

A Season for Light and Beauty



Kenroku-en, Ishikawa Prefecture

Kenroku-en, one of the “three great gardens of Japan,” attracts more than 2 million visitors a year from Japan and abroad. It is located in the city of Kanazawa, which faces the Sea of Japan in Ishikawa Prefecture. The garden, constructed starting in the latter part of the seventeenth century, includes large ponds, artificial hills, and teahouses. It has delighted visitors for many years with its changing scenes through the four seasons. Ishikawa Prefecture is one of Japan’s snowiest areas, and every winter at Kenroku-en, in a practice called *yukitsuri*, ropes are hung from the tops of long bamboo poles and attached to tree branches to keep them from breaking under the weight of the snow. Trees topped with these great conical arrays of ropes are a famous winter sight at the garden. The completion of the Hokuriku Shinkansen, a snow-resilient high-speed railway line, has made this destination more accessible even in wintertime, and the area’s snowy scenery is highly popular among visitors from other countries.



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Kobe Luminarie, Hyogo Prefecture

Kobe Luminarie is a festival of light that brightens the winter scene in Kobe, capital of Hyogo Prefecture. The festival was first staged in December 1995, about 11 months after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, which claimed more than 6,400 lives, with artistic illumination whose roots lie in Italy. Its purpose was to offer prayers for repose of the souls of the victims and to promote hope for the recovery of the heavily damaged city, a port that has long been a bridge between Japan and other countries. The popular event has been repeated every December since then, with numerous illuminated structures brightening the winter night. Among the attractions are Galleria, where visitors walk along a passage under a series of colorfully lit arches, and Spalliera, where they are treated to a great array of wall-mounted lights in distinctive geometrical patterns. The entire site is a magnificent and inspiring display of light, and the festival has become a major event in this cosmopolitan city’s winter calendar.