

The Takayama Festival

The Takayama Festival is held twice a year, and tens of thousands of visitors come to see its ornately decorated floats. The first festival, the Sannō Festival, is held on April 14 and 15, and the following Hachiman Festival is held on October 9 and 10.

The Sannō Festival venerates the kami of Hie Jinja Shrine, located south of Takayama's historic old town, and the Hachiman Festival venerates the kami of Sakurayama Hachimangū Shrine, to the northeast. During the festivals, townspeople in traditional dress and dancers performing a traditional *shishi-odori* dance parade through the city, and the floats are wheeled to their positions in front of their respective shrines. On the first night, the floats are decorated with hundreds of lanterns and moved through the streets of the old town. Participation in each festival is determined by location: neighborhoods to the north of Yasugawa-dōri take part in the Hachiman Festival, and those to the south participate in the Sannō Festival.

The earliest record of the Takayama Festival appears in a 1692 document that describes the Sannō Festival held some 40 years earlier. The floats, for which the festivals are now famous, are first mentioned in conjunction with the Hachiman Festival in 1718.