

Japan Tourism Topics

<Embrace Tohoku's Festival Spirit>

Tohoku, Japan's northeastern region, is home to several major summer festivals. The first three topics highlight some of the festivals which offer a lovely blend of traditional performances and breathtaking scenery. What's more, their staggered schedules allow visitors to embark on a festival-hopping adventure across the Tohoku region.

1. Join the Dances at the Morioka Sansa Odori Festival, August 1 - 4, Iwate

The Morioka Sansa Odori Festival will take place in Morioka, Iwate prefecture, from August 1st to 4th. During the event, over 15,000 dancers and drummers parade down the central street in a traditional celebration. The modern celebration of the event dates back to 1978, featuring, huge troupes of drummers, flutists, singers and dancers parading down the central street. It has been recognized in the Guinness Book of World Records as the "Largest Japanese Drum Ensemble" in the world.



Photo by Morioka Sansa Odori Festival Organizing Committee

Following the parade, all the spectators are invited to join the Wa-Odori circle dance, a lively tradition that creates a strong sense of community, even for those who are only visiting.

[Morioka Sansa Odori Festival](#)

2. Get into the Summer Spirit at Nebuta Festival, August 2 - 7, Aomori



Photo by Aomori Tourism and Convention Association

From August 2nd to 7th, the streets of Aomori City come alive with a spectacular procession of colossal lantern floats, known as Nebuta, stretching approximately 3.1 kilometers in length. These luminous works of art capture the spirit of Japan's myths and legends through depictions of ancient warlords, historical figures, and kabuki characters.

As the Nebuta floats make their way through the city, lively Haneto dancers, dressed in vibrant costumes, bounce joyfully to the pulsating rhythms of the Nebuta Bayashi bands, driven by the enthusiastic beat of taiko drummers. The excitement comes to a climax at street intersections where the Nebuta floats are spun in circles to the delight of the crowd.

Join the throngs of over a million locals and visitors who come to celebrate Aomori's rich heritage and captivating traditions to experience an authentic Japanese summer festival.

[Aomori Nebuta Festival](#)

3. Dazzling Displays at the Sendai Tanabata Festival, August 6 - 8, Miyagi

The Sendai Tanabata Festival will take place in Sendai, Miyagi prefecture, from August 6th to 8th. The Tanabata Festival is an event where people decorate bamboo branches with colorful strips of paper (Tanzaku) on which they write their wishes and wish them to the stars. Although Tanabata Festivals are common throughout Japan during July and August, Sendai's festival is the largest and perhaps liveliest in the country.



Photo by Sendai Tanabata Festival Sponsors

Over the course of the festival, the city center and surrounding shopping districts come alive with a dazzling display of luxurious and ornate Washi paper decorations known as Fukinagashi.

These vivid ornaments, which are hand-made by locals and represent hopes for thriving businesses and long lives, are a sight to behold that attract over two million people every year.

In the festive atmosphere by writing wishes on colorful strips of paper or sampling all the flavors of Japanese summer at one of the many food stalls.

[Sendai Tanabata Festival](#)

4. Enjoy the Lake Biwa Great Fireworks Festival, August 8, Otsu



Photo by Biwako-Otsu Tourism Association

Over 10,000 gigantic fireworks will light up the sky over Lake Biwa on August 8th, creating an atmosphere of celebration at the revival of this event after three years of COVID-19 related cancellations.

The highlight of the fireworks is the breathtaking "star mines" that explode loudly and spread like a colorful ball over the lake to the oohs and ahhs of the audience.

Visitors wishing to join the hundreds of thousands expected spectators for this energetic event that feels like an enormous block party can take a train from Kyoto to Otsu Station in a mere 10 minutes, making this a highly accessible event for those already visiting Kyoto.

[Lake Biwa Great Fireworks Festival](#)

5. Gotta Catch 'em all at Pokémon World Championships 2023, August, Yokohama

From August 11th to 13th, 2023, Pacifico Yokohama in Minato Mirai will become the stage of the electrifying Pokémon World Championships 2023. The event, held annually since 2004, brings together skilled trainers from around the world who have triumphed in their national qualifying tournaments, all aiming to become the ultimate Pokémon Master and showcase their strategic skills and fierce determination.



This year's event will be complemented by a host of other Pokémon-themed events going on in the Yokohama area. Free-to-access activities include a

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“Pikachu Gathering” twice per day in the Grand Mall Park and “Pokégenic”, art displays featuring Pokémon characters popping up around the venue. Trainers can even board the Nippon Maru ship docked at Shinko Wharf for a “Pokémon Trainer’s Cruise,” where they can meet and play with trainers from all over the world.

[Pokémon World Championships 2023](#)

6. 10 days of Fireworks: Japan Rhine Summer Festival Long Run Fireworks, August 1-10, Aichi



Photo by Inuyama City Tourist Association

The city of Inuyama is holding a “long run” fireworks event along the banks of the Kiso River, known as Japan’s Rhine River, from August 1st to 10th. Rather than one large fireworks event in a single evening, this unique format will feature 10 smaller fireworks displays taking place on consecutive evenings, making for smaller crowds and more opportunities for visitors to Inuyama to catch one of the events. Despite the shorter duration of the individual shows, each show will still feature enormous “star mine” style fireworks against the illuminated backdrop of National Treasure, Inuyama Castle.

Visitors arriving before evening can spend a day enjoying Inuyama’s history and traditions including the castle, strolling around the well preserved castle town districts and over sixty preserved Meiji Period (1868-1912) buildings contained in the Meiji Mura, an open-air museum.

[Japan Rhine Summer Festival](#)

7. Visit Karuizawa, the Original Summer Retreat of Japan in Nagano

Nestled in the picturesque southeast of Nagano Prefecture, Karuizawa is a hidden gem only one hour from Tokyo on the Shinkansen bullet train.

Karuizawa already has a rich history as a post town along the Edo-period Nakasendo transport route. Its transformation into the quintessential summer destination began after a Canadian Anglican missionary A.C. Shaw fell in love with its mountain vistas and tranquil nature, introducing it to the rest of the world as a summer refuge. From the moment you set foot in Karuizawa, you’ll notice a fusion of East and West, the latter mostly in the form of



Christian churches and Western-style structures that give the town its distinct, quaint atmosphere.

Karuizawa’s location at the foot of Mt. Asama, as well as its abundance of forests and woods, means even in mid-summer, you can take a cool stroll while admiring the historic Western-style buildings designed by famous architects. In particular, check out the Mampei Hotel, said to be loved by John Lennon and the Beatles, and the venerable Karuizawa Union Church designed by W.M. Vories, whose rustic design blends perfectly with the surrounding forest.

[Visit Karuizawa](#)

8. Experience the Beauty of the “Dover of the Orient” with Choshi Kayaks Tours, Chiba



Summer is the perfect season to explore Japan’s diverse coastlines and engage in exciting outdoor activities. The Byobugaura Coast, known as the “Dover of the Orient” because of its resemblance to the White Cliffs on the English Channel, spans 10 kilometers in Choshi, Chiba prefecture.

Choshi Kayaks offers a unique opportunity to explore the geological wonder up-close at sea-level from a kayak. The gentle waters and the stability of the kayaks makes this a perfect family-friendly activity that visitors of all ages can enjoy.

Overall, this is a must-do for anyone looking to discover

one of Japan's national scenic spots from a new perspective and immerse themselves in the raw beauty of nature.

[Visit Chiba "Choshi Kayaks": An Ocean Adventure](#)

9. Canoe through the Mangroves of Amami Oshima, Kagoshima

Located roughly 380km from the coast of Kyushu, the relative isolation of Amami Oshima has led to the development of unique ecosystems found nowhere else in the world, leading it to be recognized as part of a UNESCO Natural World Heritage site. The island is a prime location for exploring the habitats of endangered species, not the least of which is the Kuroshio-no-mori Mangrove Park. The primeval forest of mangrove trees is best explored by canoe or kayak along the calm waterways that wind through the forest.



Paddling silently through the forest, visitors might catch up-close glimpses of its inhabitants which in turn will watch curiously as they glide slowly by. Fiddler crabs scramble for their holes in the sand while barred mudskippers poke their eyes out above the muddy waters. Endangered birds and owls are also often spotted by sharp-eyed visitors to the park.

Hiking is another popular way to see the forest ecosystem, with many varied routes that reveal rare creatures and breathtaking vistas, from the summit of Mount Yuwan to the enchanting surroundings of the Sumiyo River.

Whether by water or on foot, the Amami Oshima mangroves offer visitors to Kagoshima a unique way to experience human conservation of endangered lands and learn more about the subtropical species of southwestern Japan.

[Explore Amami](#)

10. Become a Sake Brewer for a day (or two) at KURABITO STAY - Saku, Nagano



Photo by KURABITO STAY

While Sake brewery tours have become commonplace across Japan in recent years, the opportunity to participate in actual Sake brewing remains rare. That is what makes KURABITO STAY in Saku, Nagano Prefecture, such a unique chance for Sake lovers; a 3-day, 2-night experience living and working in a real Sake brewery with over 330 years of history learning about the brewing process and enjoying Saku's fine regional Sake.

Participants will stay in renovated accommodations in the brewery, much like the real Kurabito (brewery workers) did in the past. Under the guidance of the

Touji head brewer, participants learn about Koji, or mold, the most important ingredient in Sake, and the various steps in the production process as they work together to make Sake that will eventually be sold to consumers.

Along the way, they will learn the finer points of how to appreciate high-quality Sake and dine out among the friendly restaurants of Saku, enjoying local cuisine and Sake prepared by skilled local chefs and brewers. Best of all, participants will develop camaraderie as they work together with other overseas visitors and locals alike, fulfilling KURABITO STAY's mission to "brew" a rich and vibrant community based around Sake production.

[KURABITO STAY](#)

Notes:

- *Items 7-9 are based on information from JNTO Partners.*
- *The above details are correct as of the time of publication, and are subject to change.*

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