

Hokkai Bon Odori

One of the final events at the Sapporo Summer Festival is the Hokkai Bon Odori at Odori Park in mid-August. This is the season of Obon, the traditional festival that welcomes the spirits of the dead back to this world for a brief reunion with loved ones.

Bon odori is a type of dancing held during Obon, and it is thought that the spirits of the dead dance along with the living. Anyone can join the dance circle. Many of the steps and gestures are simple and are repeated many times, so it is possible to catch on quickly.

Dancing begins each evening at 6 p.m. with easy dances that kids will enjoy, and children receive a small gift for joining the dance. There is a special “kids only” lottery each day, and winners get to beat the big taiko drum on top of the tower. Lottery entries are accepted right up until the performance starts.

Jim Beam Summer Festival

On the first two days of the festival, Jim Beam highballs, music, dance, and festival food are on offer. In a departure from the traditional *bon odori* music, a DJ selects songs from a variety of genres, such as popular songs, Western music, and folk songs.

Costume Contest

A costume contest is held during the evening of the last day of the festival at 3-chome in Odori Park. The costumed dancers often join the *bon odori* later, after a parade. Contest entry applications can be downloaded and submitted by email, fax, or postal mail from the beginning of July.