

Flower Festival

During the Hiroshima Flower Festival, held each year over three days during the Golden Week of national holidays in May, Hiroshima Peace Boulevard overflows with flowers, music, dance, parades, and an assortment of other activities in a celebration of peace and positive action. One of Hiroshima Prefecture's largest annual events, the festival attracts well over one million visitors.

A huge "Flower Tower," the design chosen from submissions by local citizens each year, is erected on the southern side of Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, while the 100-meter-wide Peace Boulevard, which is closed to traffic during the festival, hosts dozens of event stages and exhibition stands. The festival program changes annually, but may include anything from Japanese taiko drumming to Mexican mariachi bands and Brazilian samba dancing. A variety of stands and stalls, meanwhile, introduce local arts, crafts, and foods.

The Carnation Stage, set up next to the Peace Memorial Museum, is the festival's focal point and the venue for its biggest shows. Thrilling performances of contemporary *yosakoi* dance and *kagura*, a centuries-old and highly dramatic fusion of theater and dance, can be seen here.

The carnival-style Flower Parade, held on the first day, is a highlight of the festival. Beginning near the intersection of Peace Boulevard and Takaramachi, an eclectically cosmopolitan procession makes its way to Peace Memorial Park, with participants ranging from "Flower Festival Queens" to bikers on Harley Davidson motorcycles.