

# January

Welcome to 2026! So, how did everybody celebrate **New Year's Eve**? Was there any grape eating, plate smashing, or carrying of empty suitcases?

## Different Countries, Different Parties

Many of you probably visited your family's favorite shrine and enjoyed the very first sunrise of the year. But in other countries, people celebrate this holiday in lots of different ways -- some are surprising, and some are just plain **strange**! Let's check them out:

**Denmark** – To invite good fortune, have your Danish friends **smash** old plates and dishes outside your door at midnight. The larger the pile, the luckier your year will be!



**Spain** – Why wish for luck just once when you can wish for it **twelve** times, one for each month of the year?! At each of the **12** chimes of the clock leading up to midnight, Spaniards attempt to eat one grape. Successfully eating all 12 in time ensures good luck for every month of the new year.



**Mexico** – To manifest adventure and travel opportunities, Mexicans walk around the street with an empty **suitcase** at midnight. Some people even pack their bags with one item associated with travel, such as a beach ball or a pair of binoculars!



# Local

# Highlights

After discovering some New Year's traditions from faraway lands, let's zoom in a little closer to home. January in Aichi Prefecture is packed with cool winter traditions and exciting events you won't want to miss!

## Toyota City

### Asahi Nature Highland Sledding Hill

This outdoor spot transforms into a winter wonderland with an artificial-snow sledding hill! Even without real snow, you can rush down fast and slippery tracks. No skiers, no snowboarders, just pure sledding fun.



## Chita City

### New Year's Owari Manzai Comedy Performance

What a fun way to start the year by literally laughing out loud! Three styles of Owari Manzai comedy are performed at Owari Hachiman Jinja Shrine on January 1st to welcome the new year with heartfelt cackles. This beloved local tradition was officially recognized as a National Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 1996 as a traditional event of the greater Chita area.



# Student Corner

From learning about the unique traditions and events both in the global and local community, we now turn to a different kind of creativity. The next section features a collection of riddles written by our students, showing how language and imagination can be just as entertaining as any festival. Take a moment to enjoy LC students' playful ideas and clever use of words.

1. People believe me every time, but I sometimes make mistakes. You won't know it until you see my other friends.

- T. I.

3. We start as boring. But with just one click, we are magic!

-S. Y.

5. Some people dislike me because they think I steal things and I'm dirty. But others actually love me! I'm very famous.

-R. F.

7. Under me is fire. Above me is flood.

-M. A.

9. A cat who always chases a mouse ate "o." What fruit is this?

-E. H.

11. I have pieces of paper. I look like a bird when I'm opened.

-I. M.

2. When I fall, I get smashed. But I can keep you moisturized.

-Y. M.

4. My twin brother and I don't get along, but we are always together.

-Y. K.

6. I'm the tallest tower in Town.

-K. N.

8. You can't stop me from running. And I'm different in other countries.

-K. A.

10. I have my own shop. I'm good for the environment.

-R. M.

12. When I see it, I see myself.

-A. T.



# From the Land Down Under to the Land of the Rising Sun

At our school, creativity does not stop in the classroom. Learning happens not only through lessons and textbooks, but also through meaningful cultural connections within our community.

Last month, Seirinkan welcomed four students from Pymble Ladies' College in Pymble, Australia. During their short stay, this exchange became a chance for shared discovery, where ideas, traditions and habits, and friendships crossed borders. Now, let's hear directly from Karen, Lucy, Kitty and Madeline as they share their thoughts and memorable moments from their time with us.

## How would you describe your stay in Japan?

Karen: It was an exciting and adventurous journey.

Lucy: I'm so glad I came.

Kitty: People are welcoming. I would definitely relive this experience a million more times if I could.

Madeline: An immersive experience! I have enjoyed learning about school life and the culture in Japan.



## What do you and your Japanese friends have in common?

Karen: Although we may not be able to speak fluently in English or Japanese, we all try our best to express ourselves. We are eager to learn new languages so we can exchange personal experiences and interests. We also like similar celebrities.

Lucy: We are on the lookout for good-looking people (イケメン). Nick from Zootopia is popular.

Kitty: We like laughing at things that are not even funny, and we have many inside jokes. We have similar interests, such as music taste (Back Number, Yuuri, etc.).  
Madeline: We are all very funny and love to chat.



### What are the noticeable differences between you and your Japanese friends in terms of habits?



Karen: In Australia, we don't have to bring indoor shoes or slippers to school.  
Lucy: People care much more about their hair here. In Australia, most girls go to school with slicked-back hair, but in Japan, everyone is always brushing their bangs or styling their hair every day.  
Kitty: Students are much closer to their teachers, and teachers are friendlier and more approachable at Seirinkan.

Madeline: The most noticeable physical difference is our height, as I am much taller than my Japanese friends. Other than that, there are not many differences between us in terms of habits.



### When you return home, what will you miss most about Japan?

Karen: I will miss my classmates here at Seirinkan and the food.  
Lucy: I think I will miss the friends I've made here the most, and I really hope I can see them again soon. Everyone has been so kind to me. I'll also definitely miss the chicken and cheese tortilla from Starbucks.  
Kitty: I will miss everyone's kindness and sense of humor. I have felt very welcomed and entertained during my time at Seirinkan and in Japan in general. I'll also miss the school vending machines that sell almost all the bread I like! I think I'll miss being able to wear slippers at school too. Lastly, I'll miss shopping at cute stores and spending time with my host family.  
Madeline: I will miss my friends at school and the food.

