

CHUA MING HUNG - HOKKAIDO HOMESTAY 2008 (16 Dec – 27 Dec 2008)

次は旭川駅です, that's the announcement which signalled our home-stay is finally starting, having taken a 7 hour flight from Singapore, a Pokemon theme connecting domestic flight and a 2 hour train ride, the 3 of us reached snowy Asahikawa. We were welcomed by Vivian (Cecilia and Xin Yu's host), Chiaki, Saya and Sally (my host for the first day). Saya even prepared a welcome note for us! Thanks Saya ☺



We then proceeded out of the station and was promptly greeted by a breath taking, -5 degree celsius wind, in the car, Sally then mentioned that today was actually a warm day (my first reaction was to see if she was joking) and for some reason, I started imagining the movie Ice Age and that's the beginning of our 10-day stay, a "cold" start to a heart warming home stay.

Together with my various hosts, Sally, June, Sophia and the lively kids Kousuke, Kazuhiro and Shouta, we spent the next few days in a flurry of fun activities, We visited the Otokoyama 男山 Sake Factory, where I had the chance to sample free sake (and an experimental sake as well, mixture of sake and beer which tastes a little bit like champagne) the staff upon knowing we were from Singapore, gave us a free sake cup each as a souvenir! Trust the Japanese to be as thoughtful as ever. June brought us to the Anpanman shop in Furano which was a 2 hour drive down and taught us how to make butter rolls ☺ While baking, we even had the time to make a giant snowman (we did this at 11pm, I know you have to be crazy to be making a snowman in the middle of the night at -8 degree Celsius but we still did that anyway).

We also met with David Long who is married to a colleague of Vivian during Christmas eve, he brought around to his favorite biking spot and also to his home where we met his lovely wife and two daughters, we had tremendous fun playing the Wii during which we crowned Xin Yu the Wii tennis champion. David also shared with us his home made spice beer which was fantastic and made dinner even though we were only expected to be around for noon.



Genghis Khan, you definitely must try when you are in Asahikawa, it consists of lots of vegetables and mountains of mutton cooked on a hot plate, the soup stock based on the meat was absolutely delicious and the warm dish is just perfect for the winter nights. I have 3 words to describe it, Delicious, Delicious and hmm Delicious.

It was with much reluctance that we had to bid good bye to our dear hosts on the 27th of Dec. They came to send us off at the train station and stood outside in the cold in the -8 degree temperature while the train was in the station, many thanks to you, Vivian san, June san, Chiaki chan, Saya chan, Sophia san, Nakamura san, Hachibe san, Kousuke kun, Kazuhiro kun, Sally san, Charlie san, Shouta kun and the many Hippo members in Asahikawa, for making this home-stay such a warm, happy and memorable one. Thank you!