

A Historical Walk Around Kyoto



Photo by Masayoshi Masuda

Hanatouro (Lantern Festival)

Lantern Festival called *Hanatouro* is held here in the eastern area (Higashiyama) from Friday, March 8th to Sunday March 17th in 2013. About 2,500 lanterns are illuminated along the 5 km traditional walking path, and also Japanese flower arrangements (*Ikebana*) are decorated using lights in Maruyama Park. The symbol of this eastern area as shown in the photo is Yasaka Pagoda in Hokanji Temple. Although this temple closes at 4 p.m., some of other temples and shrines such as Kiyomizu Temple are specially open to the public at night during this festival. They are also illuminated.

Hanatouro has been established as a new project in Kyoto since 2003. This Kyoto *Hanatouro* project is to provide many tourists with traditional atmosphere to enjoy walking around Kyoto in the low season so that this city is rejuvenated. Since the foundation of this project, Sanyo Chemical has been one of the companies sponsoring it. From 2005, *Hanatouro* started to be held not only in the eastern area in March, but also in the western area (Arashiyama) in December. Through *Hanatouro*, you can enjoy a lot of collaborative events combining traditional and new technology.

Fox Wedding Procession

When you walk around this eastern area in this festival, you may be happily surprised to see a white fox wedding procession recreated there.

Since ancient times, a fox wedding procession passing by has been generally said to bring very good fortune in Japan. According to Japanese legend, ancient people happened to see various small fires like lanterns from mountains, as if foxes formed a procession. The fox wedding procession also indicates a sudden rainfall or shower in the sunshine as one of the Japanese weather proverbs because of its rare occurrence.

Traditional Walking Path

There are many traditional Japanese houses, interesting shops, some cafés and restaurants along the street runs which from Kiyomizu Temple via *Sannen-zaka* (three-year hill), *Ninen-zaka* (two-year hill) to Maruyama Park. As legend has it, a person would die within two or three years if the person fell over on the two-year hill or three-year hill. It is considered to have been derived from the idea of taking care on a flight of stone steps on this hill. So, please watch your step walking around there especially at night.

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