



Winter Pleasures

Winter is a wonderful time of year in Japan. Unique seasonal events include the “first visit” of the new year to a temple or shrine, competitive snowballing in Sobetsu, Hokkaido, and illuminated flower viewing in Ashikaga City, Tochigi Prefecture. Many scenic places, like the UNESCO World Heritage Site Shirakawa-go in Gifu Prefecture, are at their most picturesque in the snow. In the natural world, red-crowned cranes head for the feeding grounds of snowy Kushiro Shitsugen marsh in Hokkaido, while seafood such as monkfish is at its plump and most delicious. In this month’s issue we take a look at these and other simple pleasures of the Japanese winter.