

## 1. Vegas trip

This month I went on a five-day family trip to Las Vegas. It was a Christmas present from my host parents to me and my four host brothers. Vegas was one of the places I have wanted to visit so I was very excited. Each hotel in the city has its own theme which made sightseeing really fun. We stayed at LAXOR Hotel which is shaped like a pyramid and has an Egyptian theme. Our room was on top level and had a beautiful view. On the first day, we walked around the city all day. We saw the “Welcome to Las Vegas” sign, HERSHEY’S Chocolate World, New York-New York, and The Fountains of Bellagio. We walked more than 20 kilometers. At the end of the day, the boys and I got a gelato, and it was amazing. The second day was a driving day. We went to Arizona to see the Grand Canyon and the Hoover dam. I had just learned about New Deal and World War II in my U.S. History class, so the timing was perfect for me to visit. I think it is interesting when I cross the state, they look so different even if their states are right next to each other. The rest of the day, we enjoyed shopping and visiting some places. I bought souvenirs for my dad, a magnet, because he always gets nice looking magnets every place he visits. We went to Fremont Street, the Neon Museum, the Coca-Cola store, the M&M’s store, and saw a variety show. At the Coca-Cola store, there’s a place where you can taste pops (sodas) from around the world. There were 14 unique flavors, like green tea honey from Indonesia and cucumber Sprite from Romania. What I realized from this experience is that “simple is best.” It was fun to try many flavors, but most of them were just okay—not great. The highlight of this trip is exploring the city, especially at night. I loved watching the neon lights all over town.

## 2. Tennis

Starting this month, the spring sports season officially began. Since cheerleading is not available, I decided to join the tennis team. I chose tennis because my host dad really wanted to see me play in tournaments and strongly recommended that I join. Another reason is that I was practicing tennis for two years when I was in elementary school. Also, my school has eight nice courts, and I wanted the chance to play on them. I just joined the team a couple of days before spring break, so we haven’t practiced a lot yet. The coach said we will have practice five days a week, so it’s going to be busy. I feel tennis is difficult because the rackets and balls feel heavy. It’s also somewhat similar to badminton, which I used to play in Japan, but the rules and gameplay are completely different, which sometimes confuses me. The tournaments will start next month, and I’m really excited. I want to work hard and help our team win.

