

Year after year in Japan, I have spent the winter shivering away in my apartment, only to go outside and find that the weather is not even that cold. What a frustrating time it has been, suffering through the long, cold nights in my uninsulated apartment when the weather outside has reminded me only of late fall. So imagine my surprise and delight when this year's weather almost feels like a real winter!

I've already lost track of the number of times that snow has fallen and even the number of times that the snow has stuck and accumulated on the ground. That is the sign of a good winter! While I am used to infinitely more snow in my hometown of Cleveland, the snow in Mie this year has actually been quite good. There is nothing better to me than waking up on a cold morning and opening the curtains to see a blanket of white covering everything outside. And while I'm scared to drive on snowy roads in Japan, I still get that same excited feeling whenever I see the white stuff piling up outside my window.

But one great thing about the snow and this winter in Japan is that it hasn't been unrelenting. I think everyone can enjoy a little snow now and then, but when the snow is constant and nonstop like at home, it can become a little tiresome. As much as I love the snow, it looks ugly after a few days (or weeks) pass, and cars have sprayed ugly black dirt stains all over the piles of snow near the road. And while it is fun to make a snowman or have snow so deep that you can ride a sled in the front yard, it gets tiring walking home every day and getting the bottom half of my pants (and my shoes) soaking wet from wading through the snow. The novelty and excitement about snow wears off after it has been around for a few weeks or months.

There hasn't been any of that with the snow in Tsu this year. While there is still no where near the amount of snow that I am used to at home, this year's winter has felt to me more like a real winter than any of the past few years I have been in Japan. Sure, it's cold, but the possibility of waking up to see the world covered in white is something that makes it feel that much more like home.