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PRESS RELEASE

ARRAY OF EVENTS IN JAPAN HEAT UP WINTER 2024



Oto Fire Festival © Wakayama Tourism Federation

New York - November 29, 2023: Winter in Japan is heating up - from the annual fire festivals that warm the soul, to the illuminations that light up the skies, the cold months boast exciting experiences. Japan's upcoming events include:

Now Open: Azabudai Hills

Located near Tokyo Tower, the long-anticipated [Azabudai Hills](#) development is now open. This 20-acre urban oasis will

provide new shopping and dining experiences at the Azabudai Hills Market, as well as host the international art collective teamLab as it relocates the popular immersive art project “Borderless” to the development in February 2024. Azabudai Hills features more than 250,000 square feet of green spaces, 320 species of plants, 11 kinds of fruit trees and bushes (including blueberries, lemons and peaches), as well as herbs and edible plants. The entire project is designed to promote sustainability in urban development, with a focus on decarbonization, recycling and renewable energy. Later this winter, the development will also see the opening of Janu Tokyo, the first in a robust future pipeline of hotels from the renowned Aman’s new, younger sibling.



Rendering of Azabudai Hills
© DBOX for Mori Building Co., Ltd

Winter Illuminations:

Ashikaga Flower Fantasy: Through mid-February

Ashikaga Flower Fantasy in Tochigi Prefecture features more than five million lights throughout the entire park, including a hillside mural depicting the four seasons. The famous wisteria at Ashikaga - the park’s largest has vines that span more than 24 acres - are also lit up, glowing in purple hues. The illuminations begin around 4:30pm each afternoon.

Icicles of Misotsuchi: Mid-January to mid-February

For a natural spectacle, the gigantic **icicles of Misotsuchi** in Chichibu City in Saitama Prefecture will be aglow in rainbow colors. The icicles can grow up to 26 feet high and 98 feet wide, and are the only naturally occurring icicles in Chichibu. The illuminations begin around 5pm each afternoon.

Nabana no Sato: Through late May

One of the largest illuminations in Japan is **Nabana no Sato** in Nagoya in Mie Prefecture. More than 5.8 million LED lights depict rivers, mountains, seas and trees, with the famous “Tunnel of Light” being popular among couples. The illuminations begin around 3pm each afternoon.



Illuminated wisteria at Ashikaga Flower Fantasy
© Ashikaga Flower Park



Icicles of Misotsuchi
© Saitama Prefecture Products & Tourism Association



The Tunnel of Light at Nabana no Sato
© Nagashima Resort

Fire Festivals:

Oniyo Fire Festival: January 7, 2024

The **Oniyo Fire Festival** is a *tsuina*, or ceremony to drive away malicious spirits. The 1,600-year-old festival culminates in the lighting of six torches, each over 40 feet tall, which are then carried around the grounds of Daizenji Tamataregu until they burn out. It is considered a blessing if embers or sparks from the “devil fire” fall on you. Admission is free (paid viewing seats are available); the festival runs from 1pm to 10:30pm.



Oto Fire Festival
© Wakayama Tourism Federation



In Japan, the ages of 25 and 42 are considered astrologically unlucky for men, so the [Nozawa Fire Festival](#) combines a rite of passage and ancient rituals to protect them through the upcoming year. As the festival begins, the 42-year-olds sit atop a makeshift shrine; they call for fire as villagers set the structure alight with torches, while the 25-year-olds try to protect it by holding attached ropes. The shrine is then set alight at the end of the ceremony, with many people roasting rice cakes the next morning over the remains of the fire for good health. Admission is only available for visitors staying in Nozawa Onsen Village; the festival runs from 7pm to 11pm.

Nozawa Fire Festival
© Nozawaonsen Tourism Association

Oto Fire Festival: February 6, 2024

Steeped in over 1,400 years of tradition, every year the Kamikura Shrine purifies its *noboriko* (male worshipers) with sacred fire through the [Oto Fire Festival](#). Dressed in white, the *noboriko* light torches and run down all 538 of the steep stairs that lead to the village. This ritual is male-only; women are able to watch the festivities from the shrine path. Admission to the festival is free, with the festival running from 6pm to 9pm.

ABOUT JAPAN NATIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION (JNTO)

As the official tourism board, JNTO seeks to inspire international travelers to visit Japan. Focusing on sustainability, diversity and preservation of its history and culture, JNTO encourages travelers to explore the country while supporting local businesses, learning about indigenous cultures, and helping conserve its natural sites.

For more information about travel to Japan, visit <https://www.japan.travel/en/us> or the JNTO pages on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Youtube](#). To contact the New York office of the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) directly, please e-mail jntonyc_press@jnto.go.jp.



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