

A WINTER WONDERLAND OF FESTIVALS

Shoes squeaking on a bed of fresh, powdered snow—that's the daily luxury one gets to experience when living in the northern Tohoku region of Japan. That and a myriad of snow festivals to draw you out of your winter hibernation and the never-want-to-leave-it warmth of a Japanese *kotatsu* (heated table). So get your gloves, scarves, coats and *kairo* (heat pads) ready to explore my top 3 recommended winter festivals the next time you head to Japan!

- By Jessica Scott

Sapporo Snow Festival— Hokkaido

This festival is a show of **craftsmanship and skill at its biggest, boldest and finest**. Intricate ice and snow sculptures taller than houses will greet you at every turn, with impressive light displays and show areas so you can also enjoy the fun at night. With so much to see, I guarantee you will be a happy photo-snapper here. And make sure you try a cone of Hokkaido's famous ice-cream, too—it won't melt even if you're too busy sightseeing!



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Otaru Snow Light Path Festival — Hokkaido

A charming snow and light festival in this small port city only 30 mins away from the heart of Sapporo City. In winter, the lights glitter off snowy statues and the canal, reminiscent of **a fairy tale painting come to life**. The festival runs for 10 days and overlaps with the Sapporo Snow Festival, making it easy to visit.



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Yokote Kamakura Festival — Akita

Warm, inviting human-sized *kamakura* huts offering grilled *mochi* and *amazake* (non-alcoholic sweet *sake*) inside are **a must-do experience**. But the real star of the show is the Yokote riverbank dotted with mini *kamakura* — you might even spot some famous characters, such as Godzilla or Totoro. All the mini *kamakura* you see (over 3,500) are the combined efforts of the local school children, who pitch in to make this **the most spectacular Kamakura festival across Japan**.



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For more info on things to do in winter,
read JNTO's Winter in Japan Guide:

www.japan.travel/en/guide/winter-guide/

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