

How to Enjoy Hokkaido

How to enjoy Hokkaido on the cheap! Tips for visitors from abroad!



写真提供:NPO法人しもかわ観光協会



Fire and Ice

In winter, towns all over Hokkaido host various winter festivals. Snow and ice, both natural and *choukoku-sareta* (sculpted), are often beautifully illuminated with colored lights. Here, however, I introduce a winter event where the main source of light is *rousoku* (candles). The *aisu kyandoru myuujiamu* (Ice Candle Museum) takes place in February in Shimokawa town in northern Hokkaido. It is a celebration of ice candles, and this year marks the fiftieth time it is held! But first, what is an ice candle? You may have never seen one unless you have experienced winter in a cold place like Hokkaido. To make an ice candle, you put a bucket of water outside at night when the temperature is -16 C or lower. The water will partly freeze into a *han-tomei* (translucent) *youki* (container) that is shaped like a bucket. Put a candle inside and light it. Like a *hounou* (votive) candle in a church, the ice candle will produce a warm, soft light. As for this year's Ice Candle Museum, outdoor events such as the ice candle display take place at Nigiwai-no-Hiroba plaza and indoor events are held at the adjacent *machi okoshi sentaa* (town information center), Komorebi. The events include food and souvenir booths, a stamp rally, live music, and a photo contest. But what really makes the Ice Candle Museum so special is that Shimokawa's shops and homes have a deep-rooted custom of lighting ice candles. Visitors can enjoy the magical atmosphere of ice candles throughout the entire town. After visiting the Ice Candle Museum, I think you will understand the *igi* (significance) of its name. Ice will melt and candles will burn out, but the warmth of the ice candles will remain in the museum of your heart. (February 10 and 11; 17:00 to 20:00). While visiting Shimokawa Town, you might want to stop by Sakuragaoka Park, which is known for a structure called the Mini Banri-no-Chojo, a mini-version of the Great Wall of China. This 2-kilometer-long wall is made of over 150,000 stones. It was hand-built, stone by stone, by the locals over a period of 15 years. Like the Ice Candle Museum, it also shows the warm support that Shimokawa residents have for their town. J

“アイスクャンドル”をご存知ですか？

北海道各地で行われる冬季イベントの中で、今回ご紹介するのは今年で50回目を迎える「しもかわアイスクャンドルミュージアム」。アイスクャンドルとはバケツに入れた水を凍らせて、中心の凍りきらなかった穴にキャンドルを

灯したもので、開催地である下川町は日本におけるアイスクャンドル発祥の地といわれています。

今年は「にぎわいの広場」「まちおこしセンター・コモレビ」で開催されますが、メインの会場だけではなく町全体でアイスクャンドルの幻想的な空間を楽しむことができ、イルミネーションとはひと味違う幻想的な空間が広がります。

開催日は2月10日(土)・11日(日)、両日とも17時～20時。

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