

A Historical Walk Around Kyoto

Wishes to the Night Sky—The Star Festival (*Tanabata*)—



On the Star Festival Day, the star Vega and the star Altair can meet only once a year over the Milky Way. Japanese people probably wrote wishes on various colored strips of paper and hung them to the bamboo trees in their childhood.



There are various Star Festivals by area. According to a legend in Finland, after a married couple loving each other was gone, they became two stars, but far away from each other. They desperately tried to meet and kept collecting stardust over thousand years to build a bridge of stars between them. And they could finally reunite.



Japan has many events associated with the Star Festivals (*Tanabata*) in many places. Kyoto also has such events in August, which is July by the lunar calendar. On the Kamogawa River promenade, LED-light and wind chime lantern artworks are decorated, which are wind chimes made with traditional pottery of Kiyomizu ware, and placed in bamboo baskets with LED-lights. The Horikawa River is

embellished with illumination and beautiful *Yuzen-nagashi*, a traditional way of rinsing dyed silk fabric used for kimono in the river. Both of them offer romantic *Tanabata* experiences unique to Kyoto.

The food of *Tanabata* is *Soumen*, which is Japanese very thin noodle made with wheat, normally eaten cold. It is said because the *Soumen* looks like the Milky Way or yarns of the Weaver. How about looking up the night sky for *Tanabata* while cooling and refreshing yourself with *Soumen*?