

# How to Enjoy Hokkaido

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



写真提供:北見市 商工観光部観光振興課



Visitors to Hokkaido can have a good opportunity to mix with locals at one of Hokkaido's many winter festivals. One such festival is held in Kitami City, which faces the Sea of Okhotsk. The Kitami *Fuyu Matsuri* (Winter Festival) includes *setsuzou* (snow sculptures) made by local residents, *kouri choukoku* (ice sculptures), a large snow slide, and other activities. Visitors and locals warm up by a bonfire while drinking hot drinks or cocktails. And of course, no festival is complete without various *suteeji-ibento* (performances) and *kicchin-kaa* (food trucks). This year, the 55th *Fuyu Matsuri* is on Feb. 8 and 9, from 9:30 to 16:00, with the theme "Winter is our friend". Perhaps it sounds fairly typical of winter festivals around Hokkaido, but there is one more unique element. On Feb. 7 from 17:30 to 20:00 is a pre-opening sponsored event, the 25th Kitami *Gen-kan* (bitter cold) *Yakiniku* (grilled meat) *Matsuri*. This festival was started by people who had been transferred to Kitami for work. Instead of complaining about the cold, they decided to promote Kitami's cold weather and its love of *yakiniku*. For this event, approximately two thousand people gather around *sumi* (charcoal) grills under the cold night sky. They enjoy eating, drinking, karaoke, and a *chuusen* (raffle). Just how much eating and drinking? Well, last year a ticket that could be used by up to four people included 400g each of *sagari* (beef hanging tender), *buta kata-rousu* (pork shoulder loin), *buta horumon* (pork innards), and *tamanegi* (onions). In addition, there was *nomi-hodai* (all-you-can-drink) shochu and soft drinks. It sounds like a great party, and I imagine that the participants must feel a strong sense of friendship and unity. This year the event is *zenseki kanbai* (sold out) but if you are thinking of going next year, start checking the Kitami City homepage for tickets early. Last year, tickets went on sale on Nov. 29, a date that can also be pronounced *i-i-ni-ku*, meaning "good meat", so it is easy to remember. Is winter your friend? Friendships are sometimes strengthened by challenges, and Kitami's bitter cold is certainly a challenge. The average temperature on Feb.7 is a high of -2.5 C and a low of -15 C! But if you join the residents of Kitami at their Winter Festival, and perhaps at the *Gen-kan Yakiniku Matsuri*, you may discover that winter is indeed your friend. **J**

## 「冬とともだち」になろう!楽しい企画が盛りだくさんの「北見冬まつり」とは?

オホーツク海に面した北見市で開催される「北見冬まつり」。55回目を迎える今年は「冬はともだち」をテーマに2月8日(土)と9日(日)に行われます。入場料は無料で、会場には地元団体が作った雪像や大きな雪山の滑り台が設置されているほか、屋台やキッチンカーが並ぶグルメコーナーもあります。ホットドリンクやホットカクテルを焚火にあたりながら楽しむ「アイスBAR」も人気。夜はライトアップされて幻想的な空間になります。さらに、寒さに負けない体をつくるための「耐寒ラジオ体操」も北見冬まつりならではの、この時期の平均気温は最高マイナス2.5度、最低マイナス15度ですが、元気づく体を動かせばその寒さも心地いいかもしれません。

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