

Kinosaki Danjiri Festival

One of Kinosaki Onsen's largest festivals, this celebration dates back over 200 years and takes place on October 14 and 15 every year. The Kinosaki Danjiri Festival is Shisho Shrine's main festival, a boisterous celebration that showcases the passion of the locals in the area. Also referred to as the "Fighting Shrine Festival," the festivities include a grand performance in which a portable shrine (*mikoshi*), *dai* (large wooden carts that can be lifted), and *danjiri* (large wooden carts that can be pushed and pulled) are paraded through the streets; the *dai* and *danjiri* face-off in a mock battle. The two types of carts are moved by groups of men who form teams according to their neighborhood in the town, based on the river that runs through Kinosaki Onsen (classified by upper, middle, and lower districts). Shisho Shrine stands at the center of these districts.

The main event takes place on the second day of the festival and sees participants make their way toward Shisho Shrine, which is located on one of the main streets of town. The *mikoshi* from Shisho Shrine stops by each of the seven *soto-yu* public bathhouses for prayers, along with the *dai* from the upper district of town, which acts as protection. The face-off begins when the *danjiri* from the lower district of town encounters the *dai* and blocks their progress following the *mikoshi* towards Shisho Shrine. This climactic face-off takes place at Ohashi Bridge where the *danjiri* and *dai* clash into each other, the action known as *seri*. The raucous confrontation is accompanied by loud drums and gongs during the battle. The Danjiri Festival is a highlight of the autumn season and is a tradition passed down from generation to generation. Visiting the area during the festivities is a great way to experience the true spirit of Kinosaki Onsen.