

Dec. 2006

Hello Everyone!,

December was a pretty laid back month school-wise, students took final exams at the beginning and then it was basically --- wait for winter vacation.

I switched host families, which has probably been one of the hardest things yet to deal with, it's like breaking away from your loved ones again... however I still visit them regularly and I am definitely enjoying my new host family as well.

I went to Tokyo for 3 days with Rotary, very interesting place, way too many people in one area — something like 50 million (including the surrounding suburbs). I met Richard Magness, a previous Rotary Exchange student who now has been studying/living in Japan for 4 years. It was nice being able to talk with him about Japan, he's a great guy.

The main focus of the Tokyo trip was of course.... DISNEYLAND.. And I thought Tokyo was overpopulated, the lines/people in Disneyland made Disneyland not seem so... Disney? In order to move, it took you about 30 minutes to go maybe 100 yards, ride-lines were 4+ hours for everything. I think in the whole 12 hours we were there my friends and I went on like 2 rides. The second day, we chose a different route and went to Disney Sea, which I must say, was much better. There were far less people, the rides were more adult-oriented, and we had fun.

After getting back home, winter vacation started. Winter vacation here is 3 weeks, but in those 3 weeks, I think I only have 2 days for myself, every day includes a party, parade, friends, Rotary, dinner with people, etc. I enjoy going to Nagoya by train in my free time, and hanging out with friends from school or Rotary, we finally saw the new Bond movie (after about 4 attempts!, we kept getting the times wrong): a big improvement over the last one. I agreed to participate in a parade this upcoming Friday where I become one of the Seven Gods of fortune for the New Year, and dress up as a samurai, and parade around Seto for maybe 8 hours — I will definitely take some pictures.

Tomorrow I head to Nagashima, this huge amusement park, I'm really looking forward to it; it's been awhile since I've ridden a good roller coaster.

I'm attaching some photos of Tokyo and other random happenings. Christmas here was much like at home, but of course I missed you all, and thanks for the wonderful gifts! New Years was a little lower key, not so much partying like in the states, but instead a time to spend with family. That's basically everything which has been keeping me busy lately, I hope everyone is doing well back home!

Garrett