

Labor Gakuen Newsletter

URL: <http://www.labor.or.jp/gakuen>

November 2006

Welcome to the October-March semester at Labor Gakuen. We hope everyone is enjoying English conversation and meeting new people. In this newsletter, you can enjoy reading stories about many different experiences Labor Gakuen students had in the Summer.

Thanks to all of the students who helped make this newsletter.

My small overseas trip

During the summer vacation, I had two topics of interest though I didn't have a chance to travel overseas. One is getting an i-pod and the other is the closing of UTANO youth hostel.

Firstly, I'm really surprised how impressive the i-pod is. Everyday, I enjoy listening to music and pod cast programs. I feel like the world of English is closer to me now. The problem is that the time I can listen to it is only limited.

Secondly, the closing of UTANO youth hostel made me sad. This August, my

On August 31st, a lot of people thanked UTANO youth hostel for giving us, and even the neighbourhood, these great memories.

Fortunately I live in Kyoto, which has famous sights. Even if I didn't have a chance to travel, I had a chance to communicate with foreign friends through UTANO youth hostel. I'm looking forward to when UTANO youth hostel will be remodeled in 2008.

Yoko Shibata

Swedish friend came to Japan. We enjoyed staying there and made precious memories. I got to know many foreign and Japanese friends through this final chance to stay at UTANO youth hostel.

We enjoyed chatting for a long time at night and enjoyed sightseeing together. It must have looked strange because it was a big tourist group in which foreign people and some Japanese were mixed together.

My Summer Vacation

I visited various cities in Canada with my friends from the 24th of July to the 7th of August. The purpose of our trip was to attend my friend's wedding ceremony at Calgary on the 5th of August.

Before the wedding, we enjoyed East Canada. We visited Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Halifax, Charlottetown, Quebec, Montreal and Calgary. It was too hot except in Calgary, but the humidity was low in all of these areas. We had a pleasant time sight-seeing everywhere.

At Niagara Falls there is beautiful scenery that we enjoyed from on board a ship. We went

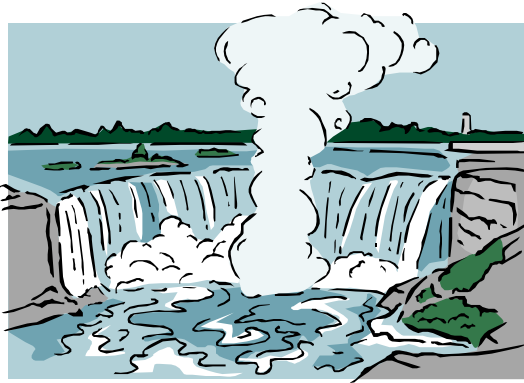


Prince Edward Island is an island famous for Ann of Green Gables and the novelist Montgomery. There was a lot of greenery over quite a wide area on the island. We took the Ann Tour around the island for a day.

In Quebec and also Montreal City 65 percent of people speak French. Montreal, like Osaka in Japan, was crowded with people.

The wedding ceremony that I attended was

near the falls and got soaked through in spray. We saw the play 'High Society' at the theater at Niagara-on-the-Lake, but we dozed during the play.



Orange juice, PLEASE

During the summer vacation I visited my host-mother in Perth, Australia. It has been four and half years since we last met. While I was staying there, I had a chance to play with her granddaughter, so I would like to tell you about my valuable experience with her. Her name is Rusin and she is three years old. She is a really gorgeous girl with big eyes, long eyelashes and curly hair.

We were playing dolls- she was a rabbit mother and I was a piggy. (Actually I would have liked to be a puppy but she said, "No, you are a piggy". Anyway we

simple and friendly. We wore kimono and the attendants took pictures of us.

Akiko Sakaguchi



At that moment her face turned angry and she told me:

Rabbit mother: "As I told you, Piggy, when you ask someone for something you should say "please". "

Of course I know that it is polite to add "please". I realised that her mother must have told her the same thing and she echoed it. But I also realised that I might have forgotten to say "please" in conversations. Even if I forget "please", adults don't venture to tell me about it, but rabbit mother showed me immediately. After this exchange, I had some chances to practice this experience while I was staying in Perth, for example,

Host mother: "Which would you like to drink tea or coffee?"

Akiko: "Tea, please."

Friend: "Would you like to eat chocolate? Milk or bitter?"

played....). At our imaginary breakfast scene, the following incident happened.

Rabbit mother: "What would you like to drink?"

Piggy: "Uhhh, orange juice."



Akiko: "Milk, please."

I am grateful to rabbit mother for her exact advice. On the flight back to Japan, when I asked a flight attendant for a drink, I thought of rabbit mother and said, "Can I have a glass of white wine, please?"

I felt I became an elegant lady

Akiko Mori

Massage!

I had a vacation in Hawaii with my family this summer. I usually get heavy feet and jet lag during my trip. I hate feeling like this, so I decided to have a massage as soon as I arrived at the hotel. I made a reservation for a massage at the spa.

I arrived at the hotel in Hawaii. The hotel has a famous spa. I went there and took a jacuzzi bath, a sauna and a shower for an hour before I had the massage. I got really relaxed.

After that, I met the therapist. She was a middle-aged woman and she seemed very strong. She began to give



CRUISING

This summer vacation, I decided to go cruising on a traditional big ship. It was the Queen Elizabeth the 2nd (70,327tons). My 4 female friends, my husband and I left Kansai Airport on the 28th of July. We stayed the first night at a hotel in

me a massage from head to toe. She had godlike hands! She put me to sleep with her clever massage.

After the massage, I didn't have heavy feet. I had light feet, and my jet lag was gone. I was able to enjoy my stay in Hawaii quite comfortably. If you go on a trip, I recommend that you take a massage on the same day you arrive!

Takako Nishida



A lucky experience!

It was a worthy experience for me. How can I explain my impression when I tried 'Koudou' for the first time? I was so excited when I smelled the sweet and elegant scent of 'Kyala', the high quality incense tree tip from Vietnam. Koudou is one of the traditional Japanese arts, where people enjoy smelling heated incense tree tips and make a guess at the name of the incense tree.

Koudou began in the Muromachi period when the shogun Ashikaga Yoshimasa and the upper class enjoyed this game. On the 7th of July, Tanabata, they compared the scent of seven

London. On the 29th of July in the afternoon, our ship sailed for the North Sea from the port of Southampton, which lies in the south part of England.

The ship sailed dropping in at two or three famous fjords, Oslo and Bergen, Rotterdam and other places. There were various kinds of events all day long and many facilities in this ship. I was often lost in the ship. All passengers enjoyed having something to do from morning to late into the night.

Anyway, I was completely satisfied with cruising when I saw a great sunset on the sun deck. We got home on the 5th of August at twilight. As soon as we got back from cruising, it was like a dream to save in my heart.

Emiko Nagasaki

My summer holiday memories

I like the high-school baseball games at Koshien. I cheer for public schools and teams who participated in the tournament for the first time. I watched the games on T.V or listened to the radio while I was gardening. I was glad WASEDA high-school won the pennant this summer, because I was born in Tokyo.

kinds of incense tree tips. Even though it was difficult to guess the different incenses, the scent stimulated their senses and made them interested and excited.

We have fewer chances to try it than the tea ceremony. Why don't we have many chances to try it? I guess that one of the reasons is that they do Koudou with at least five to ten people and so it's inefficient not to deal with many people at once (as they are able to do in the tea ceremony). The other reason is incense trees are found only in South East Asian countries. They may not be planted anymore or it's very difficult to find them.

I was happy that I tried Koudou. I like the scent of 'Kyala'. I hope they keep on practicing Koudou as long as they can.

Hide
Hosono

Canadian Rockies Trekking

I went to the Canadian Rockies trekking. This trip was a present from my husband because I worked hard for a long time. We left from Kansai International Airport on July 17th, and changed planes at Vancouver for Kelowna. After that, we went by car to Revelstoke. We went hiking at Revelstoke for six hours.

The next day, we went by helicopter to the Rocky Mountains. This course didn't have a road for mountain climbing and nobody lives there

My husband gave me not a diamond ring but my own personal computer. However, I need a lot of practice before I can use it freely.

I can't go to the first day of the class, because I'm going to Paris with my friend.

This is my delayed summer vacation!!

Mitsuko Fujii



except bears. There are three lodges on this mountain. These lodges were built about ten kilometers apart and are two-storied houses with bedrooms, a living room and kitchen. There is no electricity or bathroom, but there is a sauna bath. Ten to thirteen visitors can stay in these lodges.

Our group was made up of thirteen people: ten visitors, two guides and a cook. The cook was a woman. She cooked breakfast and dinner. She was a good cook and the dishes were very delicious. Everyday, when we came back from hiking, she prepared tea, coffee and cake. I was impressed with this.



Would you like some tea?

A great many foreign tourists visit Kyoto throughout the year. There is a convenient facility where tourists can appreciate traditional Japanese culture called 'Gion Corner', located at Shijo-Hanamikoji near the Kenninji Temple. They have well-composed performances made up of Gagaku (Court Music), Kyogen (Ancient Comic Play), and Bunraku (Puppet Play). After watching a fifty-minute show, the guests have a chance to experience the tea



We went hiking for five days and enjoyed it. There were many alpine plants along the hike, for example Cotton Grass and Glacier Lily. Glacier Lily is yellow here, but it is violet in Japan. I was surprised that there were so many kinds of alpine plants. These flowers were very cute. We didn't see a bear, but we saw a squirrel and a hummingbird.

We enjoyed travel, food, beautiful landscape, and kind and friendly people.

Kazuyo Tago

We can find enjoyment in the tea. One of them is 'meeting' people such as foreign tourists or guests of tea gatherings. I hope this simple tea ceremony will become their good memories of Japan.

ceremony briefly if they want. I sometimes serve as an assistant in this section.

I've been practicing Chado, the Way of Tea, for more than twenty years and studying English for five years in Labor. Even still, I have trouble at times. First, in pairs, we demonstrate the basic procedure of making and drinking powdered green tea. After that, the guests try to make tea and taste it by themselves, and we instruct them how to do it.

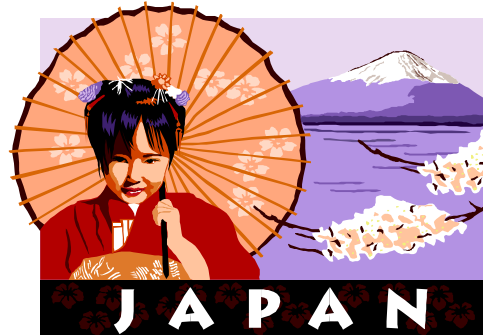
We can see them smiling happily, very eager to learn Japanese culture. They ask me many questions and some of them are difficult to answer. 'Why...?' 'Why...?'. I'm often stuck; however, no one helps me. I have to come through the difficulties on my own. It isn't easy to explain the characteristic movements of making tea in English, but it might improve my skills.

A special experience

This summer, I didn't go on any big special holidays, but I went on four trips in the Kansai area. I visited Arima spa in Hyogo, and Nagahama, Adogawa and Makino in Shiga. I went to Shiga three times.

The trip to Arima spa was a special experience. My four friends and I went there in my friend's car. It was a Jaguar. We enjoyed a comfortable drive. The place we stayed at for one night was

Midori Terada



Parting and Meeting

This summer I had two big things happen I can't forget. First, my sister died of cancer after 7 months of treatment. She was so kind and reliable that her death left me in a terrible shock. Since then I've been thinking how transitory life is and rethinking how I could live the rest of my life.

Secondly, a young American girl came to stay with my family for a week. She is cheerful and eager to learn everything, so we had a wonderful time with her. She will study Japanese language and culture for one year as an exchange student in a Japanese college.

Summertime was a season of parting and meeting for me.

Akiko Okada

They have been great railway fans for a long time because of their names. So, last summer I took them to the JR traffic museum in Bentencho, in Osaka

Kosenkaku Hotel, which is like a cottage in the forest.

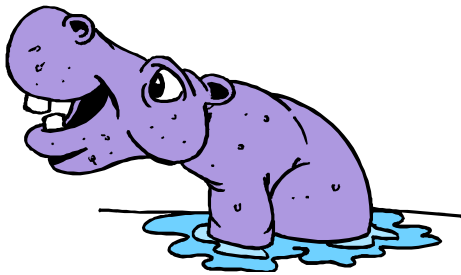
We were very relaxed and had a great time. We are old classmates from Junior high school. On our way home, I drove the Jaguar. I was so excited because it was a special experience. I love to drive, but I have a small car!

Atsuko
Okamoto

The Traffic Museum

I have twin grandsons. They were born on December 13, Heisei 11. I can easily remember their birthday because it's 11/12/13!

Their names are Nozomi and Haruka. Nozomi is the name of the Shinkansen super express train and Haruka is the express train bound for Kansai Airport.



Travel in South Africa

This summer, I went to South Africa from August 24th to September 2nd. One of the purposes of my trip was to see the Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. Victoria is one of the three biggest falls in the world. I saw the other two falls, Iguas (Brazil) and Niagara

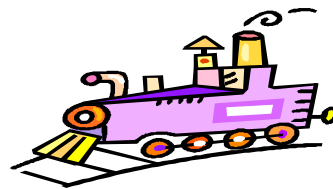
city. It's an amusing spot for kids. There are some steam locomotives, old electric trains, an old airplane 'Cessna', many plastic models and a 3-D cinema of 'Ginga Tetsudo 999'.

We went there by JR, and by chance I noticed an interesting fact. The fare from Kyoto to Bentencho is ¥780, while the fare from Kyoto to Osaka is ¥540 and from Osaka to Bentencho is ¥160. Therefore, if I get a ticket for Osaka first, get off there and ride again, my total fare will be ¥700.

Go straight: ¥780, ride twice: ¥700. Don't you think it a little strange?

However, I finally found out what was behind this mystery. From Kyoto to Osaka there is stiff competition between JR, Hankyu and Keihan railway companies. From Osaka to Bentencho there is also competition between the JR loop-line and the City subway. But from Kyoto to Bentencho there is no competition! This is the reason why the double fare system has been thought up.

Norihiko Okubo



CAPRI ISLAND

I went to Italy in the summer vacation. On a beautiful day, we visited Capri Island to see the famous 'Grotto

(Canada) last year.

The Victoria Falls were very majestic and beautiful, and many rainbows arched over the falls. I thought Victoria Falls were more fantasy-like than the other two falls.

Next I visited the Safari Park in Botswana. I saw many kinds of wild animals; elephant families, giraffes, zebras, impalas, hippopotamuses and crocodiles. I was very impressed to see them so near. I've only ever watched them on TV or in movies.

After that, I went to the Cape of Good Hope (Cape Town) and I trekked there. I imagined again that 'Earth is round'! It was early spring so I spent a comfortable time.

South Africa was a very nice country, but I was sorry that there was a division in society between rich and poor. However, I won't forget the clear sky, starry skies and the eyes of kids.

Miwako Yagi

The fascination of Vienna

In July I went to Vienna with my husband on a package tour. The fascination of Vienna was the heritage houses of Hapsburg. There were lots of historical buildings such as palaces, churches, theatres and museums.

First we visited Schonbrunn Palace, the imperial villa where the Empress Maria Theresa (1717-78) lived in summer. It was a very beautiful palace covered with yellow, the color she loved. There were about 1400 rooms.

In 'The Mirror Room', Mozart, at six years old, had played a concert for the

Azzurra', the 'Blue Grotto' or 'Ao-no-Dokutsu'. The sky was clear and the sea was so calm. When we arrived near the cave, I felt my dream come true.

Many boats were waiting their turn to go into the cave. We changed to a small boat then we waited with excitement.

At last, we went into the narrow hole. It was really black and I couldn't see anything. The boatman shouted 'Look behind you!' Suddenly the mysterious blue wave spread out before us and we all cheered at once.

I took many pictures in a hurry. It was like a momentary dream. Capri Island was bright and magnificent, and it made us happy.

Akiko Endo



Empress and her family. There was an interesting anecdote. After the concert Mozart stumbled on the floor and Marie Antoinette, the daughter of the Empress, helped him. He was glad and said 'I'll marry you someday'. As you know, Marie Antoinette married King Louis 16th of France and was executed in the French Revolution.

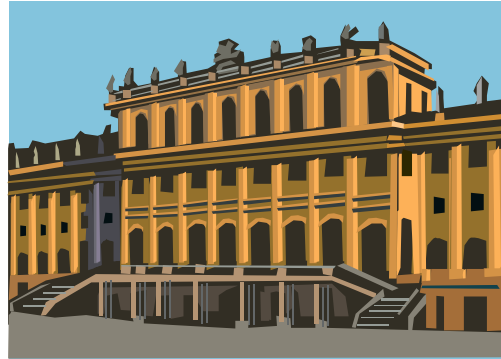
The main hall was absolutely gorgeous. It was used as the ballroom in the Vienna Convention (1814-15). At night we enjoyed a classical music concert there. The Shonbrunn Palace Orchestra played music by Mozart. It took us back to the golden era of Viennese classical music.

As for music, we shouldn't forget the Viennese forest, which was wonderful. Streams ran through the trees and many roads led into the inner part of the forest.

MY SUMMER VACATION

I traveled to Hawaii from August 25th to 30th with my husband. Before leaving home, we had some trouble because the reserved taxi didn't come. We called the travel agent and taxi company, and went to Kansai Airport in another taxi. In the taxi, I was extremely nervous because we were 50 minutes late for the appointed time. We only just got on the plane.

We stayed at the King Kamehameha Kona Beach Hotel for 4 days. There wasn't any Japanese staff there, so we had to use English to check in, and to reserve lunch and dinner. I was really nervous talking to local people in the pool, restaurants and shops, but I was pleased to talk



A guide talked about Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert who had loved the forest. He led us to the place where Schubert had composed the famous song 'Der Lindenbaum'.

There was a small coffee house with the music of 'Der Lindenbaum' written on the outside wall. And beside the house there was a big Linden tree with lots of flowers blossoming in white and yellow. I breathed the perfume to the full and said 'Goodbye' to Vienna.

How fascinating Vienna was!
Yasuko Toyooka



Beethoven

with them.

The first day we went sightseeing, and it took ten hours to drive around the island. There were colourful flowers, a beautiful sea and delicious seafood and fruit, such as crabs, shrimps, shellfish, tuna and mangoes.

Another day we went to Mauna Kea. It's about 400m, and the highest mountain on Hawaii. There were lots of telescopes from around the world at the top. I saw Japan's telescope 'Subaru' and some from other countries. I found out that world space research has been done there. We saw a sensational sunset and watched the starry sky by telescope. We saw moon craters, Jupiter's rings, the Milky Way and a lot of other stars. I felt the beautiful sunset and innumerable stars in the sky.

I really enjoyed my stay on Hawaii Island.

Isoe Yamada

Mark M's movie reviews

Last time I told you that movies are a fun way to learn English (but you should watch the same movie many times). This time I want to tell you about other fun ways to learn English, and also help you with a problem some students have had. Some foreign movies in Japan don't have English subtitles.

If you want to learn English from a movie it is important to see the words in English. So, if you have this problem with your favourite DVD then let me recommend Amazon.co.uk. You can buy movies in English with English subtitles that will work on your machine at home. I often buy movies from them.

Do you want to know what TV shows your



My great experience

I went to England to do a homestay and go sightseeing with my friend from August 25th to September 4th. We stayed in Oxford for 9 days and learned at Oxford House College. There were German, Israeli, Colombian, Venezuelan and Korean people in the class.

It was only 4 days; however, I talked a lot with my host family. My host mother and father were very kind. They took us to Shakespeare's birthplace and his wife's house. After class they also took us to Christ Church Cathedral. I went sightseeing every day.

The best thing during my stay in England is that I was able to make a reservation for a bus tour by pay phone by myself. Great! I was full of energy. I felt like my English was improving a little...??

Mieko Nishisaka

Labor teachers enjoy watching? Here's a short list:

Desperate Housewives

(Season 1 in Tsutaya/Season 2 on NHK BS)
Great show, about a group of housewives who live in a neighbourhood with lots of secrets and lies.

24 (Seasons 1-5 available in Tsutaya)

Wonderful, fast non-stop action with super agent Jack Bauer having to save America from terrorists or worse! (Stars Keifer Sutherland)

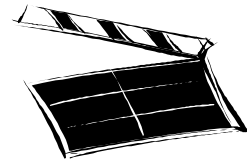
Lost (Season 1 available in Tsutaya)

Amazing show about an international group of plane crash survivors living on a strange island.

Mark T's Summer Trip to Italy

I enjoyed August in Italy this summer after having not travelled for a few years. I took in the sights in Milan, Como, Venice, Florence, Siena and a few other smaller towns during my trip. The highlight of the trip was renting a scooter to ride through Tuscany.

I have to admit, the noises the scooter made and the overall feel didn't inspire confidence. It was barely able to reach 85kph and going down one hill, as I approached 88kph, I wondered if I might go back in time at this death-defying



I love all of these shows and I think they are all great to watch in English. But my favourite American drama is...

Supernatural (First 6 episodes in Tsutaya now)

Similar to X-files, it's a horror TV show about two brothers who hunt monsters, ghosts and demons.

I hope that there is a drama here you would like to try, so until next time, enjoy!

On my vacation I was on the train bound for Kansai airport and sitting next to a man who was playing a game on his Nintendo DS. He was playing **Eigo zuke (English training: Have fun improving your English)**. I watched him write and translate Japanese sentences into English and get points for every time he was right. If you make any grammar mistakes, the computer automatically tells you. When you have finished all of the sentences correctly you go up to the next level. It really looked like a lot of fun! You can also say the sentences into the machine and it checks and corrects your pronunciation! Unfortunately the man on the train didn't play this part of the game.

So, if you can afford it and if you have some free time, my big recommendation from Novice to Intermediate students is the TOEIC approved, DS English training game.

speed.

In the end all went well and the scooter allowed me to see some beautiful, lesser-known rural parts of the region. It allowed me to find a great restaurant with a hippie cook in the small town of Monti in Chianti – she had no end of entertaining stories to tell and a lot of local knowledge.

At the heart of my trip was food and I made a conscious effort to eat gelato every day. On days when it wasn't possible to find a gelateria, I had two servings the next day to make up for lost time. By the end of my trip I'd sampled at least 30 different flavours. I attempted to taste a wide range of pizzas as well and managed to eat at least 10 during my trip.

My confession

This summer, I stayed at my mother-in-law's house to help her. She has been living by herself for 30 years. She is 86 years old and wonderfully cheerful, except in summer. Summer is her one and only



Finally, I indulged myself in one of my true loves – pork. Yes, I love pork, especially prosciutto. I made sure to taste the local variety in every town I visited and the town of San Daniele emerged as the champion for me, despite the refusal of one old woman working in a place called “The House of Pork” to serve me in that town – apparently, she was too busy preparing for customers to do this ... hmm.

The trip was problem-free for the most part and I had a wonderful time in Italy. If you're thinking of going, I'd recommend it, although be ready for some high costs, especially in tourist centres.

Don't forget to try the prosciutto!



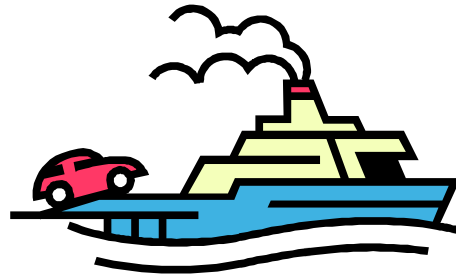
enemy.

I brought my English set which contains my English textbook, notebooks and e-dictionary. But I didn't open them (I couldn't).

When I met my teacher for the first time after the summer vacation, I wanted to greet her but I noticed I had forgotten most of what I had studied this spring. I couldn't say 'Good. How about you?' and 'I'm going to get something to eat.'

It was a terrible shock to me. So I'm writing this in accordance with my teacher's advice, though it's rather too late!

Yumiko Nishiwaki



Summer Festivals

I went to the Nebuta Festival in Aomori with my husband this summer. It was fantastic and exciting. I was deeply moved.

We left on the 1st of August. We went to Nagoya by car, and rode on a ferry to Sendai. It took about 20 hours. In the ferry, we relaxed. We read books, listened to jazz and watched a movie. We arrived in Sendai in the evening of the next day. In Sendai, we ate beef tongue. It is both famous and delicious.

The next day we went to Aomori. We dropped in at Lake Towada, the Oirase mountain stream and Mt. Hakkoda. They were beautiful and cool. The Nebuta festival was powerful and exciting. It started about 7pm, but we had to wait on the street for one and a half hours until it began. After the festival, we went to a hotel in Hirosaki city because every hotel in Aomori city was full. We got there around 11pm.

Noriko Kawahara



Kyushu Travel Quiz

by Brooke

It was mid-August and the typhoon was heading for Kyushu, but it was too late to change our plans. My mother had a Japan Rail Pass, and we had already booked hotels and bought tickets on the shinkansen.

(Q1. How do you say 'shinkansen' in English?)

The first night in Fukuoka was a bit windy, but the next day in Kumamoto was pouring rain! We got soaking wet going to see Kumamoto's black castle.

(Q2. What movie was filmed at Kumamoto Castle?)

That afternoon we took a train to Aso, but by the time we got to Mt. Aso Youth Hostel the weather was absolutely terrible. The typhoon was moving slowly and it would be impossible to see the volcano.

(Q3. How much does it cost to stay at Aso Youth Hostel?)

We decided to head down to Kagoshima a day early, and it was lucky we did! When we got out at Kagoshima Station, the sun was shining. We put on our shorts and T-shirts,

The following day we caught a local train to Ibusuki to relax in the hot sand baths. It was strange being buried up to our necks in steaming hot sand, but afterwards we were refreshed and full of energy.

(Q5. How long is it recommended to stay in the sand bath?)

We began our trek to Nagasaki the next day. In total, it took 7 hours by bullet train, ferry, bus and train to get from Kagoshima to Nagasaki!

(Q6. How long does the ferry take from Kumamoto to Shimabara?)

When we got to our hotel we were absolutely exhausted. Next morning, we decided to walk around Nagasaki to see the most important sights. Unfortunately, we didn't realise there were so many hills.

Very tired and covered in sweat, we finally arrived at the A-Bomb Museum. However, we soon forgot our tiredness. We were horrified to learn about the details of that terrible day in 1945.

(Q7. What date was the atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki?)

As Mum and I headed back to Kyoto, we thought about how lucky we were to have had such a wonderful holiday together.



grabbed our sun hats and hopped on a ferry to Sakurajima.

(Q4. Is Sakurajima an island?)

On Sakurajima, it was boiling hot, so after sightseeing we relaxed in a hot spring with a shrine, right by the sea. Fantastic! Going back to Kagoshima we saw a fabulous sunset and that night we were lucky enough to see amazing fireworks.

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