

December 26, 2014

Greetings,

Hope you have a good year. We Nakagawa family had a good year. In contrast to the last year, we had a chance to make a couple of domestic travels this year.



A hot spring resort in Ginzan Onsen. One of the heaviest snow area in North part of Japan.



Iris discovered how yummy the fresh sea urchin is in Ajishima Island, Miyagi.



Tip of Noto peninsula on the coast of Japan sea.



Old town district in Takayama city in the mountainous Hida region of mid Japan.

Iris is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in the elementary school. Ever since she entered to the elementary school, she goes to an after school care after her class until 18:00 so that she doesn't have to be alone at home until her parents come back from their work. The after school care has been always her favorite playground. She enjoys a couple of hours of her free time with her closest friends there. There is no duty of homework,



lessons to develop skills nor accomplishments, away from her annoying parents. So it's like a paradise for her. The after school is operated by the local government and always suffered from the limited capacity they can provide. Because of the highly demanded situation as always, every kids have to leave by the time when they become 4<sup>th</sup> grade, which is 3 months away for Iris. Iris is going to miss it a lot. On the other hand, her parents need to come up with something alternative in order to fill up Iris's time after the school until dinner. A popular solution for many kids in the area is to let them take private lessons to supplement schoolwork. Again, Itaru is hesitating such a culture since he grew up in local town where nobody around him took such a lesson at least 3.5 decades ago. Poor Iris how their parent's decision to be made...

Itaru challenged two marathon races this year in April and October. The race on April was held in Sado Island which is located on the west side of main island Japan. Itaru and his family took a bullet train from Tokyo to Niigata and then transferred to a ferry to get to the island. It takes about 5 hours to get to the island. This race was Itaru's 2<sup>nd</sup> full marathon race and the last one was almost 20 years ago back in his student days. Itaru was ambitious to break his personal record of 3h12m which was established in his 20th, so he kept aggressive pace in the race. However he found out later in the race that the climate was too warm in April (around 20 Celsius) to be

that ambitious. He couldn't keep the high pace because he was dehydrated by 25km or so and ended up with slowing down to almost walking speed. The remaining 17km was nothing but hell for him. He got suffered form frequent cramp on both legs and had to stop a few to several minutes each time. He was so depressed by the fact, but he was even afraid of the worst scenario that he might not be able to get to the goal before the ferry to the main island departs and he may miss it. He actually had to catch the midnight flight from Tokyo international airport to make a business trip to Warsaw, Poland on that day. Yes, Itaru admits how nonsense travel plan he made, but he claims he has excuse that the entry for marathon races has to be done many months in advance when he has no plan for the business travel yet. Well, fortunately he was able to finish the race with an additional 1 hour, i.e. total 4h14m and was able to catch the ferry and the midnight flight! He slept like a hell on the plane, not to mention.

Half a year later, Itaru challenged another full marathon race to revenge in Chiba, suburb of Tokyo. The race in October in this area again has to deal with the warm climate. Fortunately, he had the opportunity to make a business trip to Hawaii right before the race, so he trained well under the high temperature condition there. Perhaps this adjustment

worked out well, he finished the race in 3h24m without significant pace down towards the end of the race. He still believes he can improve the time because he couldn't keep up his pace for the first 15km because there were



too many runners occupied the course and took him 15km to get out from the traffic jam. Believe or not, the marathon is getting so popular in Japan and there 20,000 runners were running this race.

Wishing you a happy new year.

2-3-21 Hazawa, Nerima-ku,  
Tokyo 176-0003  
Japan  
Itaru, Keiko, Iris

〒176-0003  
東京都練馬区羽沢 2-3-21  
中川格

