**Summary**

We talk about some of our international travel and discuss great places to visit in Japan.

**Content Notes**

Brief mention of sexual assault.

**Transcript**

Kisstopher: Lately I've been thinking about just how absolutely gorgeous the country of Japan is. I think it's one of the most visually stunning countries that we've visited. I think, and this is my personal opinion, I think that Japan is more beautiful than France, at least for me.

Chad: I think the parts that we have seen, definitely.

Kisstopher: Well, in France, all we saw was Paris.

Chad: Right.

Kisstopher: And I didn't find Paris to be particularly beautiful, but even if I put Paris up against Tokyo, I think Tokyo is more beautiful than Paris.

Chad: Yeah, I think we had a nice view in Paris. We were on the Rive Gauche, the left side of the river I guess, and there were trees and things but it wasn't arranged in the way that Tokyo was arranged as far as parks.

Kisstopher: Well, and we were out and about a little bit in the city, and I think that like, the Eiffel Tower… it’s desolate around the Eiffel Tower. It's just like, the Eiffel Tower. Then like the Arc de Triomphe is just an arc in the middle of traffic, so for me, I feel like, in Japan, I don't know… the structures feel more living to me. They feel more alive. There aren't a bunch of stone squares. There ... I don't know, maybe because the architecture in Japan is so different to me.

Chad: Well, we have the Nagoya tower here in Nagoya, which is in the middle of a park, and then-

Kisstopher: But it's in the middle of a park.

Chad: Right. And then in Tokyo there's-

Kisstopher: With tons of trees and nature.

Chad: ... there's the Tokyo Tower, which is in the middle of a park.

Kisstopher: Right. And all of the castles are in the middle of like, park-like grounds.

Chad: Right. Historically that was so you could kill people coming to invade the castle, but-

Kisstopher: Yeah. So, today's topic is talking about traveling in Japan, and for me, I really do enjoy going abroad. This is an interesting thing, travel, to me. We traveled tons inside Japan when Rasta was little.

Chad: Right.

Kisstopher: But then as soon as Rasta was old enough that we could travel without him, we started to travel abroad more.

Chad: Yes.

Kisstopher: Because I'm a cheapass.

Chad: So our first trip inside Japan, we came to Japan like several years before we decided to move here.

Kisstopher: Yeah.

Chad: We came to Kyoto.

Kisstopher: Yeah.

Chad: And we saw a display for a dinosaur museum.

Kisstopher: Oh my gosh, yes.

Chad: I think Rasta was about eight years old at the time, so this was four years before we moved here. And Rasta said he wanted to go see the dinosaurs. So we said, "Great, let's go see the dinosaurs."

Kisstopher: Oh my gosh.

Chad: What we didn't realize was that it was advertising for the Fukui Prefectural Museum, which required us to take a 90 minute train out to Fukui Prefecture from Kyoto, where we were at, and then a 30 minute bus ride out into the middle of nowhere to the museum. Which, the museum was great.

Kisstopher: And we spoke no Japanese.

Chad: None.

Kisstopher: Like, I'm surprised that they gave us train tickets because in English, you could say, "I'd like three tickets please."

Chad: Right.

Kisstopher: And in Japanese you would say, "I'd like two adult tickets and one child ticket," and so I was saying, "Three tickets," and they were just like, "Okay, we get that you're saying the number three, but how old is the kid?" And I was like, "Three tickets, three people." And then I pointed to us, anyways we were able to work it out. I was using a Japanese guidebook to translate what I wanted to say.

Chad: Yeah, we had bought a CD which was supposed to teach us Japanese. Most useful thing about it was that it came with a card of phrases in both English and Japanese, so we could point to the one in English and they could read the Japanese of it, and then, oh-

Kisstopher: Yeah, that's how we ended up using it because my pronunciation was horrible. It was just ...

Chad: Because, we were at the train station, and our pronunciation was so bad that they were confused that we wanted to buy trains tickets at a train station, because who does that?

Kisstopher: Yeah, because I-

Chad: If we had said nothing they would have understood better, and we noticed that. If we had just put up three fingers they would have known we wanted three tickets.

Kisstopher: Yeah. So that was just a horrible, horrible experience to get there, and then we got there, it was actual dinosaur bones. In the United States, even if there are actual dinosaur bones, there's always some sort of interactive thing where the dinosaurs will jump out at you, or you can go dig around in things, it's not just fossils.

Chad: Yeah, if you want to see just fossils, universities are usually better for that.

Kisstopher: Yeah. And so, Rasta was bored and man, I had a meltdown. I'm not proud of that day. I don't know why you would bring that day up. I did think when we were talking about traveling, Chad is going to mention like, the worst traveling experience rather than be positive.

Chad: The first traveling experience.

Kisstopher: That wasn't the first. If we're going to talk about my first meltdown, let's be real.

Chad: I wasn't talking about meltdowns at all. I was talking about-

Kisstopher: I feel like that's what you're talking about.

Chad: No. I didn't remember you having a meltdown at all.

Kisstopher: You don't even remember like being flaming pissed at Rasta for not enjoying anything. He was playing on his Game Boy, he wouldn't even move through the exhibit he was just-

Chad: I do remember that but-

Kisstopher: ... transfixed.

Chad: But that was at the Nara Prefectural Museum, which is a different-

Kisstopher: No.

Chad: Okay.

Kisstopher: You had the meltdown at the Nara Prefectural Museum, at the Nara Prefectural Museum I didn't care that he was just playing on his Game Boy because I had already had that experience at the dinosaurs.

Chad: Oh, okay.

Kisstopher: So I was like, "Just sit your skinny little behind down on this chair." Nobody's going to steal him. That's the great thing about Japan. You can just leave your kid on a bench just playing a Game Boy while you walk through the museum.

Chad: So now that we've ruined anybody's perception who thought that we were just always cool and even with no opinions.

Kisstopher: So, no, if we're going to talk about meltdowns while traveling, I feel like now I feel like I want to talk about this. When we first arrived in Japan we had a very, very dear friend who had traveled all through Japan and he was really big on, "Whatever you do, make sure you take the limo bus from the airport to your hotel."

Chad: Yes.

Kisstopher: Because it's super cheap, it's super convenient… mind you, he had traveled in Japan when he was in his 20s by himself-

Chad: Yeah, in the 1970s.

Kisstopher: Yeah. So we were like, "Okay, we're going to do the limo bus." So we found the limo bus, got on to it, and then we were completely lost. We had no idea where we were going or anything, it was so confusing. It was super cheap.

Chad: Yes.

Kisstopher: But it was also super in Japanese. There was no like, on the thing that tells you the stops, there was nothing written in romaji at the time. Now they have everything written in romaji. So we're seeing the stops come up in kanji, which I'm like culture shocked already because I'm like, “I was not prepared for a kanji world.”

Chad: Well, and Kyoto where we went is traditionally Japanese.

Kisstopher: Yeah it's like, it's considered one of the “real Japan” locations.

Chad: It still is. People from Tokyo go to Kyoto because they want to get in touch with real Japan. Japanese people. So, it's still very much the traditional, it's got the most temples and gardens and all kinds of things per area.

Kisstopher: Yeah, it has the most limited use of romaji which is the Romanized, what we would consider English, like the ABC alphabet, and so we weren't prepared for that at all.

Chad: No.

Kisstopher: And then we had made a reservation at a Japanese business hotel, which now I would be okay to stay in, because I know what to expect, but I was not prepared for it. So when we went in, our room reeked of cigarette smoke, even though it was a non-smoking room. The beds were super tiny and covered in polyester and the bathroom, to get into the bathroom, you had to step up and into it, and the shower wasn't even big enough for Chad to stand upright in.

Kisstopher: And I just was like, "I can't do this, I can't do this," and then he was like, "Well, let's go to the restaurant. Let's go to the hotel restaurant and see if we can get a meal," and I was like, "Okay, fine." I like all of my, if I eat meat, it has to be burnt, like cooked brown all the way through, no pink. And in Japan, how do they cook their meat?

Chad: They cook it however they're going to cook it.

Kisstopher: Yes, and in Japan it's considered most juicy, and most flavorful when it's rare.

Chad: With the exception of wagyu, which is Japanese beef. So Kobe beef has a particular type of wagyu, which is like a whole trademarking issue. There it's cut small and well done, but it's also super expensive, and you have to go to a special restaurant if that's what you want.

Kisstopher: But hambagu, which I mistakenly translated into hamburger, which it is not. Hambagu is its own meal and its own style of beef, and it's usually a ground beef patty, cooked medium, and that's considered well done to them. Most often cooked rare where it's just lightly grilled on the outside. So when you cut into it, it's still raw, like completely raw and bloody.

Chad: It's kind of like an unflavored meat loaf without any oats.

Kisstopher: And raw.

Chad: And raw, yes.

Kisstopher: I can't stress enough that it's raw, and they'll often put a raw egg on top of it.

Chad: That's the yude egg, which is not completely raw. It's just lightly boiled.

Kisstopher: It's, no, it's raw. It's everything is raw. So me with my like, if I eat eggs, I want them scrambled hard. If I eat beef I want it cooked well done. So we have traveled, we have been traveling for two days, and getting here the first time was a harrowing, harrowing trip, because we were transferring at LAX. So we flew from San Francisco to LAX and the plane leaving San Francisco left late and so by the time that we got ... and we had to check our bags and pick our bags up because they weren't transferring our bags for us.

Chad: Right, because we were flying from LAX to Seoul, to Incheon airport in Seoul.

Kisstopher: No we, yeah. But the flight from San Francisco to LAX, we were going from domestic to international, so we had to recheck in, and we had to go through customs, and the plane was so late that they had to hold the plane on the tarmac for us, and we had to take a special train ride ... special van ride out to the tarmac. They had to wheel out the thing, it was like a whole thing-

Chad: We were those people.

Kisstopher: Yes. I felt so bad. And then we get on the plane, and the flight goes fine, smooth, everything goes great. Transfers go great from there, not a big deal. But it was like a 24 hour travel.

Chad: Right.

Kisstopher: And so, I'm fried. And then I get on the limo bus thanks to our friend's bad advice and end up at this hotel where it smells like cigarette smoke, and I quit smoking and it had been very recent that I had quit smoking and so I was-

Chad: A couple of years before, yeah.

Kisstopher: Yeah. And to this day, like, I'm just waiting for my family to say I can smoke again because baby, I'm a light it up.

Chad: 85. We've agreed, when you reach 85-

Kisstopher: Yes, on my 85th birthday, I'm going to smoke them, because I'm going to have them. So I completely miss being a smoker. I absolutely love cigarettes. I think they're amazing cancer sticks. I just love them.

Chad: Okay, enough with the ad.

Kisstopher: Don't smoke. Stay in school, don't do drugs.

Chad: Okay. You should see the craving look on her face.

Kisstopher: Yeah, I'm just like, "Oh man, I so would smoke. I so would smoke." Anyways, so then we're here at this place in the hotel and then we go down and they serve me a raw hamburger with a raw egg on top of it. And I'm like, "This is not what I want at all. I just want a bacon cheeseburger."

Chad: Right.

Kisstopher: And it was traumatic. It was completely traumatic.

Chad: Yeah, so what did we do about that?

Kisstopher: Well, we changed hotels, and then ate McDonald's the whole trip because there was a McDonald's right downstairs, and then we had one night where we went down to-

Chad: Well there was a McDonald's and there was Mister Donut, which that was our first time being introduced to Mister Donut.

Kisstopher: Oh my God. Mister Donut is so good.

Chad: Originally an American company, started in Boston, but going strong here in Japan but apparently not in the US.

Kisstopher: Yeah. So good. So so good. And I loved the pon-de-ring. But now I'm not a huge fan of the pon-de-ring.

Chad: Yeah.

Kisstopher: But the pon-de-ring tastes exactly like those cakes that you get at any American amusement park where they just throw the dough in the fire and then shake sugar-

Chad: Yeah, the funnel cake?

Kisstopher: Yeah, funnel cakes, there you go. So the pon-de-rings taste exactly the funnel cakes. Now I'm getting a craving for pon-de-rings. I'm so suggestible.

Chad: Well, after we record I can go get them for you if you want, and you can be reminded why you don't like them.

Kisstopher: Yeah, I don't like them anymore because they taste kind of wet.

Chad: Yeah.

Kisstopher: So, but if you're craving funnel cake, the pon-de-ring's a good way.

Chad: And it's interesting how Japan has changed just thinking back on that first trip, because another thing that happened on that trip, and we don't edit out, so you're going to have to live with this, is that you went out to get food alone while Rasta and I were in the hotel room, and a pornographer started chasing you around, trying to get you to flash him.

Kisstopher: Yes.

Chad: And chased you all the way into the hotel where he met, like-

Kisstopher: He wanted to come up the elevator, I was like, "No." And then I took a solo trip to Kyoto and again there was this guy who was flashing his T-bar, like he was wearing a thong underwear and sweats, and was flashing the upper part of his thong underwear, and I laughed. I shouldn't laugh at people, but the way he was acting was funny to me. And then he waited at the end of the escalator and tried to come up to my room and tried to get me to go walking with him. He wanted to give me a tour of Japan. So that was completely weird and creepy.

Chad: Yes.

Kisstopher: But Japan is super safe. I don't know why those two things, because there have been several sketchy things that have happened to me.

Chad: Like on a statistical basis, that trip was just weird because it was that same trip that we heard that there had been a group of people that had been robbed by middle school girls, trying to get money to go play pachinko, which doesn't even make sense, because to play pachinko you have to be at least 18.

Kisstopher: Yes, so we're just like doing the crime report now. And that's so, Japan is completely safe, you see five year olds-

Chad: That was over 15 years ago.

Kisstopher: We see five year olds riding the train by themselves all the time. So let's fast forward into the present.

Chad: Okay.

Kisstopher: And so we traveled around a lot when Rasta was little, mostly just to get him out of the house and engaged.

Chad: Right.

Kisstopher: And I find that now we don't travel so much, because each time we like, find something that we want to do, like every year, even doing the paper lantern festival that we say we're going to do every year, I think we've done it twice. It was like five years ago we were like, "We're going to do this every year. It's so awesome and it's a lot of fun."

Kisstopher: I don't know, it just like ...

Chad: That's the thing about Japan is that it's very festival oriented so things come for one weekend and then they're gone.

Kisstopher: Yeah.

Chad: Rasta and I for example, a while ago, went to a gyoza festival, which was four days of setting up like 50 different stands that had gyoza, which are pot stickers, that's a whole thing, me moving to California and seeing pot sticker on the menu. I thought, "Wow, they are just so open about their drug use, you can order pot at a restaurant." Shows you how much exposure I had to ethnic cuisine. And then it's gone.

Chad: So when we decide on something, if it's not convenient right then, then it's just gone. It's not like we can chose to go, "Oh, we'll just go next week." So you do things when they happen, or you don't do them at all.

Kisstopher: Yep. So I find it interesting, like there are things that I've been wanting to do in Japan for years, and years, and years that I just haven't gotten around to because something about how old Japan is and how temporary Japan is creates this mix of, if it's not super convenient, I'll get it, I'll do it next year, so that puts it off for an entire year. Or it's always there.

Kisstopher: So like, we live in Nagoya, but I've never been to Nagoya Castle.

Chad: Well, and right now the castle's under construction, and will be for several years.

Kisstopher: Right. And I don't feel any sense of urgency about that. We've been on several river tours, and we've, you know, zoos in Japan I just don't do, I'm anti zoo, but that's a whole thing for me I'm not going to get into. I no longer support aquariums. I supported aquariums, I still support the Monterey Bay aquarium because it doesn't have any porpoises and the Nagoya aquarium, I admit that I supported it when Rasta was younger, that was out of laziness and convenience. And now I don't support any aquarium that has porpoises in captivity.

Chad: Yeah, the Monterey Bay Aquarium is a special place. We got married down in Monterey and they're set up for research and preservation, so being open to the public is kind of secondary to their mission.

Kisstopher: Yeah, and so they don't have any whales in captivity.

Chad: Right.

Kisstopher: And they don't have any dolphins in captivity, and the otters that are there are otters that were raised because they were saved and they couldn't be, they aren't healthy enough for whatever reason to be introduced back to the wild. But there is an alcove where just free-range otters come in and out and all of that. There's an opening and it has tidal flows and all of that. So the tide pool is fed through tidal flows.

Kisstopher: So for me, going from that, being raised with understanding that aquariums were a place for conservation and research, when I went to the Nagoya aquarium, or when I went to aquariums around the world, I wasn't as educated on porpoise health and the impact that they have on porpoises. So now, as you learn you evolve, and this is me, evolving. Not harshing anybody's mellow who doesn't agree with me, don't harsh mine. You're not going to change my opinion.

Chad: Okay.

Kisstopher: I'm not trying to change yours I'm just sharing my beliefs.

Chad: We're not making s'mores, so we don't need any harshmallows.

Kisstopher: Thank you. So we most often go the paper lantern festival about once every other year, and we recently started, I want to say about last year or so, I said, "Hey, we need to travel twice a year." And so we've done things like, we've gone to, where did we go? We've been to Kobe, but that wasn't ... Kobe and Hiroshima. We went to Hiroshima twice.

Chad: Right.

Kisstopher: And Takashiyama. Oh my gosh, gorgeous, gorgeous, out in the Hida region, so we really like to go around Hida.

Chad: Oh yeah, Hida Takayama.

Kisstopher: Oh, Takayama, yeah okay. So we like to go around Hida, and so I think we're kind of, because we did Gifu and we did the surrounding areas, so basically we've sort of committed to that for the next three years I think. We're not doing international trips and we're just going to focus on getting to know Japan.

Chad: Yeah. So Gifu is about 30 minutes from us by train and Hida Takayama is in Gifu Prefecture still but it's about an hour and a half away from us by train.

Kisstopher: Yeah, so I feel kind of weird in that I have no desire to go to Gero because I don't like hot springs.

Chad: And Gero is between Gifu and Hida Takashiama. I think there's no reason to go out if you don't like hot springs.

Kisstopher: I don't want to go to the hot springs that the monkeys come down and sit in the hot springs with you. I really like… the snow monkeys, they're quite large, and they are wild animals, so I think it's so strange to me that people want to go into a hot springs with a wild animal.

Chad: Yeah.

Kisstopher: With really sharp teeth. And they're like, "But no, no, they're used to people and they're completely safe." I don't know, I just think that they're probably going to poop and pee in the hot springs, because they're not going to care. So I don't know-

Chad: Yeah, I don't know about that whole thing.

Kisstopher: ... just to me, I think it's like, ugh. Ick. Yuck. Why would anybody want to do that, but hey, some people say it's magical to go out in the snow, in the winter with the snow monkeys.

Chad: Well, and you know people are peeing in the hot springs.

Kisstopher: Yeah, I would imagine. Ew, I think I'd probably be one of those people. I think I would be. Well, because I'm going through menopause and that's affected the strength of my bladder control.

Chad: And there's so much chemicals anyway, just naturally, all the sulfur and everything.

Kisstopher: No, okay. So yeah, no, I'm not like peeing in public pools and stuff, so don't send us hate mail about me peeing places. I'm not peeing all over the place. I don't go in the hot springs. I have tattoos.

Chad: If it's good enough for Olympic athletes ...

Kisstopher: So, you have a tattoo, I have tattoos and so finding places we could go to go to a hot springs, or go enjoy the bath houses or anything like that, like, we couldn't go to Spa Land because we wouldn't be able to, even in the dressing room, they don't want you to undress in there. Some gyms that will not let you take a shower on premises if work out, if you have a tattoo.

Chad: Right.

Kisstopher: So I find that because we're tattooed, it's just easier. It's loosening up.

Chad: It is loosening up, especially if you are Western looking. So if you're not Asian looking because then they know, "Oh, you're a foreigner." Mistakenly, there are Japanese people who are not Asian looking but ...

Kisstopher: And there are Asians that are foreign.

Chad: Absolutely, a lot of them, yes.

Kisstopher: That are Western.

Chad: Yes, a lot of them. That's what I'm saying, it's not just about being from the United States. They don't check passports before they discriminate on the basis of tattoos.

Kisstopher: It's strictly about not being Asian.

Chad: Yeah.

Kisstopher: And so, I find, okay, that nixes hot springs, and we don't do amusement parks. Actually, you know what? I was really surprised when LegoLand opened that you didn't want to go.

Chad: This LegoLand in Nagoya is geared towards younger kids. So they specifically, if you're over about 12, you're probably not going to enjoy it. There's not rides.

Kisstopher: I know, but I thought that you would enjoy just going and seeing where Lego is now?

Chad: Yeah, but ...

Kisstopher: Because you used to be really into the Legos. When Rasta was about five or so, you were really into Legos.

Chad: I still like Legos, just not enough to spend money on them, and LegoLand is kind of expensive to just go see where Legos are at.

Kisstopher: What do you mean? How expensive is it?

Chad: I think it's about $85 per person.

Kisstopher: What? Are you for real?

Chad: Yeah, and they're having trouble getting attendance and things and maybe by-

Kisstopher: $85 per person to go to LegoLand?

Chad: Yeah, which is about equivalent with DisneyLand.

Kisstopher: No.

Chad: Yes.

Kisstopher: No.

Chad: Yes.

Kisstopher: Okay. That's shocking to me.

Chad: DisneyLand was about $85 per person to get in for one day or like, $150 to get a whole season when we went ...

Kisstopher: But that was three parks.

Chad: Well, and that was what? 17 years ago.

Kisstopher: Yeah, and that was three parks.

Chad: Yeah, so but it's quite-

Kisstopher: How much was LegoLand when we went? I don't remember LegoLand in the US being that expensive.

Chad: No, I think Lego Land was about $60 a person.

Kisstopher: Okay.

Chad: It was still kind of expensive if all you're going to do is see Legos.

Kisstopher: Okay.

Chad: Because the last time I was in Copenhagen, which was during my PhD, I flew to Copenhagen to give a talk, I was able to go to a Lego shop, because Legos are from Denmark.

Kisstopher: Oh, I didn't know that.

Chad: And see all of the latest Legos and things.

Kisstopher: Okay.

Chad: There's this thing called the Internet, I don't know if you've heard of it? But you can also look and see what Lego's got going on.

Kisstopher: So something for me that I really am happy about now, that is kind of opening up travel for me is the fact that Rasta has a car, and I feel like, because I know that you don't mind traveling on the train. I do because I get groped. And so, unless I can get a seat, there's a chance that someone's going to grope me.

Chad: Yes.

Kisstopher: So, Japan is a safe country, but in terms of physical space, it's a lot different than the United States. We're going to talk about that on a different cast, so I'm not going to get into that here. So now that Rasta has a car, I feel like day trips are more of a possibility. Like, what was the city we bought his car in?

Chad: We bought his car in Anjo.

Kisstopher: Yeah, and I had been through Anjo on the train, but I had never been to Anjo.

Chad: You've been to Anjo quite a lot because when you were doing dispatch English teaching, one of your clients was in Anjo.

Kisstopher: No, they weren't.

Chad: Yeah, I know you don't remember it. I can see on your face you don't remember it.

Kisstopher: I completely don't remember it.

Chad: Yeah, because I had to meet you there once. You wanted me to meet you after you were done.

Kisstopher: Really?

Chad: Yes, really.

Kisstopher: So, I find that when I was doing dispatch English teaching when we first got here, I was traveling a lot throughout Japan.

Chad: Yes.

Kisstopher: And I got to know a lot of obscure little places I wouldn't want to visit because I didn't find them to be interesting.

Chad: Yes.

Kisstopher: Like, Komaki's a great little town, cute little town to look at, but don't think they really have any sights.

Chad: They're a factory town.

Kisstopher: Yeah. And like Yokkaichi-

Chad: A factory town.

Kisstopher: Yeah. So I feel like, I want to get out and do more. Like I've never been to, I think I've been once, the Tokugawa Art Museum. But the art museum was closed so I went to the gardens while it was raining with Rasta for the purpose of, I don't know, getting pictures for something.

Chad: Taking pictures, yeah.

Kisstopher: Yeah, and then it was raining and so, or I had it in my head that I have to go to the Tokugawa Museum. Like, I'll get it in my head, like, "I haven't been somewhere, I have to go." And I'll just go.

Chad: Yeah, and it's-

Kisstopher: Like we're going say, if it's practical. It could be raining and it could be an outdoor thing and I'm like, "No, I'm supposed to go see this thing, I'm going to go see it."

Chad: Well, and that's pretty close to your office. It's maybe 20, 30 minutes to walk from your office.

Kisstopher: Yeah, and we rode our bikes there.

Chad: Yeah.

Kisstopher: So I want to go and see things and do things, but I find like, for me, I don't mind taking the subway to places, it's taking a subway home from places that kind of gets under my skin.

Chad: Right.

Kisstopher: And so like, I want to go to… see I switched, I was going to do English and Japanese. It's the Terebi Tower in Japanese, it's the Television Tower in English but in my California speak, it's the TV Tower. I was saying all three together.

Chad: Well, unofficially the English is Nagoya Tower.

Kisstopher: Yeah. So it'd like to go to Nagoya Tower and see one of the shows because they have these really cool light shows, but I don't want to go down to Sakae on the train. It's only a 15 minute subway ride, and the subway is literally, like five minutes from front door to subway train, but that ride back is just like, "Ugh."

Chad: Well, it's an 11 minute ride, but it's a ride that you used to take every day when you were studying Japanese.

Kisstopher: And, when I was working at a specific English company.

Chad: Yeah, and when you were working at a specific ... yeah.

Kisstopher: I just, don't like the ride.

Chad: Yeah.

Kisstopher: And I didn't mind doing the ride every day when I was learning Japanese. It felt really quick and convenient. And I don't mind Sakae station, it's just really I don't, afterwards I just feel because of my lupus and my hereditary coproporphyria, I'm usually in some sort flare of some kind of thing, and the lupus really does affect my energy. It makes me so tired.

Chad: I know on the subway, you're kind of expected to keep yourself to yourself so like, manspreading is a big thing in the US, and it happens here in Japan, but everybody looks at them like, "You're a real asshole."

Kisstopher: Yeah.

Chad: So you know, especially for us, because we're not Japanese size, which is another way to say both of us are kind of on the fatter end of things.

Kisstopher: Well, I'm totally fat. I'm a fat chick.

Chad: Even though we fit within the seats, people look at us as if we must not be. So I feel like I have to kind of hunch my shoulders together, even though it doesn't make me any narrower.

Kisstopher: Yeah. I find that on public transportation, you hate talking.

Chad: Yes.

Kisstopher: And so it's not comradery. I feel like I can usually get you to talk to me on the way to places, but on the way back, you feel like, we've been talking for a long time, you can just do this ride in silence.

Chad: Well, it's an effort to filter out background sounds.

Kisstopher: Okay.

Chad: Because of, and I don't know if I've mentioned this before, the autism. I have to work really hard to distinguish background and foreground sounds, so when I'm talking with you on the train, I'm hearing everybody else's conversations simultaneously. And when we're headed out, I have a lot of energy, so I can do that. When we're headed back I'm exhausted, so it's harder to do that.

Kisstopher: Yeah, so I find your willingness to ride in the car with Rasta driving and Rasta being able to drive, for me too, I was surprised by how much I actually do enjoy doing things with him, and that part of it is having the experience of doing it as a family.

Chad: Right.

Kisstopher: I didn't realize how family orientated I was for certain things. But like, our last trip to Hiroshima I was really… we had done the trip once with him, but doing the trip once with him, the second time it was more enjoyable to be just the two of us. And finding our little favorite restaurants and there's like other things for us to try if we ever go back, but I think it'll be quite a few years-

Chad: I think so.

Kisstopher: ... before we go back to Hiroshima.

Chad: We tend to go places twice.

Kisstopher: Yeah, and then that tends to be it for whatever reason. So, there's things I want to do like Little World of Man that is local in Nagoya, which is a bunch of foods from around the world and a walking park. And then, outside of Nagoya, I don't know where I want to go, it's hard to pick because like, I think I want to go to Okinawa but that feels like a summertime thing, and that's a flight.

Chad: Okay, I was going to say, that's a long drive. But yeah, that’s a flight.

Kisstopher: That's a flight, and so like, I don't know. Like, planning our future traveling in and around Nagoya like, what the parameters are going to be, like should it be, "Okay, we're going to take a train ride to this far?" So in the snow, I do want to go to Nagano to go to the snow, but that's a really long train ride.

Chad: Well, we have reservations already.

Kisstopher: Yeah, but it's a really long train ride.

Chad: Yes, but it's a pretty train ride.

Kisstopher: Yeah. So, doing that and figuring out like, "Okay, we need to go to western Japan, and we need to go to southern Japan, and northern Japan." And we've already done Hokkaido.

Chad: Yeah.

Kisstopher: So we went to the snow festival there, but we went to Asahikawa not Sapporo. But I have no desire to go to Sapporo. I really loved the Asahikawa trip.

Chad: I was talking to somebody who lives in Sapporo and they said that they wished they'd gone to Asahikawa for the snow festival there so ...

Kisstopher: Yeah, it was really, really nice. It was so intimate. It wasn't too crowded and we got to go to the museum and it was a really, really great trip.

Chad: Yeah, the town had ice sculptures set up everywhere just around downtown so we could walk around. It reminded me of being at the ice festival when I lived in Fairbanks when I was a teenager.

Kisstopher: Yeah, I really enjoyed, my favorite of all of them was where the flowers were trapped in snow, that were trapped in ice rather, that were lit up. So they made like, these lanterns with flowers suspended in the water and then lit them. They were just absolutely glowing and gorgeous.

Chad: Yeah, I think those are probably like a school project. They looked easy to make, and we saw them all around town too.

Kisstopher: Yeah, really pretty, and I liked how they kept them dug out from the snow.

Chad: Yep.

Kisstopher: So that was really fun, so I think traveling domestically in Japan, to me it's also a little bit expensive.

Chad: It is, yes.

Kisstopher: So like, a train ticket from here to Tokyo is about 6,000 one way, $60 one way if you do non-reserved.

Chad: No, no it's not.

Kisstopher: No it's not? It's way more than that?

Chad: It's 10,000.

Kisstopher: Wow, so like $100.

Chad: Right.

Kisstopher: Non-reserved. So you travel to Tokyo much more often than I do. I don't think I've been to Tokyo in a few years.

Chad: Yeah, it's been a couple of years since you've went.

Kisstopher: I think the prices may have gone up.

Chad: I think last time you went you had to go for work, so ...

Kisstopher: Yeah. So that was quite a long time ago. So I feel like the train tickets are expensive, but gas is pretty cheap. Like a full ... to me gas is cheap.

Chad: Gas is not cheap. Rasta doesn't drive a lot. Gas right now is $8 a gallon.

Kisstopher: What?

Chad: You don't make the translation because they price it by liter.

Kisstopher: Yeah, and so it seems pretty cheap to me. So it's $30 to fill up Rasta's gas tank.

Chad: But he doesn't drive that much.

Kisstopher: Yeah so, but at three quarters of a tank it was like, $30 to fill it up.

Chad: He has an economy car with a very small tank.

Kisstopher: Yeah. Okay, so you're saying I'm not, I just am completely ... So okay, the lesson from today's podcast is Kisstopher knows nothing. I don't know how much anything costs, I just… and you know what? I don't buy anything because whenever we go out, you have the money or Rasta has the money.

Chad: Right.

Kisstopher: I'm sounding so precious this cast, and it's okay because I am precious, but I don't carry money. Like, I never have money on me.

Chad: Well, because what would you do with it-

Kisstopher: I don't know.

Chad: ... my precious flower.

Kisstopher: Yeah, why would I pay for anything?

Chad: Well, the bigger issue is that if we're traveling somewhere then usually it's easier if it's handled in Japanese.

Kisstopher: Yeah.

Chad: And that means me handling it, or Rasta handling it.

Kisstopher: Yeah, because while I can do it? Why should I?

Chad: Yeah. My precious flower.

Kisstopher: Yeah, basically. So yes, I am precious. I'm just going to come out of the closet, I'm precious. I'm coming out as precious.

Chad: But yeah, traveling in Japan is convenient. The Shinkansen, the bullet train is high speed, it's great.

Kisstopher: So wait, I'm coming out right now. Don't step on my moment. It's a good digression.

Chad: Okay.

Kisstopher: So I've been out as pansexual. I'm out as an atheist. Everybody knows I'm Black. I don't think that's a coming out thing, you'd see it when you look at me.

Chad: Yeah, it's not like you can head back in.

Kisstopher: Because I'm Black, and I'm proud. And I'm precious.

Chad: Yes, yes you are.

Kisstopher: I'm so precious that if I drop something on the floor I don't like to bend over to pick it up. I look at you when I drop something.

Chad: You are so precious that if something is at your feet you'll ask me to get up from across the room to get it for you.

Kisstopher: Yes, and you lovingly do it and I think that's so awesome and amazing, because my joints hurt.

Chad: I know your joints hurt, so that is part precious, but mostly lupus.

Kisstopher: Yeah, and so the reason I don't go and talk is how that actually started was when I was trying to get Rasta to use his Japanese. I would tell him, "You go speak, go say this," and tell him the Japanese to say, and now that he's bilingual and bicultural, I've never liked dealing with money. I've never liked paying for things. I've always given someone my money to pay for things.

Chad: Right.

Kisstopher: I just don't enjoy handling money.

Chad: But traveling domestically it's not, it's cheaper to travel domestically than to fly to Europe or the US.

Kisstopher: Yeah, it is.

Chad: But it's cheaper to fly to Seoul than it is to take the train to Tokyo.

Kisstopher: Yeah, trip on that.

Chad: Yeah.

Kisstopher: And so we've been to Korea twice.

Chad: We've been three times.

Kisstopher: Three times. I was wondering, is it two or three now?

Chad: It's three, yeah.

Kisstopher: Okay, and you've been four.

Chad: No I've been three. So you guys came because I went to the TAPU conference.

Kisstopher: Oh yeah, we came and met you. Right on.

Chad: Yeah, you came and met me after the conference had ended, yep.

Kisstopher: So I enjoy traveling domestically, I want to do it more, for those of you in Japan, suggest places for us to go. Because I'm really ... so I spend my day being creative. I feel like being a therapist is such a creative endeavor in that I have to do a lot of problem solving and doing a lot of figuring things out and sometimes I feel like I just run of creativity and I kind of feel like that when it comes to traveling. I've kind of run out of creativity.

Chad: Yeah, we've been to Nikko, which, Nikko is gorgeous.

Kisstopher: Oh yes, Nikko's beautiful, but I don't feel the need to go again.

Chad: No. And Nikko has the famous see no evil, speak no evil, see no evil, hear no evil-

Kisstopher: Hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil.

Chad: Yeah, those monkey statues are in a temple in Nikko.

Kisstopher: Yeah and they have a really famous bridge that was under construction when we went.

Chad: The dragon bridge, yeah.

Kisstopher: And a just absolutely gorgeous beautiful, I was going to say guetiful, mixing ... I'm mixing my words today. Gorgeous and beautiful bamboo forest with lots of really beautiful shrines and temples.

Chad: Yes.

Kisstopher: Just really majestic.

Chad: And we have a plan to go to Himeji, so we have reservations for Himeji ... no, we've been to Himeji.

Kisstopher: Yeah, we've been to Himeji.

Chad: Hikone. Yeah, we're going Hikone, we've got reservations. Himeji has a famous castle that we went to-

Kisstopher: Absolutely, if you go to Japan, if you come to Japan, you absolutely have to go to Himeji Castle. It is stunning.

Chad: We went there about maybe 12 years ago, and then it was under construction for eight years, but it's not under construction anymore, so ...

Kisstopher: And it's absolutely gorgeous, and the bathrooms in the castle were just the funnest part to me.

Chad: Yes, to be clear, they were not for use, they were the historical.

Kisstopher: You could see how they did stuff. You could really get the feel of how they did stuff and how they lived and all of that. It was really, really interesting to me. I absolutely loved the castle.

Chad: So like most Japanese castles-

Kisstopher: But the zoo next to it is depressing and it will open your eyes on what life is like, because those animals are clearly in captivity.

Chad: Yeah.

Kisstopher: It's horrible. The cages are so small and so just, broken down. I really honestly think if the animals would just charge their cage they could get free.

Chad: Probably yeah.

Kisstopher: It was just so, so sad, but I did enjoy the Cup-a-Noodles vending machine. That was so exciting to me and so novel. Like you can get a cup of noodles from a vending machine. They pour the hot water, everything for you.

Chad: Right, amazing.

Kisstopher: It was awesome. It was amazing to me. I was like, "I can't believe I'm eating Cup-a-Noodles from a vending machine."

Chad: So I don't know when we went, Himeji Castle was not wheelchair accessible which most historical sites in Japan are not.

Kisstopher: Sadly.

Chad: Yeah, but there is a-

Kisstopher: Japan is not an accessible country.

Chad: Yeah, I think urban is pretty accessible. There's a website if you look up Accessible Japan that has details about how to get around in Japan if you're in a wheelchair.

Kisstopher: Yeah, and you can also follow Accessible Japan on Twitter.

Chad: Yep. So that's a good resource if you want to come to Japan in a wheelchair because it's not impossible, but it will limit what you can do somewhat.

Kisstopher: Yeah, and it is difficult. Japan really, I'm surprised by the lack of mobility when it comes to public transportation because our stop, there is a way to get out at Nagoya Dome, but you have to go the opposite direction from our stop.

Chad: Yeah, there are three exits and only one of the three exits has an elevator.

Kisstopher: Yeah. And it's weird because one section of it has an escalator and then the other half of it ... so the dangerous thing with Japan and accessibility is that one section may be accessible but the next section may not. Like you can get down, some of them have a wheelchair lift that you can use to get down, but then you roll down a ramp and turn the corner and it's two flights of stairs with absolutely no way to get down except to have somebody carry you, and then carry your chair down.

Chad: Yeah, so I use a cane but I can take stairs just fine. But if you need an escalator, there are a lot of places that the escalator only goes in one direction.

Kisstopher: Yeah.

Chad: So yeah, that can be tricky.

Kisstopher: So really check out Accessible Japan before if you have any sort of mobility issues and you're thinking of coming to Japan.

Chad: Now, if you're blind and you want to come to Japan, it's actually probably one of the best countries in the world for it.

Kisstopher: Yeah.

Chad: The tactile paving was invented here and it's law that you have to put it outside any building over a certain size and all public transportation and such.

Kisstopher: Yeah, unless you haven't had experience with the tactile sidewalk and then it might not be as useful if you don't know how to use it, so I think again, using Accessible Japan as a guide and all of that would be my advice because I find it to be so inconsistent, so even with the tactile pavement, they have that in major cities and at all train stations but you don't have it out in the countryside and you don't have it at a lot of places that you would want to go visit. So like, at Himeji, it's not there. And at Nara it wasn't there for going to see the giant Buddha.

Chad: That's why I say a lot of historical sites are not accessible.

Kisstopher: Yeah.

Chad: And there are people actively fighting to keep them inaccessible for authenticity, so that's a whole other thing.

Kisstopher: It just makes my blood boil because then there shouldn't be any cement in all of that, so that's like a whole other thing. But, yeah, that's a whole different cast.

Kisstopher: So today was just kind of a hodgepodge like most casts. Lots of digression and see that basically I want to travel more locally is the whole point. So send us ideas, because I'm out of creativity man. I have like, no idea where I want to go. I want to go somewhere. Tell me cool places to go and maybe we'll go there.

Chad: Well and if you check our website, if we've gone some place, you'll probably see a picture.

Kisstopher: No, we don't do that.

Chad: If I've gone some place you'll see it on Twitter.

Kisstopher: Yeah. We're horrible. We put up a whole thing on Instagram saying that we're off doing other things, because we don't take photographs when we're out places. We saw, what movie was that, when he looked and he blinked and said, "I'm taking a mental photograph."

Chad: I think it was maybe ...

Kisstopher: It was a comedy.

Chad: It was maybe called The Fed. It was the guy from Schitt's Creek. I can't remember his name. Eugene Levy?

Kisstopher: Yeah, I think Eugene Levy.

Chad: There's Eugene Levy and Samuel L. Jackson maybe?

Kisstopher: Yeah, Samuel L. Jackson, and he took a mental picture of him.

Chad: Yeah, I don't remember what the movie was called but ...

Kisstopher: And so now we take mental pictures because we're ... And I don't have a smart phone so I'm not going to lug my iPad, I know you do, but I'm not going to get your phone and take a picture and that whole thing.

Chad: Yeah.

Kisstopher: I'm not doing that.

Chad: Although you do get my phone regularly so, because you have my password. We have each other's passwords and stuff, we have that level of trust.

Kisstopher: Don't go starting stuff for other couples.

Chad: Who might not be in the cupcake phase.

Kisstopher: Oh my gosh.

Chad: We've already talked about that so we won't talk about that again.

Kisstopher: We're happily married and so we're in the cupcake phase of our marriage, which is so awesome.

Kisstopher: So yeah, I hope you enjoyed today's ramble.

Chad: Yup, and come back next week to find out what we picked as a starting spot and how far we can get away from that.

Kisstopher: Yeah, what's our topic and how far we can digress.

Chad: Yes.

Kisstopher: Yes, to the next week for our weekly digression.

Chad: Bye bye.