

Just 48 hours ago at this time I was enjoying warm summer weather in beautiful Sydney, Australia. I was taking pictures of koalas and kangaroos, writing postcards and drying my bathing suit for the trip back to Japan. But as soon as I got back to Centrair airport last night, it was as if the whole thing was a dream. Spending almost two weeks in a warm climate in the middle of the Japanese winter was great but it made coming back to Japan harder than I anticipated!

Everyone knows that I love wintertime and I don't have many problems with the cold. But something that I had forgotten since I came to Japan was that I can enjoy the summer too. Many people told me that Australia would be really hot if I went in the middle of their summer. I was prepared for the worst. But when I got to Sydney, I couldn't believe how cool it was. Sure, temperatures were in the 30s, but there was always a nice cool breeze that made even the hottest days feel so comfortable. It was warm enough to swim almost every day but I never had that unpleasant sensation of sweating through my clothes that I have come to know in Japan. When people in Australia said that some days were "so humid," I couldn't believe it! Summer never felt so good to me as it has this past two weeks. There was even an article in the Sydney newspaper saying that summer temperatures had never been so hot in the month of January, which really surprised me. It was the perfect kind of summer for me.

Thanks to the nice weather, I had a great trip. I went to Australia for a friend's wedding, so there were a lot of wedding preparations and meeting up with friends, old and new. I did get to do some sightseeing in Sydney, but I spent a lot more time in the suburbs, eating at favorite restaurants and swimming at local beaches, when we didn't have time to take day trips out of the city. I didn't get to do a lot of the touristy things that people associate with Australia—I did see the Opera House and the Harbor Bridge, but no Ayers Rock or Great Barrier Reef. It was my first time to Australia, but I really hope it's not my last. I'll just have to see those other things next time!

It has been kind of a shock to come back to the freezing cold in Japan. I only got back last night, but I am already feeling my feet get to that state of permanent cold that I was trying to get rid of before I left for my trip. It will probably be a few days before I can start to really enjoy winter again, but until then I have nice memories of the beach, even though it's almost as if the whole trip were a dream. I think the biggest challenge might be summer in Japan this year, especially after experiencing how cool and lovely even 34 degrees can feel.

