

How to Enjoy Hokkaido

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



Bright White Winter Nights

"*Suittchi on!*" ("Switch on the lights!") A cheer rang out in Sapporo's Odori Park as a *chuushotekina* (abstract) representation of a Christmas tree was lit up by 1,048 light bulbs. It was December 12, 1981. Sapporo's Snow Festival was already a big tourism attraction, and summer tourism was popular. However, the tourism industry's goal was to use Hokkaido's four seasons to increase year-round tourism. One question was how to encourage tourism to Hokkaido in early winter. The solution—Sapporo's White Illumination—was inspired by the famous lighting up of the Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center in New York City. A huge triangle resembling a giant Christmas tree was illuminated with white lights evoking snow. Five years later, an incredible 134,063 light bulbs were used to decorate various shapes, and the event was awarded two prizes. As time passed, the celebration grew even further, taking place at multiple *kaijo* (sites). In the 2000's, it started to include power generated from biodiesel and solar panels. In 2017, the White Illumination was selected by tour guides who specialized in night views as *Nihon San-dai Irumineeshon*, one of the top three illuminations in Japan. Recently, the White Illumination uses around 750,000 LED lights of various colors to illuminate a variety of shapes. This year, the 44th White Illumination opens on Nov. 22 at five sites. The Odori *kaijo* is six blocks of Odori Park, from West-1 to West-6, including the 23rd *Myunhen Kurisumasu Ichi* (Munich Christmas Market) in Sapporo at West-2. This site is open through Dec. 25. At the *Eki-mae-dori kaijo*, the main street that runs from Odori Park to JR Sapporo Station is illuminated until Feb 11. Three other downtown *kaijo* are illuminated until March 14. These are: *Minami-ichi-jo* (South-1) street; Sapporo *Kita-san-jo Plaza*, also called Akapura, at North-3; and *Sapporo Eki Minami-guchi Hiroba* (JR Sapporo Station South Exit Plaza). Sapporo residents appreciate White Illumination for making these darkest nights of the year cheerful and bright! Visitors to Hokkaido will also appreciate the opportunities to create beautiful photos. The sites are very easy to access, but do wear warm outerwear and safe boots as it can be icy underfoot. **J**

札幌の初冬を彩るイベントの始まりとこれから

「スイッチオン!」札幌市の大通公園で約1048個の電球に照らされたクリスマスツリーに歓声が挙がったのは1981年12月12日のことでした。当時の札幌は初冬の観光資源が課題で、その解決策としてニューヨーク・ロックフェラーセンターのクリスマスツリーのライトアップにヒントを得たのが、今年で44回目を迎える「さっぽろホワイトイルミネーション」です。2017年に日本三大イルミネーションの一つに選ばれ、近年は約75万個のLEDライトを使用した壮大で幻想的な空間が人気を集めています。今年は11月22日(金)から大通公園や駅前通など5つの会場で開催予定。会場へ行く際は暖かい服装と滑りにくいブーツの着用をお忘れなく!

文＝米坂スザンヌ(米国カリフォルニア生まれ、フランス語学士、英語修士。1983年から札幌在住。北海学園大学人文学部名誉教授。)

Born in California, Suzanne Yonesaka received her BA in French and her MA in English, and has lived in Sapporo continuously since 1983. She is professor emerita in the Faculty of Humanities at Hokkai-Gakuen University.