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Relaxing!

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Journals from Kanto Gakuin University, Japan

2010-10-31 Relaxing!



Yinzhou and Cassie at the Toshogu Shrine!

Everyone has been so busy lately! It is currently fall break, so there are five days for the study abroad students to do various things; some are traveling, some are visiting family, and some are simply relaxing. The timing was perfect, because we have done so much!

We went on our overnight study field trip to Nikko, which was very interesting. It was really refreshing seeing a different, more country-like side of Japan, since we have been living and going to school in a fairly large city. At the Nikko Edo Wonderland, we were transported to the Edo period, where ninjas and samurai walked the streets. We got to watch a super cool play full of swords and explosives, a magic water show, and a few of us got to throw ninja stars and try archery. The Nikko Edo Wonderland was definitely a highlight of the whole study abroad experience, it was so much fun!! That night we stayed in a hotel and ate a fancy dinner, and then we all got to relax in the onsen (hot springs). The onsen was so relaxing and wonderful.

The next day we went to the Toshogu Shrine where we toured different buildings and took “see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil” pictures with the wooden monkeys. The weather wasn’t especially cooperative, but the large shrines and temples were beautiful! One of the most interesting things about the buildings there was the Japanese concept of creating one flaw in each building, because it is believed that evil is attracted to perfection. We all played a mini game of “spot the flaw” when we came to each building or monument of some sort. It is amazing to see that as time has passed, many things have changed, but the Japanese style of architecture is still prevalent in today’s society!

In our culture class we all got to try our hand at *shodo*, Japanese calligraphy. For anyone wondering, it is so much harder than it looks!! After learning the different strokes and techniques, we all got a fan or a piece of paper to draw kanji – some turned out really well, but a few (mostly just mine), were “great attempts.” Overall it was a fun and interesting experience, and for me at least, it made me appreciate all the *shodo* you see, because it really does take a practiced finesse and skill that many people aren’t capable of achieving!

Once break is over, everyone will be returning to the Hayama Seminar House for the remaining five weeks of our study abroad trip. It is amazing how fast time has flown by; it feels like just yesterday we packed our rooms up for homestay. The homestay experience overall was extremely helpful in fully immersing the students in the culture – you were literally living, eating, and breathing the Japanese way of life, since you were taken out of the “comfort” of being surrounded by fellow Americans, and placed in a Japanese home. We are all very sad to be leaving our families, but everyone is sure to spend time with the families on occasion.

The next semi-big item on our agenda is Let’s Enjoy, a sort of talent show that we are all putting on. We are doing something (okay I will ruin the surprise, it’s an Arashi dance) together, but then a few people are doing individual acts, and it will be lots of fun. Because our group has gotten fairly close, it is always fun to do something with everyone.

More to come soon! :)

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