

Shoryukai Australia Japan October 2025

It's been a long time between drinks for us to engage in group visit to Japan.

We originally thought scheduling it around the end of October for milder weather and the possibility of coinciding with Shimamoto Shihan's birthday. That plan came unstuck with Shihan's passing in May, with a new focus on expressing our support for Shimamoto Tamayuki Sensei who has inherited the role of running Shosenji Dojo and by extension the teacher and mentor of Shoryukai Australia.

In the end, our group comprised seven members: Gotaro Kitayama, Lee Cruikshanks (Gold Coast Budokai), Damon Schearer, Lee Walsh, Clint De Viale (Kuroyama Budokai Canberra), Roy Quek (Northside Budokai), and me (Bayside Budokai).

Kicking Off

We hooked up in Osaka on Tuesday 14 October, with tour guide Gotaro introducing us to the fluffy pancake joint in the Whity Arcade, Umeda for a breakfast calorie hit. The boys then headed to Kyoto for some sightseeing and more importantly the Tozando shop.

In the evening we went over to Toyonaka to meet up with Tamayuki Sensei for a quiet dinner and one or two refreshing drinks.



Wednesday Shosenji

Free time again on Wednesday before our first training session at Shosenji Dojo.

Sensei didn't normally take the Wednesday evening class, but did so on this occasion for our visit. Pleasingly the vibe at Shosenji remains the same and it was great to catch up with old friends and introduce our new members.

Sensei was recently back from taking seminars in Europe accompanied by a group of students. I've long been a fan of Tamayuki Sensei's aikido but a number of changes were quickly evident. He'd clearly spent a lot of time working out how he would present his teaching which was clear and succinct. His posture, presence, and control of ma ai (timing and distance) are extraordinary. Moreover, for a guy who's just turned 60, he moves like a cat. Undoubtedly he is his father's son, but he brings his own game from a lifetime of study.



Thursday Tenkawa and Shudokan

The Tenkawa Shrine in Nara Prefecture has a special connection to Shosenji Dojo. The Head Priest is a cousin of Shimamoto Sensei through the maternal side of the family. The deity enshrined at Tenkawa is Benzaitenno, a goddess associated with music and performing arts. Shosenji regulars will also know that the Shinto shrine on the path

approaching the dojo is also dedicated to Benzaitennoyo having been drawn from the main shrine at Tenkawa.

A few years ago I visited Tenkawa with Tamayuki Sensei. I'm not too much into new age stuff, but deep in the forest in Nara, Tenkawa deserves its reputation as a special power spot.

As a result, we planned to include a day trip to Tenkawa on our trip. Coincidentally, a group from Shosenji led by Tamayuki Sensei that included his sons and the people who accompanied him to Europe were also planning to go to Tenkawa. One of the main reasons being to express thanks for their successful trip.

We rearranged our plans and joined them in going to Tenkawa. Gotaro had meticulously planned how to get there. Train, then hire car to fit the seven of us.

We rendezvoused for lunch and then headed convoy style to a small shrine for misogi and then on to the main Tenkawa Shrine. From then on, it was a really special afternoon. We were received by Sensei's cousin, the head priest. After some tea, we all supplied our names and addresses so that the Kami would know who we were.



We were then escorted into the main sanctuary of the Shrine for a ceremony of prayers before we individually went forward and made a symbolic offering. I'm not sure what

the regular visitors made of our special treatment, but it was an incredibly privileged experience, made possible by Tamayuki Sensei and our Shosenji friends.



Afterwards we paid our respects to the retired Head Priest and Shimamoto Shihan's cousin Mikinosuke Kakisaka. Unfortunately, this was a bit of a rush job as a few of us had to get back to Osaka for iaido training that evening.

With expert driving and navigation from Gotaro we made it back to Osaka in time for Damon, Lee, Clint, Roy and me to head to the Shudokan Dojo in the grounds of Osaka Castle. I'm something of a regular there, but it was first time for Lee, Clint and Roy. The setting itself is a far cry from regular practice in Canberra or Brisbane, not to mention a bit intimidating to step on the floor under the scrutiny of 8 Dan teachers. The good news is that we got through it with Damon even getting a thumbs up from Mitsuyuki Sensei.



Felt a bit tired after a big day.

Friday Shosenji Double Shot

Friday meant two opportunities to train at Shosenji with Tamayuki Sensei. We gatecrashed the morning ladies class and later joined the regular evening class.

The ladies group has continued to grow, and pretty typically they welcomed us to join in to their class. During this session Tamayuki Sensei introduced some exercises with bokken that expanded on his teaching from Wednesday evening.



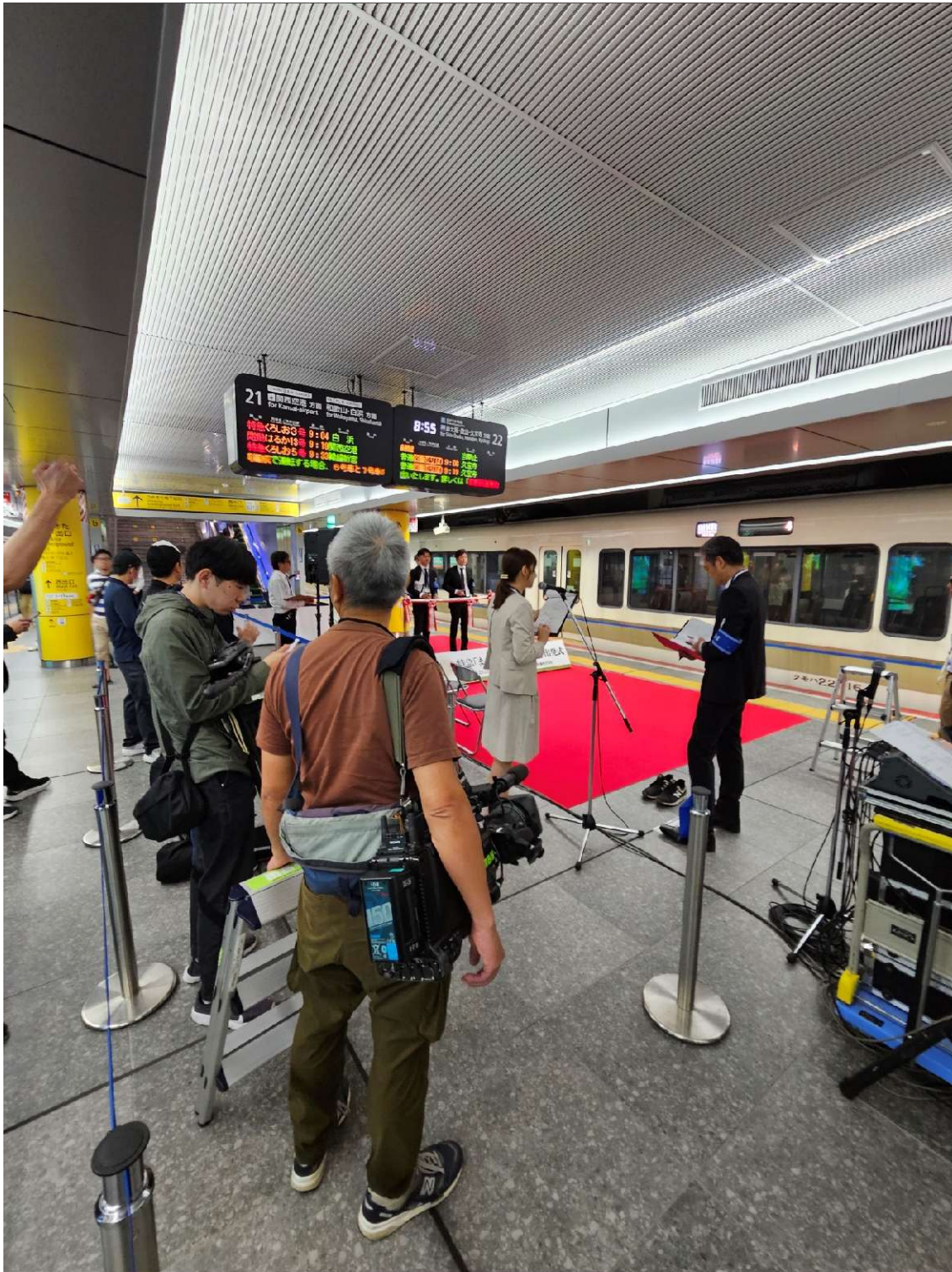
After training we wandered down to Toyonaka. The old okonomiyake joint on the main drag got knocked down about a year ago and was replaced with a new building and much smaller restaurant. Anyway Sensei came down and joined us which was pretty cool.

A bit of a rest in the afternoon before heading back down the Hankyu Railway line. Another top session from Sensei. This time we were lucky, a guy joined for his first class, meaning that Sensei initially went right back to basics before hitting his straps once again.

But like in Lord of the Rings after training it was time to break the fellowship. The Canberra crew were going to hang on in Osaka for the weekend, whilst Gotaro, Lee, Roy and I were to head off to Wakayama.

Saturday and Sunday Tanabe

We headed out of Osaka for a scenic rail trip to Tanabe. Special treat before departure was witnessing the set up for the opening of a new train at Osaka Station, complete with red carpet on the platform, a lectern, designated media area, and a bunch of excited train nerds.



Had time to kill in Tanabe on arrival and grabbed lunch before picking up a hire car. We cruised the short distance to the waterfront, location of a pretty new Budokan which was the venue for a seminar conducted by Ueshiba Moriteru Aikido Doshu that afternoon.

Tanabe is the birthplace of Aikido Founder, Ueshiba Morihei and as one of its most famous sons there's a monument to him near the station and also a fairly famous statue standing facing the steps leading to the Budokan. Inside the building along with your regular auditorium and training spaces, there is a small museum dedicated to his life and achievements.



Gotaro had put his name down as a volunteer to assist with a childrens' aikido seminar to be conducted prior to Doshu's class. Not sure what the story, was but it appeared no one told the visiting instructors from Hombu Dojo that there were people available to help them. In the end, Gotaro and his companions did a great job sitting at the side of the mat poised to jump in and lend a hand..

Whilst watching from the stands, I caught up with Tsujimoto Sensei, who had visited Queensland with a delegation from Takatsuki City about 30 years ago.



There was a good crowd for Doshu's class which ran for about an hour and a half. It was a fairly fast paced session that followed the same format as similar classes of his that I had joined. This time it seemed to be harder going, then I realised the last one would have been more than ten years ago. Maybe getting a bit older.



After the seminar wrapped up, we got stuck in a massive traffic jam as everyone tried to exit the car park. We figured there was insufficient time to check in at our hotel before getting back for the official dinner that evening, so we hung around in town.

This meant that we turned up at the restaurant just prior to start time, coinciding with the arrival of Doshu, his wife and entourage. We made our introductions and then did our best to blend into the background. I had anticipated a stand up affair with finger food where we could slip out without being noticed when the time was right. It turned out to be a Japanese style seated dinner with pretty sensational food.



We got to our hotel, and enjoyed a snappy onsen before crashing out.

Fairly early start on Sunday as we had booked to also attend a memorial service for the Founder that morning. Proof that Gotaro had picked a good place to stay came when we bumped into Doshu and his wife at the breakfast buffet.

The site of the memorial was the Kozanji Temple where the Founder's grave is also located. A really nice location on top of a hill with beautiful buildings and grounds. Being underdressed again, we ensconced ourselves at the back of a marquee adjacent to the main temple building where the Buddhist ceremony was conducted.



Once again, our plans to fly under the radar were dashed when the final phase of the ceremony involved all of the attendees making an offering of incense at the Founder's gravesite and paying respect to Doshu. Somewhat similar to our visit to Tenkawa, a totally unique and privileged experience. Although I can't help imagining that Doshu must have been wondering "Who are those blokes?"

After the ceremony, we had a drive around, checked out Shirahama, had a bit of lunch, another snappy onsen before taking the train back to Osaka. I split off to head to the airport and the other boys returned to Osaka for another night of frivolity before making their individual way home.

On behalf of the group I'd like to especially thank Gotaro for making arrangements, hiring cars, booking trains, translating and general babysitting. Also we are grateful for Tamayuki Sensei and friends at Shosenji for their hospitality, also the organisers in Tanabe for hosting a great weekend.

