



## 2021 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

**Title of the Story:** Otaru, the town that was called the “heat” of Hokkaido

**Destination Name:** *(include any state, province or region)*

Otaru City

**Country:** Japan

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**Position:** Otaru City Tourism Promotion office

**Nomination Category:** *(Please check the boxes that indicate the focus of your story)*

*Please find detailed information for the categories below in the Top 100 training module ‘Good Practice Story’.*

- Localizing the destination supply chain
- Decarbonizing the destination supply chain
- Culture & Communities
- Environment & Climate
- Nature & Ecotourism
- Tourism Reset & Recovery

*Find detailed instructions for submitting good practices in the Top 100 training module “Good Practice Story”.*

*Should you have any questions on your submission please refer to our FAQ page or contact [top100@greendestinations.org](mailto:top100@greendestinations.org)*

# DESCRIBE YOUR GOOD PRACTICE STORY

*Address each aspect of your good practice story in the different sections being specific including relevant quantitative and qualitative information.*

## Issues faced

The Otaru Canal is a waterway completed in 1923 to berth barges and make transport operations more efficient. After the war, its mission was completed with the construction of the port's wharf quay, but after a dispute over reclamation, it was rebuilt as the current walking path in 1986. The former site of the Temiya Line, Hokkaido's first railroad, opened in 1880 as part of the Horonai Railway, was abandoned in 1985. But the tracks and circuit breakers were left behind to be used as a walking trail. Otaru Canal and the former site of the Temiya Line are now Otaru's symbolic tourist attractions. Since the development of the Otaru Canal as a walking path, the city has rapidly become one of the most popular tourist destinations in Japan, attracting a record 9.7 million tourists in 1999. At that time, however, the number of tourists in Otaru was lower in the winter than in the summer due to the large seasonal disparity.

## Methods, steps and tools applied

We decided to hold the Otaru Snow Light Path because we wanted to make effective use of the cityscape to create a nighttime attraction in winter, and to draw on the entire city as a venue to revitalize the economy. This event focuses on the cold winter night, which was not considered as a tourism resource in the past. It serves as a "quiet event" that conveys the warmth of people and the sense of travel that can only be felt in the cold. The event is held each February, with a total of 120,000 candles lit to create a nighttime atmosphere of snow and candlelight.

The floating balls and candles that float on the Otaru Canal are "Made in Otaru" brand originated in Otaru.

This "Made in Otaru" approach to using local resources has fostered a love for the local community, and the event has attracted many local residents including the elderly.

In addition, about 600 foreigners out of about 2,000 people voluntarily promote the attractions of Otaru in their own countries, which leads to the further development of Otaru as a tourist city. As a result, the number of foreign guests in February has increased from about 100 in 1998, before the event started, to about 28,000 in 2018.

## Key success factors



With the volunteer subcommittee of the Otaru Snow Light Path Executive Committee at the helm, a system that allows people to enjoy and participate in the event has been established, with local volunteers looking forward to this event every year. We believe that one of the reasons why we can continue our activities for a long time is the creation of such an atmosphere where people want to actively participate as volunteers.

#### Lessons learned

Since its inception, the Otaru Snow Light Path has been held with a focus on “participation” and “handmade.” In order to light a total of 120,000 candles during the festival, we need the participation of many volunteers, so we are conscious of creating an atmosphere where people can enjoy in their participation.

Specifically, we secure accommodations for foreign volunteers during their stay and provide transportation to and from the venue. Since the participants stay in accommodation, they develop a sense of camaraderie, and some of them have even married each other.

#### Results, achievements and recognitions

Otaru Snow Light Path, Grand Prize of the 33rd Handmade Hometown Award, 2018 (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism)

By focusing on the use of “Made in Otaru” local resources, we were able to foster a love for the local area, and the event attracted many local residents, from small children to students to the elderly. In addition, about 600 foreigners, out of the total of about 2,000 people, voluntarily promote the attractions of Otaru in their own countries, which has led to the further development of Otaru as a tourist city. As a result, the number of foreign guests in February has increased from about 100 in 1998, before the event started, to about 28,000 in 2018.

#### Additional references



Otaru Snow Light Path  
<http://yukiakarinomichi.org>