

Parade Route

The Nebuta Festival is an annual highlight for the entire city of Aomori and brings traffic to a standstill, with roads blocked off and cars barred from the city center to make way for the float parades. The Nebuta floats are brought to the streets and paraded from 7:10 p.m. for the night parades (August 2 to 6) and from 1:00 p.m. for the daytime parade (August 7). The floats travel once around the parade loop, approximately two hours, before retiring to await their next run. The three-kilometer parade route encompasses Aomori's city center, running along four roads.

These four are Heiwa Koen Dori, National Route, Hakko Dori, and Shinmachi Dori. National Route and Shinmachi Dori are the two main thoroughfares, each with its own ambiance. The former is a wide boulevard lined by tall buildings and offers spectators a broad view of the floats, the *haneto* dancers, *hayashi* musicians, and other festival participants as they pass by. Shinmachi Dori is a narrow shopping street where the floats are much closer to the audience. Here spectators can enjoy direct and intimate moments with the majestic figures.

For the night parades, the Nebuta floats are lined up along the route beforehand, with the lead float positioned near the corner of Heiwa Koen Dori and Shinmachi Dori. The start of the parade is marked by fireworks, with the floats departing in unison as soon as their crews see these colorful signals. For the daytime parade on August 7, all Nebuta floats begin their journey from a spot along Shinmachi Dori.

The parades usually come to an end when all Nebuta floats have made it around the route, but sometimes a time limit is reached before the entire round can be completed. Because of this, it is a good idea to find a spot near the starting point to view all the Nebuta. The festival food sold at the stalls along the way is also worth sampling.

Paid reserved seats are available, mainly along National Route and Hakko Dori, but it is easy to find a free spot to stand or sit if one arrives early enough. Note that the two intersections near Aomori Station tend to be particularly crowded. The parades go on even if it rains; the Nebuta floats can be wrapped in clear plastic sheets if necessary.