



What is Christmas like in Japan?



With the days getting shorter and the temperature continuing to drop, most of us may prefer to stay in our warm *kotatsu* (a heated table covered by a blanket) than to go outside. However, it is only during this season that we can see magnificent illuminations across the country. While *Annaka* may not have lights compared to big

cities like Sapporo or Tokyo, we also have our distinctive lights. *Usuigawa Tropical Garden* has an impressive Christmas tree (picture on the top left), while *Nijima Gakuen* students decorate their school grounds with brilliant light displays. Not traditionally celebrated in Japan, Christmas became popular during the 1970s with successful marketing campaigns. It is considered a



romantic holiday where couples have dinners at fancy restaurants and exchange gifts on Christmas Eve. In this sense, it is more similar to Valentine's Day in the West. Due to the success of marketing campaigns, eating fried chicken

and strawberry shortcakes on Christmas day has become a unique tradition in Japan. It is the busiest time of year for such restaurants and cake shops. Some people place orders a month in advance to ensure they can have them for Christmas.

