

FRESHPAVED NOTE: Freshpaved has been an amazing resource to meet riders from all over the world. For example, I was emailing back-and-forth with a skater named Adam Clark who lives in Tokyo. He was describing this twenty-six kilometer service road that runs down Mt. Fuji with little-to-no traffic during the early morning hours. It sounded like an epic downhill adventure waiting to happen. Taking the always exciting knee-jerk approach to life, I forwarded Adam's email to my buddies, and we started planning a trip to Japan.

As you can imagine, flying to Tokyo is an expensive proposition. Before spending thousands of dollars on the trip, one question had to be answered: was the road down Mt. Fuji actually ride-able? Twenty-six kilometers of mountainous terrain poses many conditions and potential hazards to deal with. To answer the question, Adam and his local crew scheduled a session and took the first run down Fuji in May of 2005. Since that time, none of us planning the Japan trip have come to our senses, and we're even more stoked by Adam's account of the adventurous first run featured here, "26k: Carving Mt. Fuji".

We head over to Japan in September 2005 to join Adam and his buddies for the second running of Fuji. Mr. Manny Pangilinan joins us for the trip as the winner for Best Rider at the Style Sessions Competition in New York City, May 2005. Details about the trip can be found at www.freshpaved.com, so come and share the Fuji-love. Thanks very much to Adam Clark and the Japan crew for turning possibility into reality.

— Jeff Gaites



26K: CARVING MT FUJI

>> ADAM CLARK

PHOTOS: FRED BURVALL

To see Mt Fuji first hand is to be awed and humbled. At 12,388ft (3,776m) it towers above the surrounding mountains and dwarfs even the most prominent. Its perfect cone has made it the most photographed and painted volcano in the world. Lesser known is the two-lane road that runs 26k (16 miles) from the 5th Station down that symmetrical slope all the way to the gate.

To put this in perspective, after a descent of one of the longest routes in the Alps, a longboard manufacturer called Aluflex used a map

of the run as a deck graphic. That impressive run was 16 kilometers long. Three weeks before the Fuji run, I found a 2k screamer in Northern Japan. Part way down my third run, I had to shake out the muscles in my legs. Fuji would be thirteen times longer.

We arrived to the 5th Station in late afternoon and set about making dinner. Flash was out for a few runs on the road next to our camp. Chris and Jeff from Terabyte Station (the video team) were up taking time-lapse footage of the sunset. The vegetarian, Kris, was making the salad. This

left only Racer X unaccounted for when a dark flash raced past the window of my VW camper.

He was dressed in a Ninja suit tearing down the road on his 44" Lush Bahari. Imagine the irony. Here were two Swedes, three Americans and a Canadian getting ready to skate the holy icon of Japan and to complicate the cultural gray area further, Racer X was kicking it around in a Ninja suit. Somehow, with what we were doing, it factored in as acceptable.

Like the Ninja suit, many other variables were out of our control. We would be well above

cloud level for the first 12k but descending through different climatic zones. Urethane is notoriously bad with moisture and there was no way of knowing how much of it we would see on the way down. Then there was the legality question.

Try as I did to find information in various Mt Fuji resources, nothing surfaced. As a group, we decided to live by the adage, "It is better to beg forgiveness, than ask permission." I rehearsed all the apologetic phrases I know in Japanese as I walked up the road during the night skate. In actuality, not one of us was worried about getting in trouble. We worried about getting stopped part way down. There was no way this run could be complete unless we skated all the way to the bottom.

Pressure aside, at 4:45am the following morning all we could do was skate. With Jeff and Chris ahead in the film vehicle, Flash, X, Kris and I pushed off from the 5th Station.

The upper 12k were as incredible as the

views. Starting above the clouds, smooth pavement wound through a dry clear alpine region of lava rock and brush. I remember seeing X, Kris, and Flash swinging like pendulums across the road. I threw out a slide to skim off speed and wondered if I was dreaming. We had just started and had already logged 6k of uninterrupted carving.

We stopped at the fourth station but were itching to get going again. We needed to get as far down the mountain as possible before the construction vehicles came in for work and our run became public knowledge. As a fitting re-entry, a spectacular toe-side curve waited for us. We took it aggressively gaining speed.

Things got hairy at cloud level but we didn't expect Mt Fuji to be a skate park. The greasy synthetic salt they throw down to keep away the ice had mixed with the dew and the motor oil from years of tourist busses. When you hit pavement like this you might normally hang around and practice some slides or save your bearings

by carrying your board. We were here without those options and skated for nearly 8k of grime.

We eventually broke out of the slick and set again into a rhythmic series of standing "S" turns happy to be out of a downhill stance. X (wearing an apron he had picked up from a store owner with a picture of Mt Fuji on it) spotted a sign and called out after an hour and fifteen minutes of hard carving that we were only 2/3rds down.

We saw more traffic during the final few kilometers than we had seen all morning and while a few hit their brakes, most just kept going. When we came to a stop at the bottom, not a soul was there to greet us. My well-rehearsed apologies proved unnecessary. We relished in the 1,500m(5,000ft) elevation drop and first known descent of Mt Fuji. [CW](#)

Adam Clark is a regular longboard skate columnist for Outdoor Japan. Please Visit www.outdoorjapan.com for a video trailer of the descent.