

## Sanuki Toyohama Chosa Festival

Dazzling gold floats are paraded through the Toyohama neighborhood of Kanonji every autumn during the annual Sanuki Toyohama Chosa Festival. This celebration takes place over three days on the second weekend of October to express gratitude for a plentiful harvest and catch. It is named for its floats, or *chosa*, that are mounted with drums and carried through the streets of Toyohama. This type of float has traditionally been used in festivals throughout western Japan, but those in Toyohama and the surrounding area are some of the largest and most ornate anywhere. They are up to 5 meters tall, weigh 2 tons, and are carried on wooden poles 13 meters long. Their decorative features, including the massive stuffed-cord ribbon decorations called *tonbo* on the top, make the floats impressive sights when viewed up close.

Toyohama has a population of less than 10,000, but 22 of its 28 neighborhood associations have their own *chosa*. It takes about 70 well-coordinated carriers to maneuver a single float, which during the festival are carried to the sound of rhythmical chants. On the last day of the Chosa Festival, all 22 floats are carried to Ichinomiya Shrine, where each group puts on a performance that involves hoisting the float up and down and shaking it vigorously while drums are played and the participants shout in unison. Visitors who come to Toyohama outside of festival season can get a taste of the action at the Chosa Festival Exhibition Hall, where some of the floats are displayed and video of the festival plays on a big screen.