



Hokuto City: Excerpts from a Travel Diary

[Thais Costa]

Kai-koizumi Station

“As soon as I stepped out of the station, I was amazed by a modern building which I soon identified as the Hirayama Ikuo Silk Road Museum. Not having the time to enter, I appreciated a few works displayed around the building and the museum’s exterior design. The nicest part was observing how such a sleek, modern design can fit so well in the middle of the woodlands.”



Kai-ōizumi Station

“From the train station I could already see the *Panorama-no-Yu*, a large hot spring which boasts a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside. Passing this establishment, I arrived at a store called *Izumi-kinoko-en*. The huge mushrooms on the entrance door made me curious, and so I went in. It felt great to be in a warm place, and what seemed to be a small vegetable store was also a humble coffee shop that sold a tasty condiment known as Milk Jam.”



“Walking along a path surrounded by tall trees, I passed by several countryside craft shops. A pottery shop caught my attention, but it was too early and I couldn’t get in. So, I kept going until my gaze fell on a cozily dressed mannequin. Actually, the store it led to did not look like a store at all, but a house couched between the trees. I decided to get a closer look.

After talking to the kind shopkeeper and looking at the clothes inside, I realized it wasn’t a permanent store, but a house holding a special exhibition on the environmentally friendly fashion line created by Usaburo Sato.

Usaburo Sato’s atelier is located in Kyoto and it focuses on the production of environmentally friendly, hand-made clothing. He believes that the spiritual energy contained within a person can transfer to surrounding objects which are in contact with the human body, and so a hand-made piece of cloth would also then possess the maker’s own energy or power.”

“There, I learned that *Izumi-kinoko-en* and the *Kiyosato Milk Plant* have been collaborating for months in order to find the best recipe for Milk Jam, and after many failed tries, they finally achieved the desired culinary effect. Furthermore, there is another reason Milk Jam is produced. By developing this new product, the percentage of wasted milk during winter season will decrease since the jam does not expire as quickly as fresh milk.”

