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TEACHING TUESDAY

HYOBAKU MATSURI

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The Sapporo Snow Festival isn't Hokkaido's only major snow and ice festival. Every year, the town of Kamikawa hosts the Sounkyo Onsen Hyobaku Matsuri, a massive ice festival covering 10,000 square meters with about 30 different ice sculptures and buildings.

The festival takes place in Sounkyo Gorge, alongside the Ishikarigawa River. During the winter, the river freezes creating beautiful frozen waterfalls and pillars. Artists add on to the frozen waterfalls by continuously pouring water over log skeletons and carving it away after it has frozen. The festival features a massive ice maze, multi-level ice houses, and the 100 meter ice tunnel, as well as the Hyobaku Shrine with its ice walls.

The festival is most popular at night. The ice sculptures glow a blue white during the day, but are lit up with rainbow colored lights at night. The town also launches fireworks at night, which light up the sculptures even more, creating a fantastical atmosphere.