

### **Full-Moon Tug-of-War**

The fifteenth night of the eighth month by the lunar calendar is known as *jugoya*, a time when the harvest moon is considered the most beautiful and when tug-of-war contests rooted in Shinto tradition feature in many rural autumn festivals. The symbolic meanings attached to the event vary from community to community, but generally, the rope represents a dragon or water spirit, and the two teams vie for plentiful crops or good hauls from the sea. In Isso, the “contest” always ends in a tie, and the event is in effect a collective prayer for the continued health and prosperity of the community.

Preparations begin days in advance, with each household pitching in to gather the vines and grasses used to fashion the rope. On the day before the tug-of-war, the rope building begins at 6 a.m. By 9 p.m., a tightly coiled giant cord some 20 centimeters thick and 55 meters long is ready for the festivities. The date varies each year, so be sure to check the calendar to see when in September or October this full moon occurs, and plan on participating—all are welcome.

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To book a village tour in Isso, visit [yakushima.jp](http://yakushima.jp) online or the Yakushima Environmental and Cultural Village Center in person at:

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