



The Takayama Autumn Festival is the annual festival of Sakurayama Hachimangu Shrine (more affectionately known as Hachiman-sama), the guardian deity of the northern half of the old Takayama castle town. As such the festival is commonly known as the Hachiman 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 autumn festival are performed by locals on October 9 and 10 each year. It started as a thanksgiving ceremony to offer gratitude to the gods for bumper harvests.

The spring and autumn festivals of Takayama are counted among the three most beautiful festivals in Japan along with Kyoto's Gion Festival and Saitama's Chichibu Night Festival. Indeed, the Takayama Festivals are designated by the government as an intangible folklore cultural asset. The main attractions of the festival are the ornate yatai and traditional ceremonies. The yatai-gumi groups who own the yatai of the Takayama Festival take immense and justified pride in maintaining their area's yatai, each handed down from generation to generation. Once the autumn festival is over, Takayama hunkers down for the long, snowy winter.



## TAKAYAMA AUTUMN FESTIVAL



**Goshinko Procession**  
The deity Hachiman-sama usually resides in the shrine, but the Goshinko Procession marks the two days in which he travels the town. The mikoshi portable shrine in which Hachiman-sama rides takes centre stage, while all around are people in traditional Japanese costume, musicians serenade, lion-dance performers purify the streets and rid them of devils, the Tokeiraku players bang gongs and escorts dressed in ceremonial kamishimo dress keep an eye on proceedings. The procession departs the Sakurayama Hachimangu Shrine on October 9 and weaves through the town, and returns to its home the following day.  
On October 9 and 10

**Karakuri Performance**  
In the quadrangle in front of the shrine, the Hoteitai float is the stage for a scintillating karakuri marionette performance dedicated to the deities. The karakuri doll characters are Priest Hotei as well as a boy and girl. The children leap onto a swing and then onto Hotei's shoulders. Just then, his fan splits open and a nobori flag appears bearing the message "Flaunt not your high virtues and knowledge; share with the masses". The dolls are controlled by dozens of strings in a performance of incredible skill.  
Twice a day (morning/afternoon) on October 9 and 10  
In the quadrangle in front of Sakurayama Hachimangu Shrine

**Gathering of the yatai**  
The eleven Hachiman Festival yatai are usually kept in their storehouses, and are only displayed together once a year. With intricate wooden structures, exquisite carvings, drapes, 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. You will find Hoteitai in the square near in front of the shrine, and the other ten yatai lined up on the street fronting the shrine, and other area.  
On October 9 and 10

**Yatai parade**  
Four yatai are towed through the town in this procession. On October 9

**Night Festival**  
Another wonderful attraction of the Takayama Festival is the Evening Festival held on the night of October 9. Around dusk, eleven yatai are decked with some hundred lanterns and then, hauled by their respective yatai-gumi teams, they weave their way around the town with lanterns alight. 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 evening festival. These melancholy strains seem to whip up one's autumnal emotions at the thought of the coming fall.  
From approx. 18:00 on October 9

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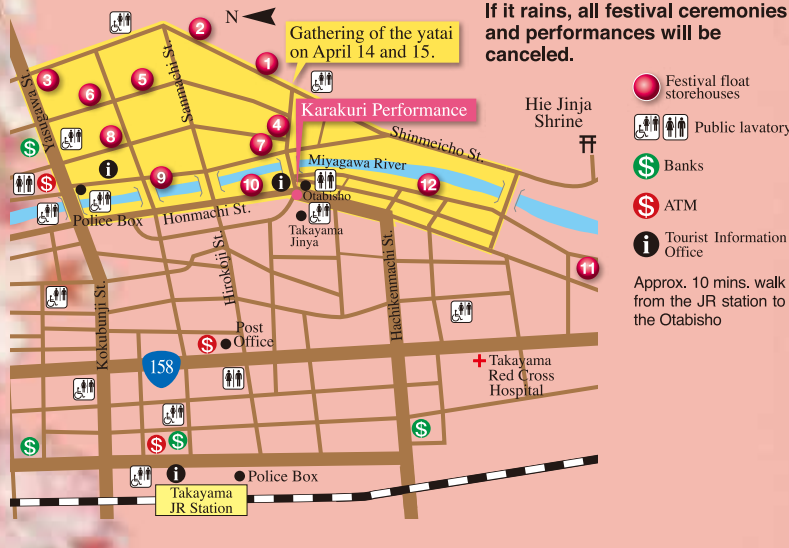
The Takayama Spring Festival is the annual festival of Hie Jinja Shrine (more affectionately known as Sanno-sama), the guardian deity of the southern half of the old Takayama castle town. As such the festival is commonly known as the Sanno Festival.

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 droves from throughout Japan and around the world.



## TAKAYAMA SPRING FESTIVAL



**Gojunko Procession**  
The deity Sanno-sama usually resides in the shrine, but the Gojunko Procession marks the two days in which he travels in 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

**Karakuri Performance**  
Gods take their rest at Otabisho resting places, and it is in the quadrangles in front of the Otabisho that 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 the Otabisho

**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 the Otabisho, and the other eight yatai lined up on the town's streets.  
On April 14 and 15

**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 vend their way through the historical town to a melancholy tune.  
From approx. 18:30 on April 14

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