

Wajima Kiriko Art Museum

From July to October, around 200 *kiriko* festivals are held across the peninsula to thank the deities for good harvests and catches and to pray for health and wealth. Festival nights across the Noto Peninsula are a blaze of color, light, and music. Portable *mikoshi* shrines, accompanied by giant lantern floats called *kiriko*, are carried around the towns, providing light and invoking spiritual protection.

The majority of *kiriko* are tall, box-shaped lanterns topped with a decorated roof. The front of each lantern is painted with auspicious characters, wishing for a good harvest or a good catch. Images of deities, legendary warriors, or beautiful women adorn the back of each lantern.

The largest *kiriko* floats are up to 15 meters tall and can weigh over 2 tons, requiring around a hundred people to carry one through the town. *Kiriko* likely started as small lanterns on bamboo poles to help the portable shrine bearers keep their footing in the dark. The earliest recorded *kiriko* festival was held in 1646.

At the Wajima Kiriko Art Museum, visitors can see these decorated lanterns up close, together with festival videos, and hear traditional festival music. The museum is designed with a high ceiling to display seven large and 24 smaller *kiriko*. A ramp allows visitors to view the lanterns from above. An observation area on the top floor of the museum affords views of Wajima Port and features a replica of the 30-meter-tall straw torch which is burned at the climax of the Wajima Grand Festival near Wajima Port each August.

Wajima Kiriko Art Museum is open daily from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.