

The Oharame Festival

The Oharame Festival starts from the middle of April and lasts for about six weeks. One of the main events involves dozens of local women wearing traditional clothing walking the 2 kilometers from Jakko-in Temple to Sanzen-in Temple. This path is meant to represent the journey that ancient villagers took between Ohara and Kyoto. Back then, local men would travel to Kyoto pulling handcarts laden with firewood to sell. The women, known as Oharame, would travel with them, carrying firewood on their heads. The bundles weighed as much as 60 kilograms and were cushioned by a circle of woven straw. They would be traded in the city for items that were difficult to obtain in Ohara, such as fresh fish. This practice started in the Muromachi period (1336–1573) and continued into the Meiji era (1868–1912), when gas became available for heat and lighting in the city.

During the festival, women wear various styles of clothing, reflecting the changes that took place over the centuries. Oharame typically wore a special kimono with tight sleeves and excess fabric above the waist. These were shorter than traditional kimono, ending at the knees for maximum comfort and mobility. The women also wore leggings and woven straw sandals.