

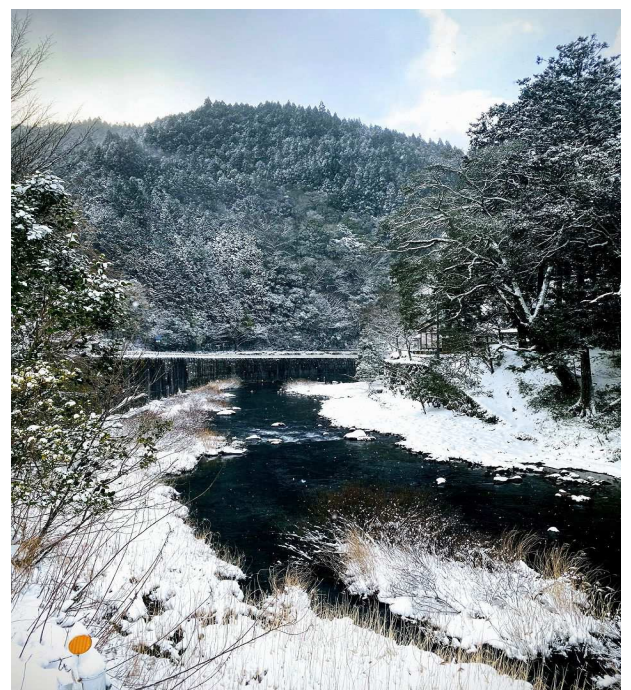
## Yusuhara a Home from Home: 4. Reflections and the Awakening of Winter

**Stephen Woodard**

Last month hosted numerous milestones for the people around the world. It ushered in a new year; bringing with it a new decade and filling most with a renewed sense of optimism and the motivation to change, which I hope will continue for time to come. For me this period meant spending it with my family back in the UK and enjoying both Christmas and New Year with them.

Returning back to Yusuhara it was clear that things would be, much like the new year, changing very soon as well. With the end of the school year approaching, preparations for graduation are already underway. The students of the 9th grade are working towards leaving junior high school education and taking the big step of moving into senior high school. Many of them are sad at the thought of leaving but ultimately excited. I would be lying if I said I also wasn't feeling a bit sad at the thought of them leaving. I hope they have fond memories of their time in junior high.

It's not just the act of getting older and moving schools that is changing, the weather recently has also taken a turn. Winter truly arrived in full force recently with a mighty blizzard and a level of snow that I have not seen in person before. What I found most surprising was the sheer volume of snow that fell in just one night, at points rising above my ankles as I waded through it. That moment of stepping outside on the first day of snow is something special to me. The air is still and calm, the scenery is beautiful, there is a certain peacefulness that can't be replicated elsewhere. It rarely snows in the UK, perhaps for a few hours every couple of years and on the off chance that the snow settles it is merely more than a light dusting on the ground. In comparison to that even the smallest bit of snow is a sight to behold. I love how beautiful Yusuhara is already but seeing it covered in beautiful white snow was a wonderful gift.



**A sight to behold, the view I see and love every day made just a little bit better.**

(\* This newsletter was written before the new coronavirus outbreak.)