

Tokasan Festival

Tokasan is one of Hiroshima's three major festivals, and has attracted local residents and visitors alike for more than 400 years. Originally held on the fifth day of the fifth month according to the lunar calendar, the three-day festival now takes place annually from the first Friday of June. The festival is the first citywide celebration of the arrival of summer and is an occasion for dressing up in yukata, a traditional lightweight cotton kimono. Many revelers take the opportunity to show off their colorful new yukata for the first time, and yukata fashion shows are even held. In fact, the event is colloquially called the Yukata Festival. Hundreds of street stalls set up along Chuo Dori Avenue sell summer treats like kakigori (flavored shaved ice), toys for kids, and colorful fans. Carnival games, taiko drum performances, and bon odori dancing, with onlookers encouraged to participate, add to the festive mood.

Although the Tokasan Festival did not start out with its current fashion show and carnival elements, it has always been an occasion for celebration. It is the only time the public is allowed to see the sacred statue of Toka Daimyojin kept at Enryuji Temple. This Buddhist protector deity has been worshiped at the temple since its founding in 1619. During the festival, people bring previously obtained amulets and charms to the temple to be burned, and stalls supply them with fresh ones to last until the next Tokasan Festival.