

## Onsen Festival

This annual festival is held on April 23 and 24 and commemorates the Buddhist priest Dochi Shonin, who is credited with founding Kinosaki Onsen. As the story goes, the mendicant monk came across the town while looking for ways to aid and cure the sick. After arriving in the area, he was advised by a local oracle to chant a specific Buddhist sutra for 1,000 consecutive days, which he did, and the *onsen* waters miraculously sprang forth.

The second day of the annual celebration also gives thanks to the many *onsen* around town with an annual ritual in which the priests of Onsenji Temple and the Tajima region, along with women and children, visit the seven public hot springs in Kinosaki. A statue of Dochi Shonin, which is usually located at the entrance of Mandara-yu *onsen*, is carried on a palanquin in front of the parade of priests, women, and children. If you happen to be visiting Kinosaki Onsen during the two-day festival, take advantage of the many events, which include food stalls, performances, and parades. There are also many special sales and promotional projects during this time, which give visitors a chance to try out many of the attractions around Kinosaki Onsen: it's a great way to experience a local Japanese festival (*matsuri*) and understand how important the *onsen* are to the local inhabitants.