

How to Enjoy Hokkaido

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



写真提供:おたる潮まつり実行委員会



Celebrating the Spirit of the Seawater

In Japan, summertime is *matsuri* (festival) time! Due to the long winters, Hokkaido natives savor every moment of summer, and they never seem to tire of *matsuri*. If the timing is right, visitors to Hokkaido can experience a huge *matsuri* that is held in the historic city of Otaru, a short train ride from Sapporo (¥750). For three days in late July, the people of Otaru hold the *Ushio* (seawater) *matsuri*. This festival originated from the desire to give thanks to the sea, the source of the city's prosperity for many generations. At the festival's opening ceremony, seawater from Ishikari Bay is designated as sacred, and this water serves as the spiritual basis of the festival. Drummers beat *taiko* drums as dancers in *yukata* (cotton kimono) walk through the streets announcing this first day of the festival, *Ushio Furekomi* (Heralding the Seawater). The streets are lined with over a hundred stalls with all kinds of food and festival games. On the second day, the main dance event takes place: *Ushio Nerikomi* (Working the Seawater). Schools, companies, *chou-nai-kai* (neighborhood associations), and other groups have been practicing the traditional *Ushio Matsuri* dance. In this dance, the hands move delicately up and down, like waves on the ocean surface. Wearing *yukata* or matching t-shirts, the groups dance from the city center to the main venue at Pier 3. To give you an idea of the scale, last year about 5,000 people from 76 groups were dancing and parading in the city center for eight hours! On the third day of the festival, *omikoshi* (portable shrines) are paraded throughout the city. Last year, this parade was revived for the first time in several years, with about 900 people from all over the country gathering to carry the *omikoshi*. The festival ends with a huge *hanabi taikai* (fireworks display) over the ocean, with three thousand fireworks. Each year, around 1 million people visit the festival—an astonishing number. Visitors to Hokkaido who are able to join in will definitely feel the Hokkaido *matsuri* spirit! (58th Otaru Ushio Matsuri: Friday, July 26 to Sunday, July 28)

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札幌からJRで約50分。人気観光地・小樽の夏祭りへ行ってみよう。

日本の夏は“祭りの季節”。全国各地でさまざまな祭りが開催され、北海道では小樽市の「潮(うしお)まつり」が有名です。繁栄の源である海への感謝をテーマにした祭りで、来場者は毎年約100万人。今年で58回目を迎え、7月26日(金)～28日(日)に開催されます。各日にメインイベントがあり、初日は太鼓を打ち鳴らしながら浴衣を着た踊り子が街を練り歩く「潮ふれこみ」、2日目は「潮ねりこみ」といって市内の企業や学校などが「どんどこざぶ～ん!」の音頭とともに、手を波のように動かしながら踊ります。最終日は約900人の担ぎ手による「神輿/レード」が迫力満点!小樽の熱気を全身で感じる祭りで北海道の夏を満喫しましょう。

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