

Summer Night Views of Hakodate



When the squid fishing season is at its peak in summer, the fishing lights off the coast add even more sparkle to the night views of Hakodate in Hokkaido.

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MT. Hakodate (elevation 334 meters), located in the city of Hakodate, Hokkaido (see map p. 6), is known for its beautiful night views and is famous as a popular scenic area in all four seasons. The sparkling mountain views have been recognized internationally, and have a maximum 3-star rating in the Michelin Green Guide Japan. Mt. Hakodate is located at the end of a narrow strip of land that juts out into the Bay of Hakodate. From around dusk, the entire city below, which resembles the stem of a wine glass, appears as a thin band of light when viewed from near the mountain's summit. The city is just 1 km wide, and the contrast of the bright city lights with the darkness of the water on either side is spectacular.

In the squid (*ika* in Japanese) fishing season, Hakodate

seems to shimmer like a jewel as the lights from the city combine with the fishing lights of the many squid fishing boats bobbing on the ocean. Fishing for squid is a well-known seasonal tradition from early spring through autumn, but particularly in summer, when many boats head out. Fishermen hang very bright lights in a row on their boats to attract the squid and then reel them in using a type of fishing lure with spikes attached.

Mizuguchi Takahiro of the Mt. Hakodate Ropeway Corporation says, "Each season brings its own beauty to the night views from Mt. Hakodate, but the combination of lights during a fireworks display is particularly spectacular as you can see the fishing lights and the lights of the city when looking down as well as the fireworks in the night sky."

Passengers can also gaze upon the dreamlike fishing lights floating in the sea from the windows of the South Hokkaido Railway trains which run along the Bay of Hakodate on the line between Kamiiso Station and Oshima-Tobetsu Station.

Mizuguchi says, "You can see the fishing lights and city lights together at eye level from the train, a night view that is

Hakodate and squid fishing boats viewed from Mt. Hakodate
Photo: Saifan/PIXTA



All photos: Courtesy of Motoko Ishii Lighting Design


A summer fireworks display on the Hakodate waterfront
Photo: © Hakodate International Tourism and Convention Association



Viewed from Mt. Hakodate, the city resembles the stem of a wine glass
Photo: Fantasia/PIXTA

quite different from that seen from Mt. Hakodate. This view is called the ‘horizontal night view’ by tourists and railway fans, and they often come to enjoy this view and compare it to that from Mt. Hakodate.”

The squid caught off the Bay of Hakodate are a popular summer specialty in Hakodate, appreciated for their transparent meat and crunchy texture. People come to taste the freshly-caught squid along with sea urchin, crab, and other Hakodate-caught seafood at the Hakodate Morning Market and other seafood restaurants within the city.

Summer has come, and now is the perfect time to enjoy the night views of Hakodate, both from Mt. Hakodate and from the window of a train. 

View from the window of a South Hokkaido Railway train. The lights of the city and the boats in the water form a single band of light
Photo: StudioADOS/PIXTA



A South Hokkaido Railway train
Photo: Courtesy of South Hokkaido Railway Company

