

Okatsuka turns her life into comedy

By Jae-Ha Kim
Tribune Content Agency

Thanks to her thriving stand-up career, comedian Atsuko Okatsuka has traveled around the world, sometimes with her family... on her honeymoon. "Our honeymoon trip to Taiwan — I brought my mom, grandma, dad and my stepmom," she said in an interview from her Los Angeles home. "(I brought my husband) Ryan to a small village where I had extended relatives I never met before. He was the first white person they'd ever seen, so the whole village lined up to meet him, touch him, talk to him, take pictures with him. These (memories) ended up in my special, 'Atsuko Okatsuka: Father,'" on Hulu.

This interview with Okatsuka has been edited for clarity and length.

Q: What other real-life experiences made it into your comedy special?

A: Accidentally buying a bottle of champagne for \$300 in Japan, after taking Duolingo lessons, thinking I was definitely ready to talk to the locals. Turns out Duolingo doesn't teach you how to read a room.

Q: What is your favorite vacation destination?

A: We haven't had a chance to vacation much lately. We usually are on tour. But I have been getting to know Tokyo more and more as we go back. We spent a month there to be closer to my dad during the Christmas holidays, and I think back on it often. I got to live like a local with my



Comedian Atsuko Okatsuka says doing touristy things is one of the joys of traveling. **DISNEY**

husband for the first time as an adult. We stayed at an apartment in a very local area (Oyama). We would go out to get groceries, cook salmon every morning, eat pickled vegetables, take a Japanese-style bath every morning overlooking the town, and head down to Shibuya as I wrote new jokes for my upcoming tour. It was truly magical. And getting to see my dad and meeting one of my brothers for the first time at a Ninja Samurai (Kingdom Ise) theme park. I'll never forget it.

Q: Where would you like to go that you have never been before?

A: I'd love to go to Seoul.

Q: How have your travels impacted who you are today?

A: It's so important to see how other people live — to be reminded of how interconnected we all are. I love people and learning what drives them to do what they do, what keeps them going, what makes them love, to commune with each other. It all makes me a more grounded and empathetic person and hence a better artist.

Q: What untapped destination should people know about?

A: I'm afraid to give it away because it might get more crowded, but Taiwan! It's paradise and the people are very loving and friendly.

Q: Where are your favorite weekend getaways?

A: Because I'm on tour so much, when I'm home in LA, I love to be home or near my home. I also love visiting my mom and grandma as much as I can, so I'm usually in Arcadia or Little Tokyo where I'm eating great comfort food — Japanese, Chinese, Malaysian and Taiwanese.

Q: Do you have a knack for picking up new languages?

A: I speak Mandarin and Japanese conversationally. I do pick up languages pretty easily and can tell most of the time where people are from based on (their) accents.

Q: When you go away, what are some of your must-have items?

A: Humidifier, sunblock, joke book and a rounded brush to keep my bowl-cut tight!

Q: What is your best or worst vacation memory?

A: Best and worst is my honeymoon trip to Taiwan, where I brought my entire family to join me, even though nobody asked for it!

Q: What is your guilty pleasure when you're on the road?

A: Doing touristy things. I'm a tourist! That's what I'm gonna do.

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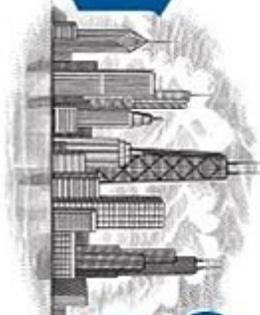


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