

## History of the Sapporo Summer Festival

The Sapporo Summer Festival is a month-long celebration throughout Sapporo from mid-July to mid-August. The spirit of charity has been an important part of the festival from the start. Each year, millions of yen are donated to welfare organizations dedicated to causes such as child welfare and helping those with disabilities.

The festival began in 1954 as a collection of 22 events that included the Tanabata star festival, fireworks, a children's sumo tournament, a boat festival, *bon odori* dancing, and a firefly hunt. These activities took place all over town and at the Toyohira River.

In 1957, Odori Park became the main venue of the festival, and the beer garden held there is now the centerpiece of the current festival. The history of beer in Sapporo goes back to 1876, and the city has breweries run by two of Japan's biggest beer companies, as well as the only beer museum in the country.

In 1972, Sapporo established a sister-city relationship with Munich, Germany—another beer capital, which brought an international flavor to the festival. Sapporo German Village offers German brews and all kinds of German pub food in the spirit of Oktoberfest. Beers from other countries are served up in World Beer Square. Meanwhile, each of the four major domestic brewers has a block in Odori Park where they serve beer and foods that pair well with it.

Another facet of the summer festival that occurs in Odori Park is the Hokkai Bon Odori held in mid-August. In the evenings, dancers circle the specially built tower in 2-chome, near the Sapporo TV Tower.

The Susukino Festival, held during the first weekend of August, is another important component. Susukino is adjacent to the south end of Odori Park, and the main events there are parades and dance performances.