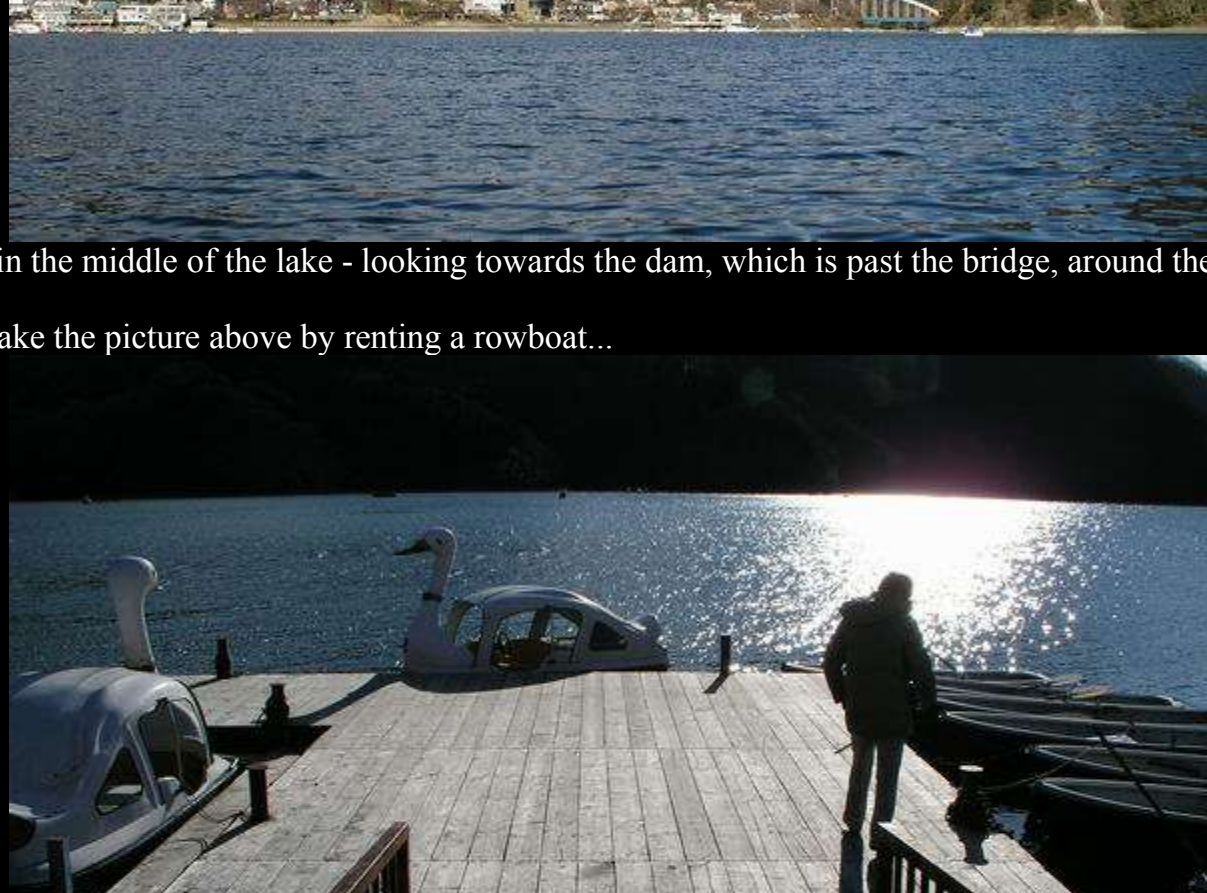


Sagami Lake January 9th, 2005

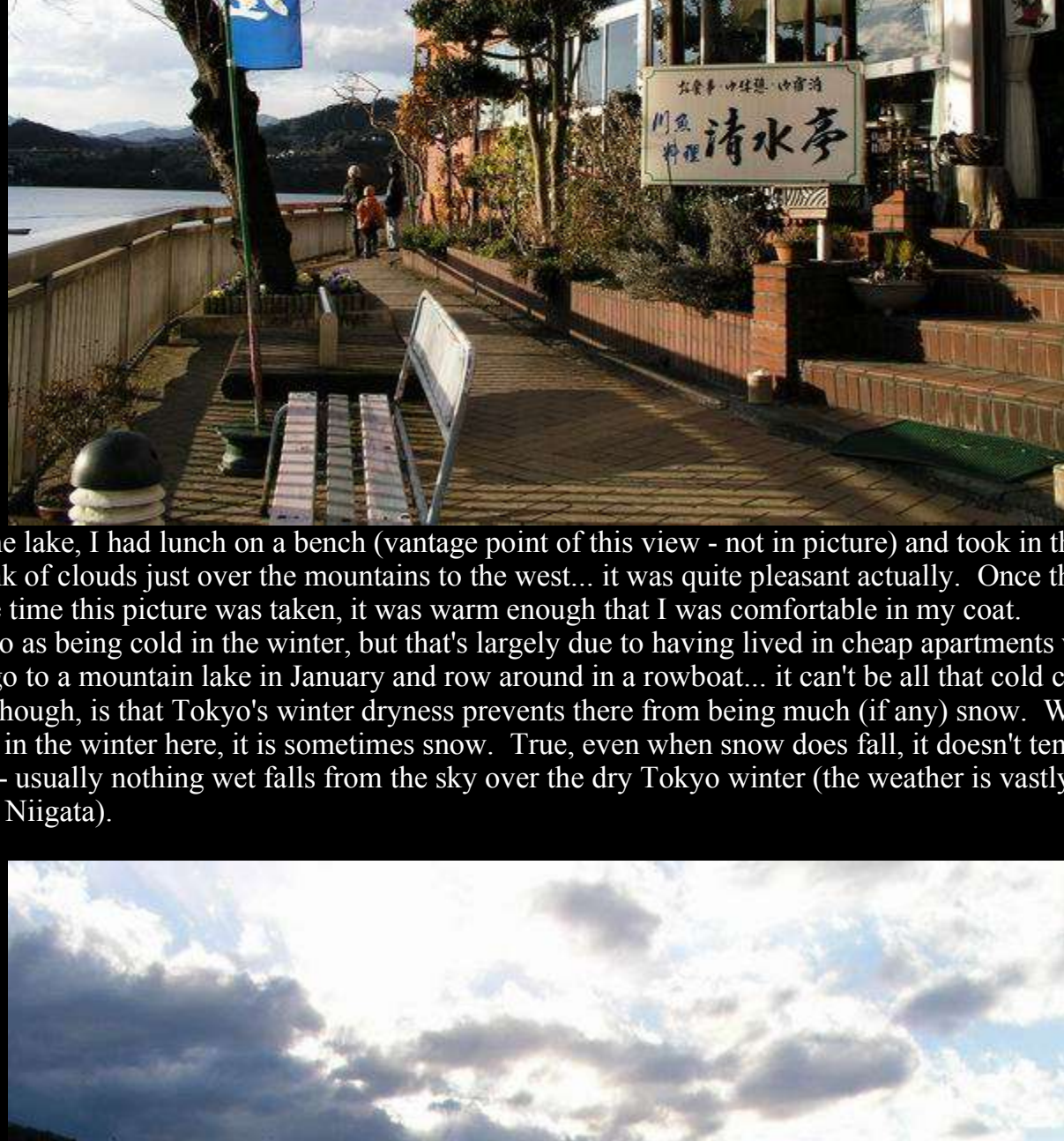
I visited Sagami Lake (Sagamiko) yesterday purely by accident. My original plan had been to go mountain hiking, but when I noticed the lake in the opposite direction I had intended to go, I couldn't resist going over to have a look. There's something about a large body of water that attracts - I remember the excitement I used to feel upon coming in sight of the ocean when I moved to San Francisco ("by the Bay & the Pacific" DYK*). The nearest station is Sagamiko Station, which means "Sagami Lake Station" so I certainly should have known from the beginning, but I wasn't paying any attention to the station name when I got off the train. (It's 52.5km and about an hour from Shinjuku by train.)



This is a view from out in the middle of the lake - looking towards the dam, which is past the bridge, around the bend and out of sight. I got out on the lake to take the picture above by renting a rowboat...



No - I didn't want to use one of those swan boats! Kids really like them, but if you're a tallish adult, the pedals are much too close to the seat to pedal with comfort. Also, it seems to be an inefficient design as they are tiring to get moving and don't go very fast. Rowboats are much easier to get about it - with less effort that produces more speed.



A bigger version of the small swan pedal boats (powered by a fire-breathing engine of course). I'm not sure what I think of this type of thing anymore. Way back when I was a new arrival on these islands, I found some things to be excessively "cute", but nothing fazes me these days. What do you think? Is that boat interesting, humdrum, outlandish, pretty... what?

An interesting side effect of big boats cruising the lake (there was also one shaped like a whale...), was the waves they generated made it feel sort of like I was rowing around on the ocean.

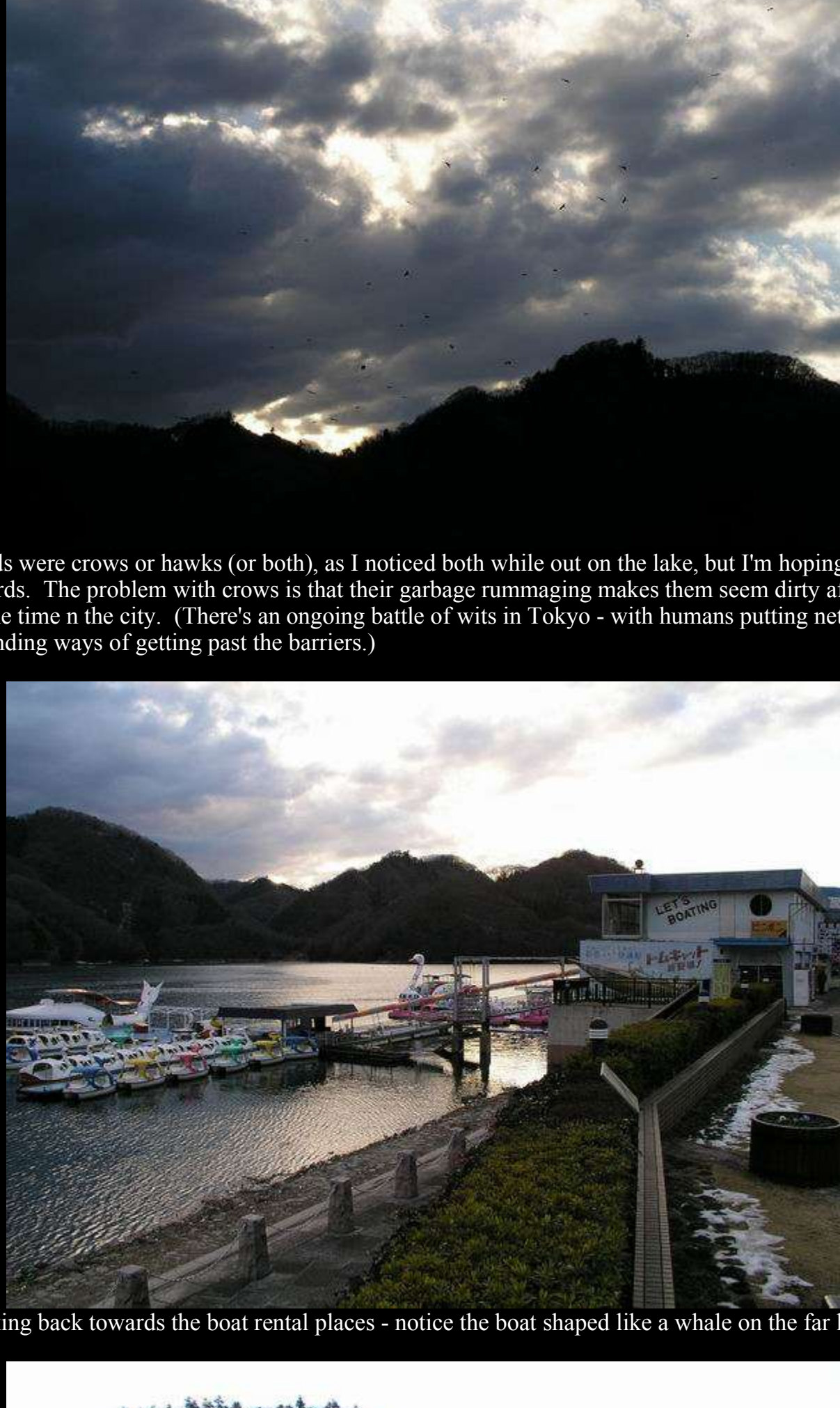


Right after getting off the lake, I had lunch on a bench (vantage point of this view - not in picture) and look in the view of the lake as the sun headed for a bank of clouds just over the mountains to the west... it was quite pleasant actually. Once the sun went down, it got quite cold, but at the time this picture was taken, it was warm enough that I was comfortable in my coat.

I often think of Tokyo as being cold in the winter, but that's largely due to having lived in cheap apartments with inadequate heating. Being able to go to a mountain lake in January and row around in a rowboat... it can't be all that cold compared to many places. Another factor though, is that Tokyo's winter dryness prevents there from being much (if any) snow. When something water-based falls from the sky in the winter here, it is sometimes snow. True, even when snow does fall, it doesn't tend to be here long before melting, but still - usually nothing wet falls from the sky over the dry Tokyo winter (the weather is vastly different on the other side of the mountains in Niigata).



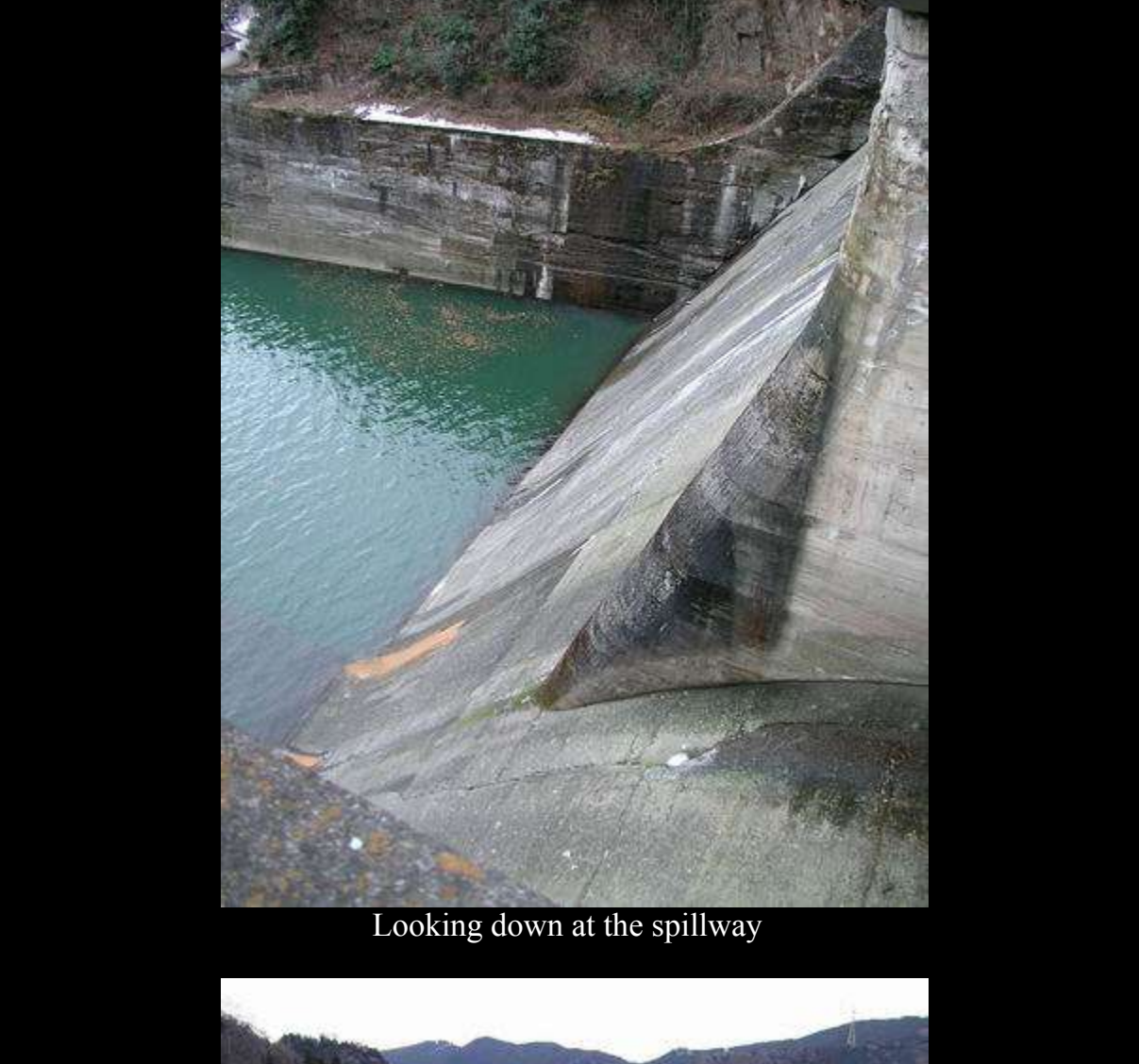
As the sun traveled behind the western clouds...



The oh-so-international *Blue Sky* -



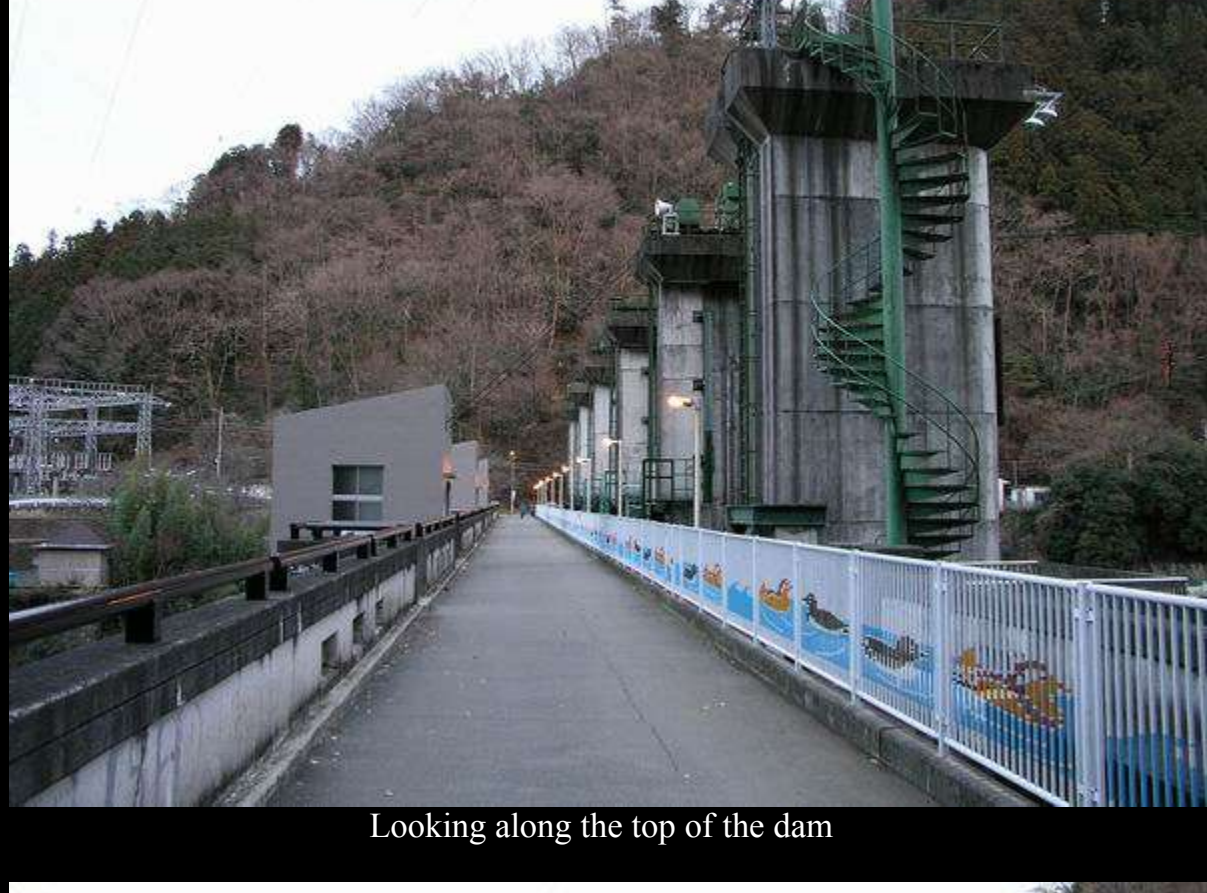
I'm not sure if those birds were crows or hawks (or both), as I noticed both while out on the lake, but I'm hoping they were hawks, which seem like cool birds. The problem with crows is that their garbage rummaging makes them seem dirty after seeing them poking around in the trash all the time n the city. (There's an ongoing battle of wits in Tokyo - with humans putting nets and other barriers over trash, and crows finding ways of getting past the barriers.)



Looking back towards the boat rental places - notice the boat shaped like a whale on the far left...



Same vantage point as the whale-boat photo, looking the other way (to the left) towards the dam.



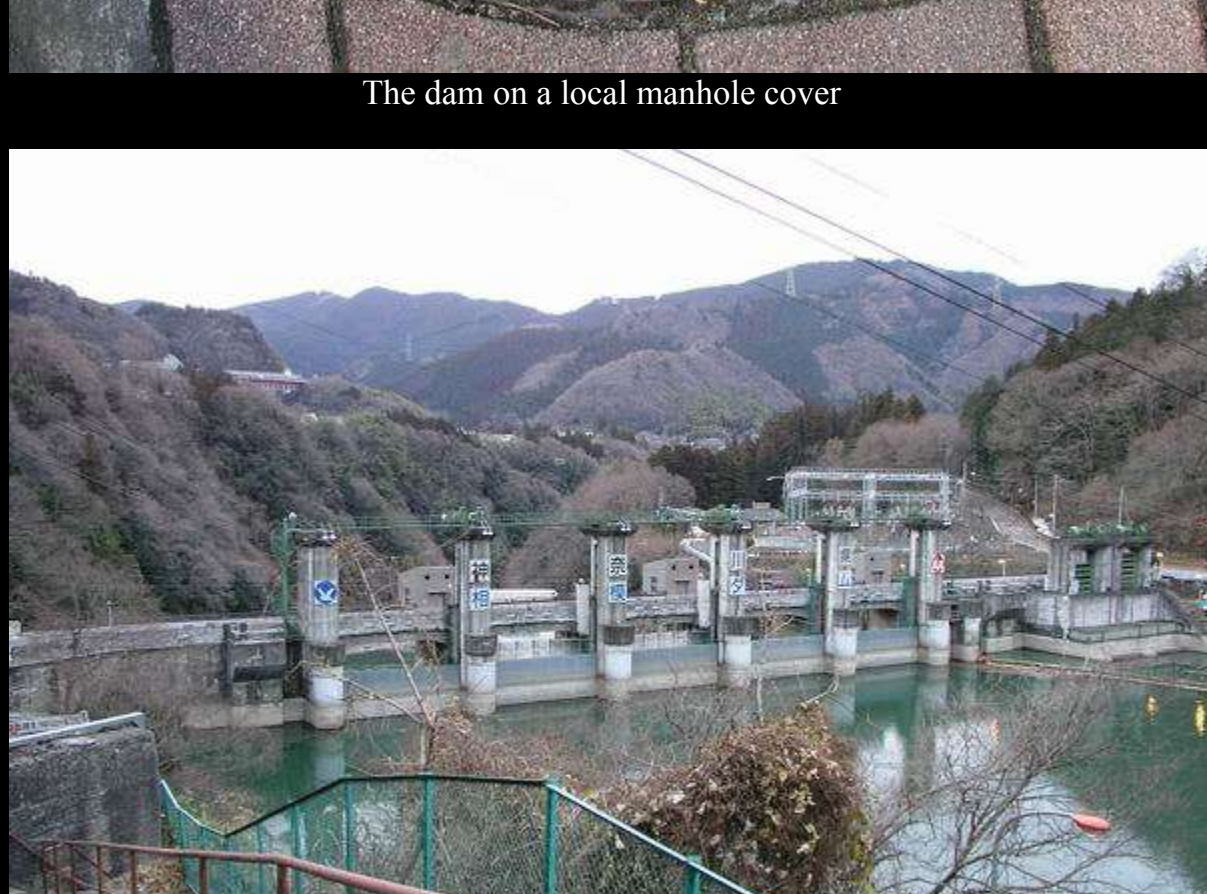
On the dam, looking back at the lake and the bridge I had crossed a few minutes before (built in 1970)



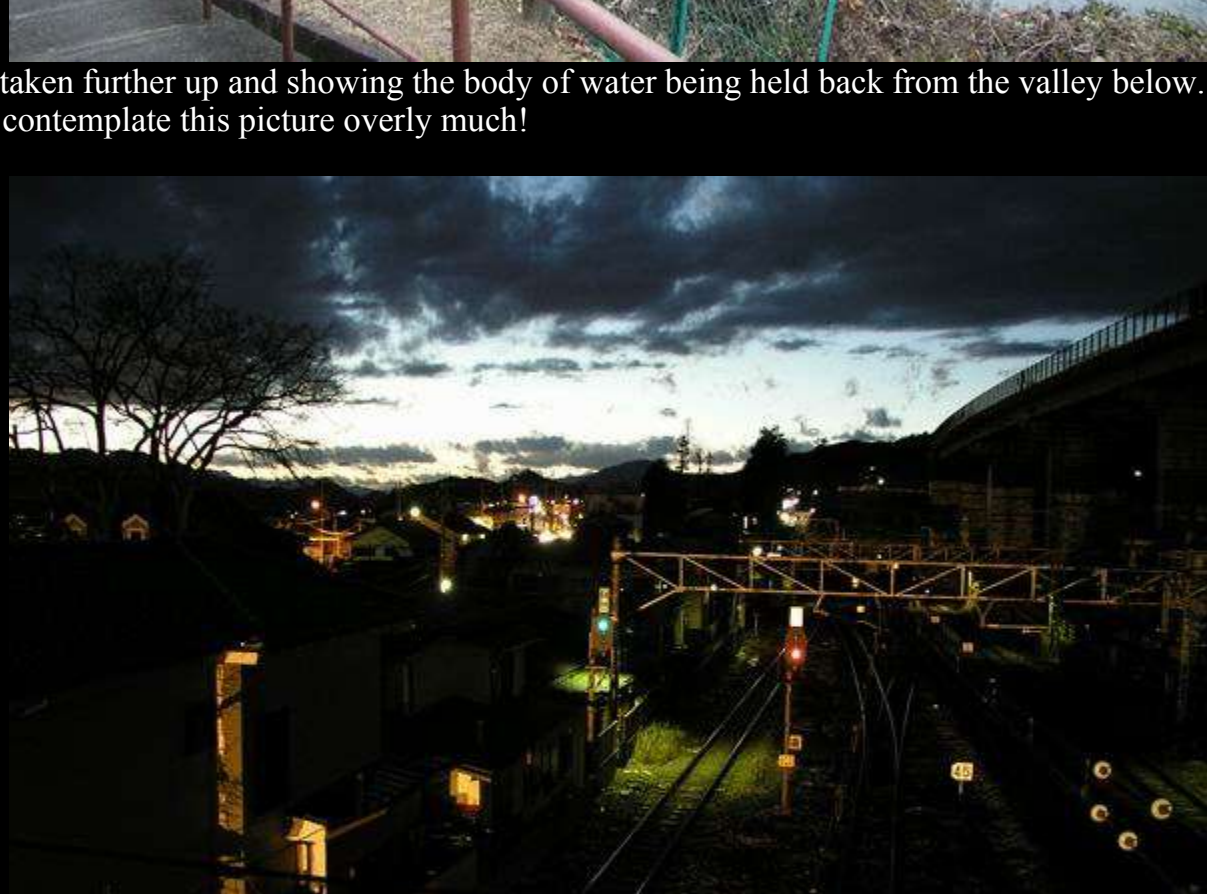
Looking down at the spillway



Looking downriver from the dam



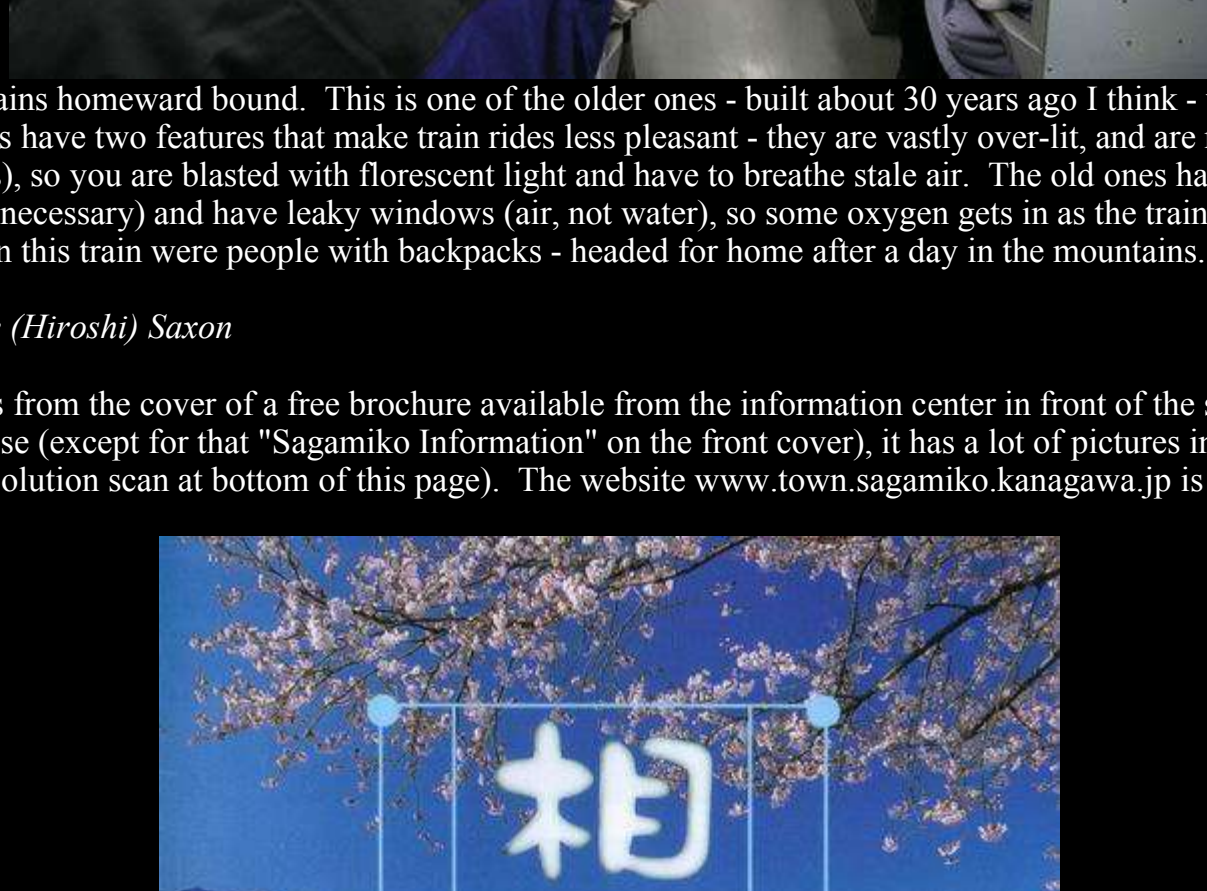
Looking along the top of the dam



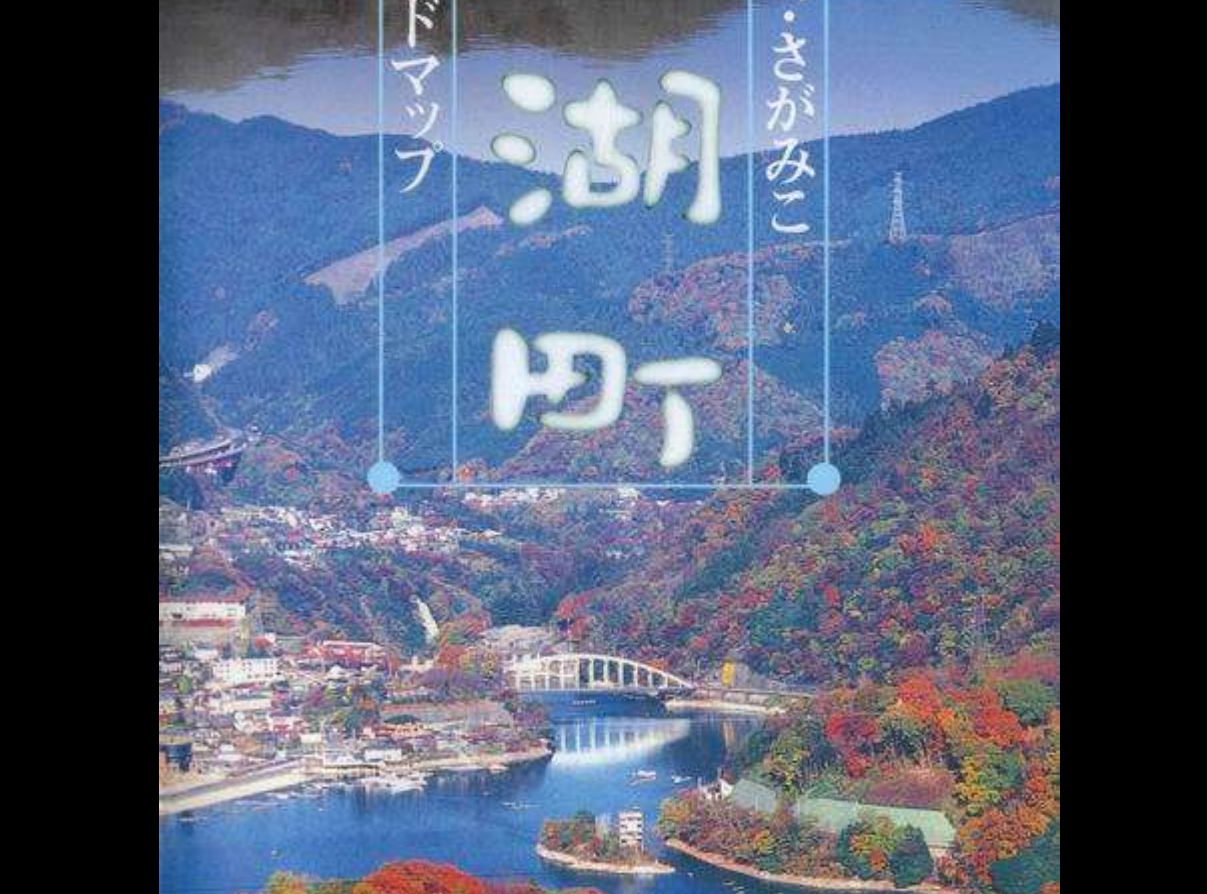
The construction of the dam was begun in *Showa-15* (1940) and completed in *Showa-22* (1947).



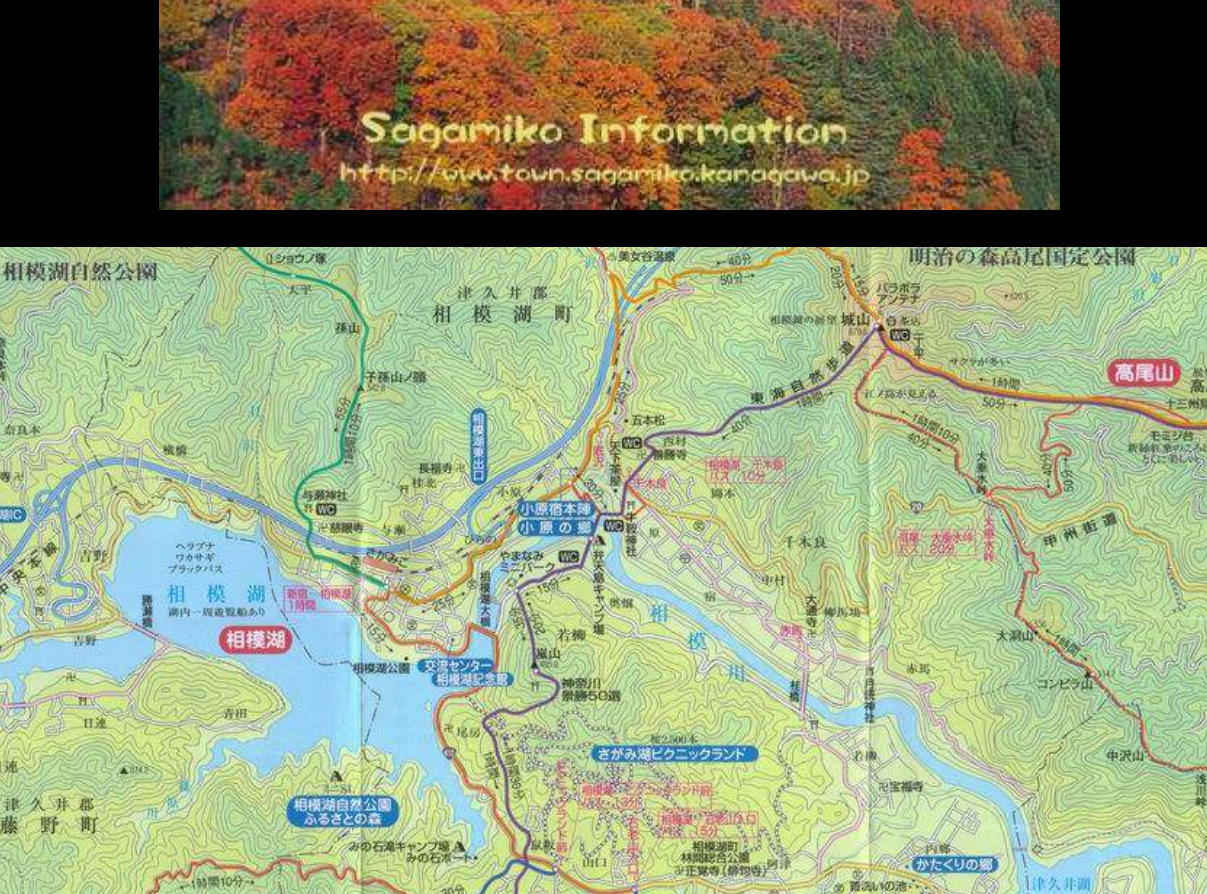
The dam on a local manhole cover



Another view - this one taken further up and showing the body of water being held back from the valley below. If I lived below the dam, I wouldn't want to contemplate this picture overly much!



Taken from a pedestrian overpass near the station just before getting on the train for home - it was quite cold at this point!



Inside the first of two trains homeward bound. This is one of the older ones - built about 30 years ago I think - which are nicer than the new ones. The new ones have two features that make train rides less pleasant - they are vastly over-lit, and are nearly air-tight (with recirculating air systems), so you are blasted with florescent light and have to breathe stale air. The old ones have more reasonable lighting (still more than necessary) and have leaky windows (air, not water), so some oxygen gets in as the train zings down the rails. A lot of the people on this train were people with backpacks - headed for home after a day in the mountains.

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PS - The image below is from the cover of a free brochure available from the information center of the station. Although the brochure is all in Japanese (except for that "Sagamiko Information" on the front cover), it has a lot of pictures inside and also has a map (partial and low resolution scan at bottom of this page). The website www.town.sagamiko.kanagawa.jp is also all in Japanese.



*DYK - Don't You Know