

Susukino Festival

The Susukino Festival is held during the evenings for three days over the first weekend in August. Food stalls line the streets, which are closed to vehicles during this time. The main events include a number of parades and dance performances, with a lively procession of portable shrines (*mikoshi*) from throughout the area on the last day.

The festival begins with the reverberations of taiko drums, as teams from all over Hokkaido band together in a combined performance. The drums herald the start of the Oiran Procession, featuring women dressed as high-class courtesans (*oiran*) of the Edo period (1603–1867) in elaborate and colorful period costumes.

On the second day, a series of dance performances by both local and international teams moves down the street. This is the day of the *yosakoi* dance competition featuring large teams of extravagantly costumed performers. *Yosakoi* originated in the 1950s as a modern form of the traditional *awa odori* dance from Tokushima Prefecture and has energetic, choreographed moves.

Also on the second day is the newest addition to the festival, the Samba Carnival Parade. Dancers costumed in the spirit of Brazil's Carnival perform along the avenue in Susukino and then onstage at the nearby Odori Beer Garden. In 2019, the first year of this parade, 13 teams comprised of 635 people participated.

On the third and final day, hundreds of people carry *mikoshi* through Sapporo and gather at the entrance to Susukino. As many as 1,000 people are needed to carry the seven *mikoshi*. The largest, which weighs 1.5 tons, requires 100 people to carry it at a time. In the throng of people surrounding the *mikoshi* and moving along with it are people ready to step in as replacements for the first carriers. People come from all over Hokkaido to participate.