

## **Yoshida Fire Festival and Susuki Festival**

The Yoshida Fire Festival is an autumn festival held jointly by Kitaguchi Hongu Fuji Sengen-jinja Shrine and Suwa-jinja Shrine on August 26 and 27. It is viewed as a “mountain-closing” festival to mark the end of the climbing season.

On the first day, some 80 torches, each 3 meters high, are erected at locations throughout the streets of Fujiyoshida. When evening falls, a performance of sacred *kagura* music begins and the torches are lit, creating a sea of fire.

### **The Image of Mt. Fuji**

Two *mikoshi* (portable shrines) are carried through the streets during the fire festival. One is a model of Mt. Fuji made of gleaming, red-lacquered wood that weighs one ton. Known as the *mikage*, or image, this *mikoshi* is slammed to the ground three times during pauses in its progress through the town. Several other shrines in the region also have distinctive Fuji-shaped *mikoshi*. The origin of the tradition is obscure, but an inscription inside the *mikage* says that it was built in 1704.

### **Susuki Festival**

The Susuki Festival is held on the afternoon of August 27, when the *mikoshi* are carried back to the shrine from the *otabisho* (resting place) where they spent the night. Worshipers bearing sprigs of *susuki* (Japanese silvergrass) sanctified with white paper strips follow the *mikoshi* back to the shrine, then circle the area of the shrine precincts called the Takamanohara (Plain of High Heaven) several times.