

Taiko Hyotan Matsuri

The Miyanoshita area of Hakone remembers the establishment of a famous hot spring with this annual festival. In 1590, when the warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598) was in the midst of a campaign to vanquish the Hojo family of Odawara on his way to unifying all of Japan under one banner, he gathered his army in Hakone to prepare for the impending battle. During this lull in the fighting, he ordered the building of a hot spring bath in nearby Sokokura for his army. Called Taiko no Ishiburo (“the lord’s rock bath”), it remains intact today. Joined by his generals, Hideyoshi is also said to have celebrated his achievements with a great feast amid the lush greenery of early summer. While the contemporary Taiko Hyotan Matsuri is held in August, usually outside the Miyanoshita Fujiya Hotel, it recreates that medieval-era party with performances of dance and music, street food and draft beer, and a fireworks show to end the evening.