celebrity, he said that he “felt the breezes from the afterlife cross his face.” He began planning a pilgrimage to sites important for their literary, religious, or military history—places he wanted to see before he died. He intended to leave that winter, but his friends, worried about his frail health, begged him to wait until spring.

Finally, in May 1689, accompanied by his friend and disciple Sora and carrying only a backpack, writing materials, and changes of clothing, Basho set out, determined yet again to become a *hyohakusha*—“one who moves without direction.” He walked for five months through the uplands and lowlands, villages, and mountains north of Edo and along the shores of the Sea of Japan. It was this wonderfully episodic sojourning that produced his masterwork, *Narrow Road to a Far Province*. “It was as if the very soul of Japan had itself written it,” said the early 20th-century Buddhist poet Miyazawa Kenji.

The book is a spiritual journey, synonymous with taking a Buddhist path, shedding all worldly belongings and casting fate to the winds. But the physical journey had a practical side: Basho made his living in part as a teacher, and as he traveled, any number of far-flung disciples were happy to host the master and receive lessons in poetry.

In 1694, the year of Basho’s death, the famed calligrapher Soryu wrote in an epilogue to the *Narrow Road*: “Once had my raincoat on, eager to go on a like journey, and then again content to sit imagining those rare sights. What a hoard of feelings, Kojin jewels, has his brush depicted! Such a journey! Such a man!”

In the intervening centuries, Basho has become many things to many people—bohemian sage, outsider artist, consummate wayfarer, beatific saint, and above all a poet for the ages. In his *Narrow Road*, Basho seamlessly plaits together self-deprecating humor, logistical detail, Buddhist compliance, painterly description, and even raunchy complaint (“Fleas and lice biting; / Awake all night / A horse pissing close to my ear”). At the same time, his book provides a kind of timeless spiritual map for the traveler. Helen Tanizaki once characterized Basho this way: “He’s like a quirky philosopher tour-guide who pretty much leaves readers alone to experience traveling in those remote places for themselves. Rather than trying to account for things, he just feels the obligation to take note of them, a vast striving for connection.”

As I put on my own raincoat and prepare to walk in Basho’s footsteps, I harbor no delusions that I am about to travel through an ancient Japan like that of the *Narrow Road*. As the scholar Donald Keene reported, “Each place it describes is totally transformed. Senju, the first leg of Basho’s journey, is now a bustling commercial district, and Soka, where he spent his first night on the road, contains a mammoth housing development. But the truth of *The Narrow Road* ... will survive such changes.”

Former poet laureate Robert Hass paraphrases Basho this way: “Avoid adjectives of scale, you will love the world more and desire it less.” Following that admonition, I have neither large nor small expectations. I do know that even today, eternal landscapes and age-old shrines can be found along Basho’s route, connecting an open-minded traveler to the past in ways no human

industry can impede. Besides, beauty is found not only in what you observe with compassionate perspicacity but also in how you come to know yourself when alone. Meandering along farmland roads on foot or riding in a car in 21st-century Japan, staying the night in a traditional inn near mount Gassan or in a business hotel in Tokyo, I will seek refuge in the indispensable idea of Basho.

Basho is said to have told a student that he often “held forth” with great Chinese and Japanese poets of the past, calling one such occasion a “conversation with ghost and ghost-to-be.” For over a year now I’ve been thinking of my journey as a kind of portable séance, an ongoing dialogue with Matsuo Basho. I will pray for decent weather (I’ll be traveling during typhoon season), good moon viewing, and quiet hours to fill notebooks. And step by step I will happily define myself as a ghost-to-be.

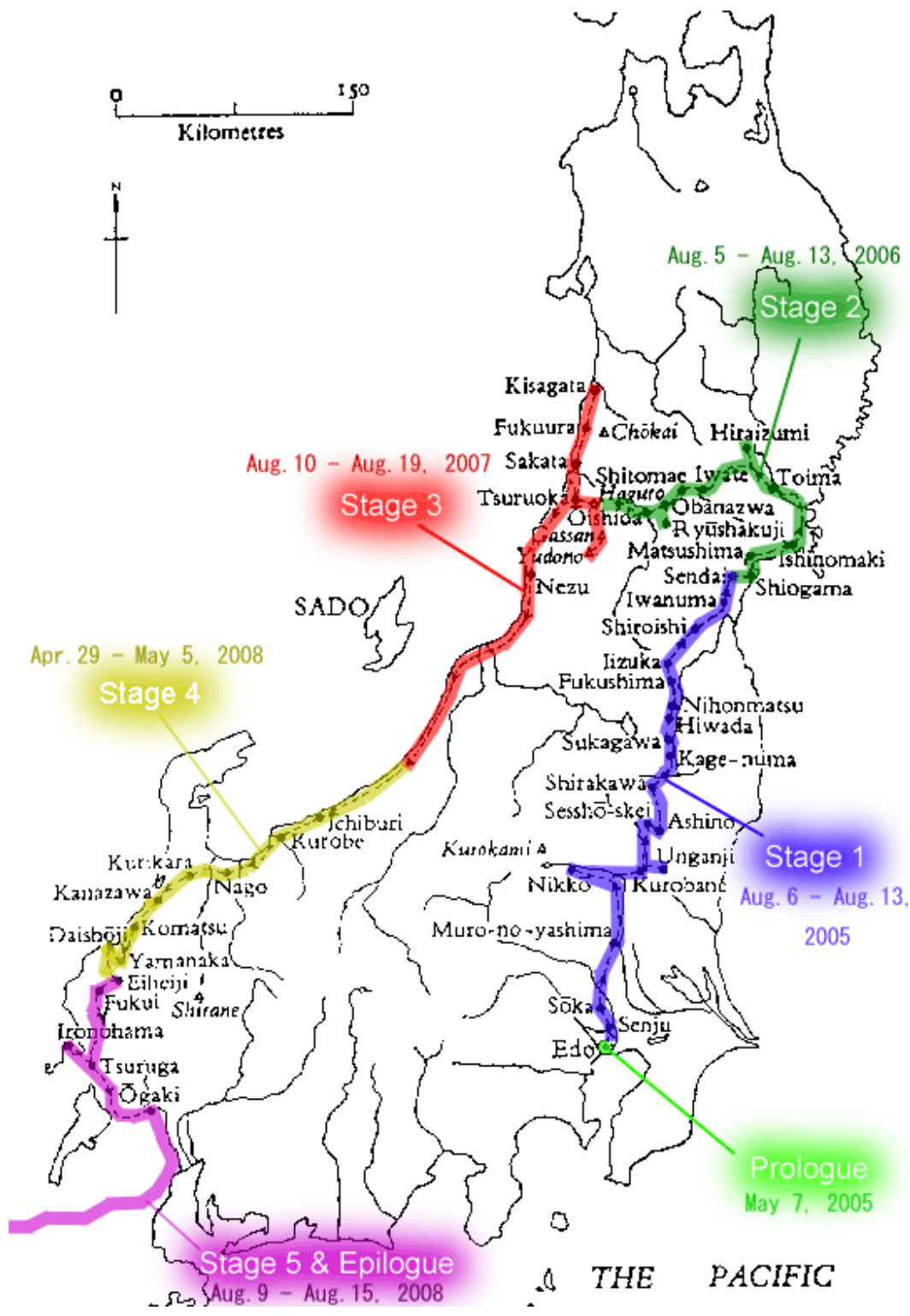
### **On the Poet's Trail**

**Journey along Basho's Trail with writer Howard Norman as he shares his daily observations in this travelogue.**

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2008/02/bashos-trail/bashos-trail-interactive>







THE PACIFIC



# Poems

## By Matsuo Basho

you make the fire  
and I'll show you something wonderful:  
a big ball of snow!

A bee  
staggers out  
of the peony.

A caterpillar,  
this deep in fall--  
still not a butterfly.

A cicada shell;  
it sang itself  
utterly away.

A cold rain starting  
And no hat --  
So?

A cool fall night--  
getting dinner, we peeled  
eggplants, cucumbers.

a cuckoo cries  
and through a thicket of bamboo  
the late moon shines

A field of cotton--  
as if the moon  
had flowered.

A man, infirm  
With age, slowly sucks  
A fish bone.

A monk sips morning tea,  
it's quiet,  
the chrysanthemum's flowering.

A snowy morning--  
by myself,  
chewing on dried salmon.

a strange flower  
for birds and butterflies  
the autumn sky

A weathered skeleton  
in windy fields of memory,  
piercing like a knife

A wild sea-  
In the distance over Sado  
The Milky Way

old pond.....  
a frog leaps in  
water's sound

As they begin to rise again  
Chrysanthemums faintly smell,  
After the flooding rain

Autumn moonlight--  
a worm digs silently  
into the chestnut.

Awake at night--  
the sound of the water jar  
cracking in the cold.

Awake at night--  
the sound of the water jar  
cracking in the cold.

Bitter-tasting ice —  
Just enough to wet the throat  
Of a sewer rat.

bush-clover flowers —  
they sway but do not drop  
their beads of dew

But for a woodpecker  
tapping at a post, no sound  
at all in the house

But for a woodpecker  
tapping at a post, no sound  
at all in the house

Clouds -  
a chance to dodge  
moonviewing.

Cold as it was  
We felt secure sleeping together  
In the same room.

Cold night: the wild duck,  
sick, falls from the sky  
and sleeps awhile.

Waking in the night;  
the lamp is low,  
the oil freezing.

Coolness of the melons  
flecked with mud  
in the morning dew.

Crossing long fields,  
frozen in its saddle,  
my shadow creeps by

Deep into autumn  
and this caterpillar  
still not a butterfly

Don't imitate me;  
it's as boring  
as the two halves of a melon.

Even that old horse  
is something to see this  
snow-covered morning

First day of spring--  
I keep thinking about  
the end of autumn.

First snow  
falling  
on the half-finished bridge.

First winter rain--  
even the monkey  
seems to want a raincoat.

Flower  
under harvest sun - stranger  
To bird, butterfly.

Spring:  
A hill without a name  
Veiled in morning mist.

The beginning of autumn:  
Sea and emerald paddy  
Both the same green.

The winds of autumn  
Blow: yet still green  
The chestnut husks.

A flash of lightning:  
Into the gloom  
Goes the heron's cry.

From time to time  
The clouds give rest  
To the moon beholders..

scent of plum blossoms  
on the misty mountain path  
a big rising sun

Heat waves shimmering  
one or two inches  
above the dead grass.

How admirable!  
to see lightning and not think  
life is fleeting.

How wild the sea is,  
and over Sado Island,  
the River of Heaven

husking rice  
a child squints up  
to view the moon

I like to wash,  
the dust of this world  
In the droplets of dew.

I'm a wanderer  
so let that be my name –  
the first winter rain

In this world of ours,  
We eat only to cast out,  
Sleep only to wake,  
And what comes after all that  
Is simply to die at last.

It is with awe  
That I beheld  
Fresh leaves, green leaves,  
Bright in the sun.

Long conversations  
beside blooming irises –  
joys of life on the road

Midfield,  
attached to nothing,  
the skylark singing.

Moonlight slanting  
through the bamboo grove;  
a cuckoo crying.

Morning and evening  
Someone waits at Matsushima!  
One-sided love

None is travelling  
Here along this way but I,  
This autumn evening.

The first day of the year:  
thoughts come - and there is loneliness;  
the autumn dusk is here.

An old pond  
A frog jumps in -  
Splash!

Lightening -  
Heron's cry  
Stabs the darkness

Clouds come from time to time -  
and bring to men a chance to rest  
from looking at the moon.

In the cicada's cry  
There's no sign that can foretell  
How soon it must die.

Poverty's child -  
he starts to grind the rice,  
and gazes at the moon.

Won't you come and see  
loneliness? Just one leaf  
from the kiri tree.

Temple bells die out.  
The fragrant blossoms remain.  
A perfect evening!

On Buddha's deathday,  
wrinkled tough old hands pray –  
the prayer beads' sound

On New Year's Day  
each thought a loneliness  
as winter dusk descends

On the white poppy,  
a butterfly's torn wing  
is a keepsake

On this road  
where nobody else travels  
autumn nightfall

Passing through the world  
Indeed this is just  
Sogi's rain shelter

Petals of the mountain rose  
Fall now and then,  
To the sound of the waterfall?

Scarecrow in the hillock  
Paddy field --  
How unaware! How useful.

shaking the grave  
my weeping voice  
autumn wind

Sleep on horseback,  
The far moon in a continuing dream,  
Steam of roasting tea.

souls' festival  
today also there is smoke  
from the crematory

Spring rain  
leaking through the roof  
dripping from the wasps' nest.

Stillness--  
the cicada's cry  
drills into the rocks.

Taking a nap,  
feet planted  
against a cool wall.

Teeth sensitive to the sand  
in salad greens--  
I'm getting old.

The banana tree  
blown by winds pours raindrops  
into the bucket

The butterfly is perfuming  
Its wings in the scent  
Of the orchid.

The clouds come and go,  
providing a rest for all  
the moon viewers

The dragonfly  
can't quite land  
on that blade of grass.

The first snow  
the leaves of the daffodil  
bending together

The morning glories  
bloom, securing the gate  
in the old fence

The morning glory also  
turns out  
not to be my friend.

The oak tree:  
not interested  
in cherry blossoms.

The passing spring  
Birds mourn,  
Fishes weep  
With tearful eyes.

The petals tremble  
on the yellow mountain rose –  
roar of the rapids

The shallows –  
a crane's thighs splashed  
in cool waves

The she cat -  
Grown thin  
From love and barley.

The squid seller's call  
mingles with the voice  
of the cuckoo.

the warbler sings  
among new shoots of bamboo  
of coming old age

the whole family  
all with white hair and canes  
visiting graves

The winter leeks  
Have been washed white --  
How cold it is!

The winter storm  
Hid in the bamboo grove  
And quieted away.

This first fallen snow  
is barely enough to bend  
the jonquil leaves

This old village-  
not a single house  
without persimmon trees.

Tremble, oh my gravemound,  
in time my cries will be  
only this autumn wind

under my tree-roof  
slanting lines of april rain  
separate to drops

Ungraciously, under  
a great soldier's empty helmet,  
a cricket sings

The summer grasses  
All that remains  
Of brave soldiers dreams

What fish feel,  
birds feel, I don't know--  
the year ending.

When the winter chrysanthemums go,  
there's nothing to write about  
but radishes.

Winter garden,  
the moon thinned to a thread,  
insects singing.

Winter seclusion –  
sitting propped against  
the same worn post

Winter solitude--  
in a world of one color  
the sound of wind.

With a warbler for  
a soul, it sleeps peacefully,  
this mountain willow

With every gust of wind,  
the butterfly changes its place  
on the willow.

Won't you come and see  
loneliness? Just one leaf  
from the kiri tree.

Wrapping dumplings in  
bamboo leaves, with one finger  
she tidies her hair

Year's end, all  
corners of this  
floating world, swept.

Various Translations of  
The Old Pond  
By Matsuo Basho

**The old pond**

Following are several translations of the 'Old Pond' poem, which may be the most famous of all haiku:

Furuike ya  
kawazu tobikomu  
mizu no oto

-- Basho

Literal Translation

Fu-ru (old) i-ke (pond) ya,  
ka-wa-zu (frog) to-bi-ko-mu (jumping into)  
mi-zu (water) no o-to (sound)

Translated by Fumiko Saisho

The old pond--  
a frog jumps in,  
sound of water.

Translated by Robert Hass

Old pond...  
a frog jumps in  
water's sound.

Translated by William J. Higginson

An old silent pond...  
A frog jumps into the pond,  
splash! Silence again.

Translated by Harry Behn

There is the old pond!  
Lo, into it jumps a frog:  
hark, water's music!

Translated by John Bryan

The silent old pond  
a mirror of ancient calm,  
a frog-leaps-in splash.

Translated by Dion O'Donnol

old pond  
frog leaping  
splash

Translated by Cid Corman

Antic pond--  
frantic frog jumps in--  
gigantic sound.

Translated by Bernard Lionel Einbond

MAFIA HIT MAN POET: NOTE FOUND PINNED TO LAPEL  
OF DROWNED VICTIM'S DOUBLE-BREASTED SUIT!!!

'Dere wasa dis frogg  
Gone jumpa offa da logg  
Now he inna bogg.'

-- Anonymous

Translated by George M. Young, Jr.

Old pond  
leap -- splash  
a frog.

Translated by Lucien Stryck

The old pond,  
A frog jumps in:  
Plop!

Translated by Allan Watts

The old pond, yes, and  
A frog is jumping into  
The water, and splash.

Translated by G.S. Fraser