



HITACHI
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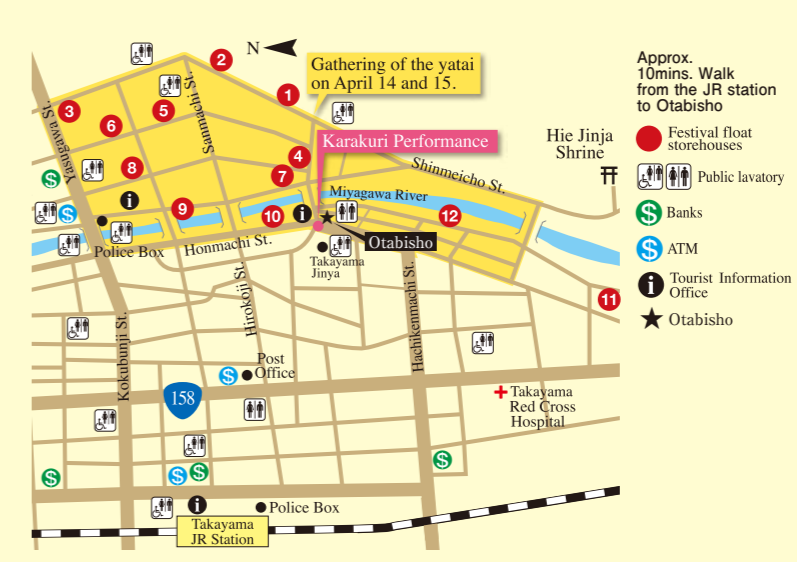
TAKAYAMA
SPRING
FESTIVAL JAPAN
April 14th/15th



The Takayama Spring Festival is the annual festival of Hie Jinja Shrine (more affectionately known as Sanno-sama), the guardian deity of the southern half of the old Takayama castle town. As such the festival is commonly known as the Sanno Festival.

The festival is thought to have its origins in the latter half of the 16th century or early 17th century. The main ceremonies of the spring festival are performed by locals on April 14 and 15 each year. It heralds the coming of spring to Takayama, a small, snow-bound city nestled between mountains; not only do the people bask in the joy of spring, but through the festival they also beseech the gods for good harvests and peace for the year.

One of the main attractions of the festival is the yatai (festival floats) and the various traditional arts surrounding them. The yatai are symbolic of the economic might of Takayama's erstwhile rich and each is a collection of Japan's traditional craftsmanship in its own right. The spring festival is a major drawcard that attracts people to Takayama in drove from throughout Japan and around the world.



If it rains, all festival ceremonies and performances will be canceled

Gojunko Procession

The deity Sanno-sama usually resides in the shrine, but the Gojunko Procession marks the two days in which he travels around the town. Indeed, it is a major parade of several hundred people. The mikoshi portable shrine in which Sanno-sama rides takes centre stage, while all around, musicians serenade, lion-dance performers purify the streets and rid them of devils, Tokeiraku players bang gongs and escorts keep an eye on proceedings. The procession departs Hie Jinja Shrine on April 14 and weaves through the town, and returns to its home the following day. Each participant strides along in the unique garb of yesteryear, making it feel to the observer like a peek into Japan of the past. **On April 14 and 15**



Gathering of the yatai

Yatai are only on display during festivals. With intricate wooden structures, exquisite carvings, drapes and other textiles, lacquer-work, metal ornaments and other decorations, yatai are indeed a collection of traditional Japanese craftsmanship. In fact, the yatai featured in the Takayama Festival have been designated by the government as tangible folklore cultural assets. Do not miss this opportunity to see yatai up close and marvel at their delicate adornments. You will find Kaguratai, Sambaso, Shakkyotai and Ryujintai in the square near Otabisho, and the other eight yatai lined up on the town's streets. **On April 14 and 15**



Karakuri Performance

Gods take their rest at Otabisho resting places, and it is in the quadrangles in front of Otabisho where karakuri marionette performances are dedicated to the deities. The three yatai (Sambaso, Shakkyotai and Ryujintai) each put on a different performance. These displays enact old Japanese legends and other tales, and the karakuri dolls virtually come alive in intricate dances set to Noh drama librettos. The dolls are controlled by dozens of strings with incredible skill by highly experienced puppeteers.

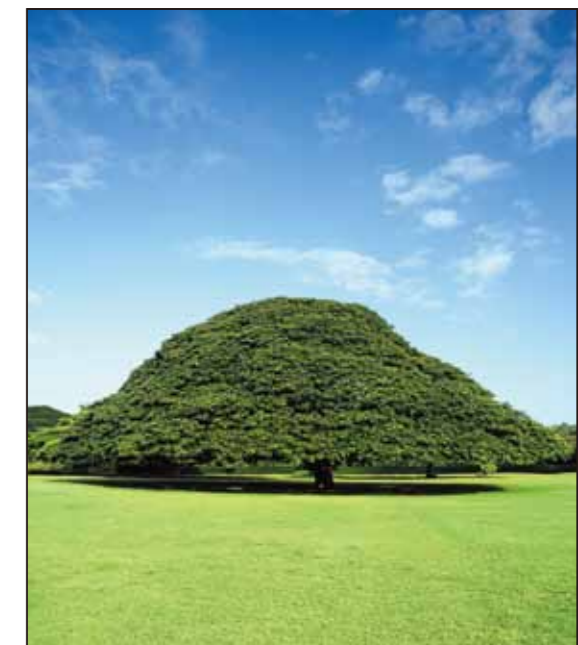
Twice a day (morning/afternoon), on April 14 and 15 In front of Otabisho



Night Festival

On the night of April 14, twelve yatai are festooned with some 100 lanterns for the night festival. The spectacle of the ornate yatai floating their way through the evening with gently swaying lanterns alight is truly a sight to behold. And having completed their rounds, the yatai are serenaded back into their storehouses with a special tune, unique to Takayama and sung only at the night festival. Spectators are treated to a genuine fantasy as these wondrous yatai wend their way through the historical town to a moody tune.

From approx. 18:30 on April 14



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