

Nebuta Floats

Both the namesake and stars of the festival, the Nebuta floats are gargantuan creations weighing up to 4 tons, with a maximum height of 5 meters, a width of 9 meters, and depth of 7 meters. Every year the festival features 22 Nebuta floats that take one year to make, from drafting the design to the actual construction of the figures. Aomori Prefecture has several variations of the Nebuta festival, including a prominent one in the city of Hirosaki, but the city of Aomori's Nebuta Festival is particularly renowned for its beautiful and impressive floats.

Each float has its own distinct style but still follows the traditional Nebuta float appearance. They are handcrafted by *nebutashi* (Nebuta artisans), who are required to master the three core aspects of the art form: sketching, modeling, and coloring. The figures on the floats are often inspired by a historical event, a Kabuki play, or ancient folklore. All the characters have large faces with intense eyebrows and are depicted wearing colorful, sometimes dotted, clothing. Each float is lit up to contrast against the dark night sky. Some floats reproduce nature, with pastel pink cherry blossoms, or illustrate a fierce war scene in shades of vermillion.

The lit-up floats at night resemble massive, surreal creatures towering above the spectators. Each float is carried and maneuvered by a team of *hikite* pullers. The *hikite* follow instructions from the conductor, or *sensumochi*, who is responsible for choreographing the dynamic movements of the float and showing the audience its four sides, which are all intricately decorated in their own way.