

Report: Let's go to see the festival in Tokyo~Ome grand festival □□□□

Date:□□ 2nd & 3rd May

Location: Ome city, Tokyo prefecture

Access: It takes over 1 hour from Shinjuku by JR Chuo line

The feature of Japan Festival

□Do you know how many festivals there are in Japan? In one theory, it is said there are three hundred thousands. In Japan, if you ask a Japanese what is your image of festival, most people would answer “Mikoshi” or “Dashi (or Yatai). An exemplary “Mikoshi” festival is “the Sanja festival” at Asakusa or “the Kanda Myojin festival” at Kanda in Tokyo, and an exemplary “Dashi” festival is “the Gion festival” in Kyoto or “the Nebuta festival” in Aomori prefecture.

□*What is “Mikoshi” and “Dashi”? Both a means of transportation for a deity. Dashi is no different from Mikoshi in terms of being a vehicle. Mikoshi is a portable shrine and people carry it on their shoulders. Dashi is a float decorated with various objects for a festival.



“Mikoshi”the Sanja festival

<https://matcha-jp.com/jp/4257> MATCHA



“Dashi” the Gion festival

<https://souda-kyoto.jp/blog/00740.html> □□□□□□□□

Departure

□ We can often see masked characters on Dashi in festivals. So, this time, we will go and see the Ome festival in Tokyo with our guides. Oh, where have they gone? Hey, it's your turn!





What are you carrying?

We are going to Tokyo, aren't we ? So, I wondered if I have to bring back gifts for our colleagues.

Stop being like a country bumpkin. We just get to Tokyo within 2 hours by train. (*They live in Gunma prefecture.)

But...

No! Let's go!

*Who are they? If you want to know about them, please confer the [article](https://discoverdeeperjapan.com/2020/04/26/part-2iidama-shrine-daidai-kagura/)
<https://discoverdeeperjapan.com/2020/04/26/part-2iidama-shrine-daidai-kagura/>

What a surprise! There are so many people in Shinjuku station!

I can't take it. Shinjuku is the busiest station in Tokyo (and the world) ahead of Shibuya station and Tokyo station. Tokyo Metropolitan Government office is in Shinjuku, too.

Ome is a town full of retro culture

□Ome city is located in western Tokyo and is the major gateway of excursion into the Chichibu-Tama-Kai National park.



Ome street

Both from <https://www.japanvisitor.com/japan-city-guides/ome>

□Ome is usually a calm town. There are still quite a number of vintage houses and many vintage film billboards. But only during the two days of the festival, this town changes.



So many people!

You were right. It's better not to carry a big bag.

It is said that this festival gathers about 150,000 people.
There are too many people that we can hardly move.

Welcome to Festival



Oh, a big vehicle is moving.

This is a “Dashi”. Each town in Ome city has a “Dashi”. There are 12 in all. There are various designs and decorations applied. These floats are so gorgeous that they are sometimes even described as a “mobile art museum”. To see each design of the Dashi is part of the attractions of enjoying this festival.





First, foxes greet us.

Even foxes come in various kinds.

Yes. We will be able to find many masked characters on the Dashi.

Can we find other animals in addition to the fox?

Maybe. Not only animals, many various masked characters will be dancing on Dashi. This is not “Pokemon Go”, it’s “Maskman Go”. How many can we find them?

You OK?

Oh, on the Dashi, several musicians are playing traditional flutes and drums.



They are playing music called “O-hayashi”. Especially O-hayashi played in festivals is called “Matsuri-bayashi”. It is designed to be performed with festival events and as such, the shape of performances and performer’s costumes can vary depending on the nature of the events. And an interesting point of this flute for festivals is that the musical scales don’t conform to either Japanese or Western music, because the finger holes are equally spaced to make it easier to make as well as to play.



With so many Dashi like this, I'm worried they might collide into each other. Oh, Dashi are coming from both sides.





People call the situation when two Dashi collide “hikkawase”. “Hikkawase”’s “hiku” means to pull Dashi, and “awase” means to have them collide. It is the highlight of the festival. The time when more than two Dashi collide brings more excitement. This time is announced on the leaflet before hand or real-time on microphone. The leaflet is provided at the station free of charge. This leaflet tells the kind of each Dashi and where the Dashi will pass.

Battle of “Ohayashi” is worth seeing.

Let’s walk around a little.

Along the street





Many shop stalls are in a row along the road. What are they selling? Should we take a look?





foods and toys at shop stands

<https://www.pakutaso.com/20170759185post-12354.html>

Foods, drinks, Japanese cheap sweets and toys are on the shop stands. ***“Yaki-soba”***, ***“Tako-yaki”***, ***“Okonomi-yaki”*** are traditional old-timers of all the stalls at the festival. In addition, there are grilled corn, ***“Yaki-tori”*** and so on. I guess *Yaki-tori* and *Tako-yaki* are some of the famous Japanese cheap foods. *Yaki-tori* is grilled chicken skewer, like kebab. *Tako-yaki* is a flour based snack baked in the shape of little round balls containing pieces of octopus. *Okonomi-yaki* is a dish of thinly sliced cabbage mixed with batter made of flour,

eggs and water and cooked on an iron grill. *Yaki-soba* is stir-fried noodles. *Yaki-soba*, *Okonomi-yaki* and *Tako-yaki* are added with Japanese salty-sweet sauce. Each costs about ¥4~500.

Everything looks tasty and smells good. I want to eat all of them.

Me, too.

What? Have you heard a strange voice from heaven?

...And, many toys are very colorful.

These are for children. But, most adults are excited to remember their childhood. These colors, smells, tastes and sounds. Every element enlivens people. I wonder if most festivals have such elements all over the world.

That hits the spot! Red pickled ginger goes with yakisoba and beer.



"Woo, sake tastes so good"



"It looks great"

You! Before I knew it. You are drinking alone.





Every “Dashi” is moved manually, isn’t it?

It is the greatest highlight scene to turn the Dashi. For example, “Kishiwada danjiri (it is held at Kishiwada in Osaka)” is famous. At this festival, the highlight is to turn the Dashi around with breakneck speed.

Mask collection

By the way, what kind of masked characters are there?

Let’s go to look for them.

















What a great variety of masks there are. There are not only a fox but a raccoon dog and a bird.

These variety of masks all derive from Noh, Kyogen and Kagura*,and so on. They represent a deity, people or animals.

*Noh, Kyogen and Kagura are traditional performing arts since medieval times. Especially, Noh uses a lot of masks.

Foxes, raccoon dogs, or monkeys are active characters in folk tale. In stories, foxes and raccoon dogs bewitch people. In addition, foxes are messengers of the deity of rice planting.



a monkey



a raccoon dog



a raccoon dog

Hey, raccoon dogs and monkeys are looking at us. I'm worried I might be bewitched.

Worship at shrine

This festival is for the deity of Sumiyoshi shrine. We go to shrines to worship.



Long steps....

How long the line is.





Hey! Don't reach for sweets. It's for children. Quit making a fool of yourself.

Sorry. I can't resist sweet things. Anyway, what is this?

This is "Ibayashi". It means they play "Ohayashi" without moving. In this period, they play and dance not only on the Dashi, but also on the stage like this. They are set along the road.

How long is the festival?

Until what time is this festival held?

On the 2nd of May, it is held from 3 pm to 10 pm. On the 3rd, it is held from 9 am to 10 pm. On the 2nd, the Dashi only moves in each town. So, I recommend to go on the 3rd.



The festival is still going on...



"Take care. Come back again anytime."

I am a little tired. We are almost out of time. Let's go home.

Yes. Let's drop by Shinjuku to have a quick drink on our way home.

That's just like you I know. Let's go!

**Reffer <https://www.japanistry.com/event/ome-grand-festival/>*