Play it again, Samurai

WITH Tokyo featured heavily in the latest X-Men film, movie fans will flock to check out the amaz- Strangely, the mysteries of the me. While there we attended a ing locations.

I was among the first inspired to follow in the footsteps of Hugh Jackman as The Wolverine, though the first Oriental experinings - and who ence I had was more dung the hell isn't? fu than kung fu.

The toilet seat in my hotel room was pre-warmed. It was very disturbing. But in Tokyo, that seems to be the norm.

It doesn't mean the room turnaround was so quick the seat didn't have time to cool.

It's just that heated haunches are what the Japanese seem to demand from their loos.

Other gimmicks techno-toilets employ include sprays, both horizontal and bidet style, and the equally unnerving drying function where a blast of hot air is jetted up your behind.



modern Japanese toilet are not ceremony dedicated to the in The Wolverine.

But there are plenty of ancient wonders If you're fan of

prepare yourself a couple of hours exhilaration. I took myself to

the Zojoji Temple. where Wolverine's funeral scene and ensuing massive dust-up were filmed.

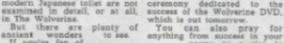
Originally established in the 9th Century, the Buddhist temple has stood in its current location - in the central Tokyo Shiba neighbourhood - since

> It was badly damaged in the Second World War. In fact, the entrance. Sangedatsu Gate, was the only part of the building to survive US bombing.

> Apparently, if you pass through the gate, you can free yourself from three vices or sins - ton, shin and chi - loosely translated as greed, hatred and foolishness.

As a greedy fool who hates everyone, this was particularly useful for

CUT ABOVE . . . top-level Samural Instruction. Below, Takya city centre



exams to a rise in price for your stocks and shares

Presumably, you would use a side entrance before these ceremonies passing through the Gate Sangedatsu would render them unnecessary.

My trip to the temple was followed by a little lesson in the code of the Samurai, Now, I'm

not claiming to be a natural but the instructor did mak if I'd done it before. And that was after I'd shown him

So later, when I visited word-maker Yoshindo sword-maker Yoshihara's studio in Kelsel Tateishi. I was half expecting him to look me in the eye and present me with a sword with which I was to fulfil my

He didn't. He's knocking on a bit now, mind. Maybe he just missed the signs.

The Samural training session was great fun.

Luckily the sword was made feil-covered bamboo. because if it had been a real one I'd have lost a couple of fingers and an ear.

So I learned how to draw and re-sheath my sword with some degree of style while maintaining a blood-free blade.

guts. So watch it.

Yoshindo Yoshihara is the generation of swordmakers from

family. He makes ten swords a year and was a little coy about the price of one - but you'd probably get yourself a very nice car for the cost of one of his entry-level weapons.

That's assuming you're lucky enough even to get on the waiting list.

watched his son. Yoshikazu, who is preparing to be the family's eleventh master, at work.

As a hand-pumped bellows brought a furnace to unfeasible heat, under his supervision a team of apprentices hammered the steel, taking it in swift turns to bash the metal and tease it towards its final shape.

I wanted to test the sharpness of a Yoshindo blade but mercifully he wouldn't let

A cruise is a great way to see the city

around. If you want to get your bearings in the city, try

Inspired by the Eiffel Tower, it was built as communications mast in the 1950s and there's a great observation deck.

city is to take the Yakatabune (Japanese house boat) Dinner Cruise in Tokyo Bay (from £89, see vistor.com

Bay amid the random lightshow of the city's buildings as a relentless parade of raw fish and tempura plus saké - and any other kind of booze you would care to sample - appears before you.

I also learned how to slice I left, in a daze of great food someone's head, chop their and too much booze - legs and stab them in the rendered foolish by greed.

Plainly the Sangedatsu Gate had failed to cure me of at least two of the three passions.

Later, I went for a look

You can see most of the city, including the Zejoji Temple and, in the distance, the familiar profile of Meunt Fuji. Another great way to see the

The boat sails around Tokyo





