

## **Fireworks Festival and Nebuta Bay Parade**

The evening of August 7 features a fireworks show and the Nebuta Bay Parade, both events that Aomori locals and tourists look forward to. The fireworks festival was first held in 1955 and has since grown into a highlight of the Aomori summer. For two hours, more than 11,000 fireworks illuminate Aomori Bay. Beneath the fireworks the Nebuta Bay Parade commences, with the winning floats lit up, placed on boats, and driven around the harbor.

The origins of the Nebuta Festival lie in the region's version of the Tanabata Festival, a summer tradition in which lanterns are floated along the river and sea. For the Bay Parade, the floats circle the harbor, passing by Aoiumi Park, Rasse Land (the floats' home during the festival), and the Hakkoda-Marui Memorial Ship, a retired vessel once used for traveling between mainland Aomori and Hakodate in Hokkaido, in a gesture of homage to the festival's roots. The *hayashi* musical ensembles play melodies from the festival and the "rassera" chants are heard from afar, their distinctive sound combined with the booming fireworks.