



May 3<sup>rd</sup> . 4<sup>th</sup> . 5<sup>th</sup>  
**Hamamatsu  
Festival**

The Hamamatsu Festival, held annually from May 3rd - 5th in Hamamatsu, Shizuoka, is one of Japan's leading festivals and attracts approximately 2 million people each year.

During the day epic kite battles are held at the Nakatajima Sand Dunes, while as night falls the action moves downtown, where spectacular floats are paraded through the streets.

This kite-flying festival is said to have originated over 460 years ago when the then Lord of Hikuma Castle,

who ruled Hamamatsu and the surrounding area, raised a kite in celebration of the birth of his first son.

However, there is little documentary evidence to support this legend.

References to kite flying in the region appear in historical documents dating from 1789-1800. Indeed, the climate of the region, with its strong, blustery wind known as Enshū karakaze,

is well-suited to kite flying and the practice of raising a kite to celebrate the birth of one's child is a tradition deeply rooted in the region.



<https://hamanako-tourism.com/en/>

# 御殿屋台

## Float Parades

Over 80 neighbourhoods compete to have the most spectacular gotenyatai (palace-like float) in the float parades which illuminate the downtown area. It is said that long ago people used to make bottomless floats and parade alongside them to welcome back the young men returning from the kite battles, and it is thought that the float parades have their origins in this tradition. Since then it has become common for children playing flutes and drums to ride on the floats which have become increasingly elaborate, with many featuring spectacular carvings.

As night falls the floats move off to the accompaniment of shamisens plucked by experienced festival veterans, flutes blown by children dressed in festival finery and drums beaten by children aboard the floats. The festival approaches its climax as the drums and flutes play out into the night.



## A Beginner's Guide to Hamamatsu Festival

### TOOLS

#### ◆Drums



Neighbourhood teams use drums to give many different signals e.g. to set the rhythm to which the men pull the kite-lines, but they are used primarily as a means of cheering on those flying the kites.

#### ◆Itowaku



The itowaku is a large reel used to wind in the thick kite-lines needed to fly the large kites.

#### ◆Bugles



The kite fliers change their rhythm according to the sounds of the bugles, which also serve to spur them on.

#### ◆Tegi



This is a pulley-like tool used to wind in the main kite-line. It is needed because the kite-lines become hot due to friction during the battles.



# Kite Battles

An explosion of fireworks over the Nakatajima Sand Dunes is the signal for over 170 kites, each bearing the unique crest of a local neighbourhood, to be raised into the May skies. The first kites to be raised, known as hatsudako, are those celebrating the birth of a firstborn child. The firstborns, dressed in traditional festival dress, also have a leading role to play watching their kites fly from the safety of their fathers' arms. Then, urged on by the sound of the bugles, hundreds of people pile in for the kite battles.

In the epic kite battles, opposing neighbourhoods entangle their 5mm-thick hemp kite-lines in an attempt to cut through the other kite-lines using friction. The friction burns the kite-lines, producing white smoke and a smell of burning. Ripples of excitement spread from the surrounding spectators, gradually building to a roar as all are caught up in the frenzy of the battles.

# 凧揚げ合戦



## ◆ Kite Sizes

The kites used in the kite battles range in size from 2 jō to 10 jō. The optimum kite size is considered to be between 4 jō and 6 jō.

1 jō is equivalent to 1.25m<sup>2</sup>, or 12 sheets of traditional Japanese mino paper. 4 jō is equal to 2.4m<sup>2</sup> (48 sheets), 6 jō to 2.9m<sup>2</sup> (72 sheets) and 10 jō to 3.64m<sup>2</sup> (120 sheets).



## ◆ Ohayashi

The ohayashi (music performed by bands of children aboard the floats) is another unique feature of the festival. Unlike the music at most regional festivals, the ohayashi performed at the Hamamatsu Festival is the same as that performed in kabuki (traditional Japanese theatre). Bands from different neighbourhoods often perform music traditionally used to accompany kabuki or Japanese dance performances.



## ◆ Neri

The neri is a parade in which the leading person carries the neighbourhood flag, followed by sometimes dozens of lantern bearers. The spirited parades advance to the rousing call of the bugles, the beat of the drums and the constant cry of "Oicho, oicho" until they reach fever pitch, with the various neri jostling and pushing as they wind themselves around each other to form a swirling frenzy of festive excitement.



# Design of Kites and Festival Clothes

Each community has their own kite design, using a part of their town name (Chinese characters or Japanese alphabets) or pictures, representing their communities. The same designs are also used on the "happi" which are light coats worn by each member of the neighborhood's team. Hand towels are also part of the outfit. Recently, deep blue "happi" made by traditional dyeing methods have gained popularity among other factory-made ones.



Happi

Obi



Koikuchi shirt

Haragake

Teko

Momohiki

Jikatabi



## Hamamatsu Festival Pavilion

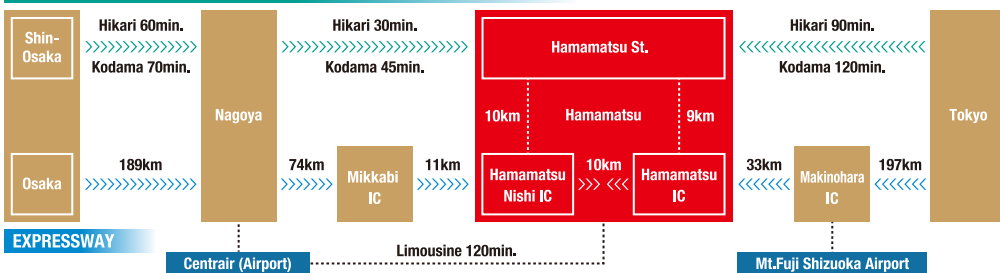
Experience the passion and excitement of the Hamamatsu Festival at this pavilion, where you can learn all you need to know about the Hamamatsu Festival.

- ◆ Opening Hours : 9:00 ~ 16:30
- ◆ Closed : End-of-year holidays
- ◆ Admission fee : Adult 400 yen
- ◆ Address : 1313 Nakatajima-cho, Minami-ku, Hamamatsu-city
- ◆ Tel. & Fax : 053-441-6211



## ACCESS

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### Safety tips

Download this App to receive push notifications in case of earthquake, tsunami, etc.

This APP is supervised by Japan Tourism Agency

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### Hamamatsu Disaster Prevention Email

Hamamatsu Disaster Prevention Email is a mailing service which sends emails to registered cell phones or computers about emergency information, local area information, weather information etc.

