

Houryu Tanabata Kiriko Festival

History

Tanabata (the Star Festival) is also the first day of the Bon Festival, and is thought of as a day to welcome ancestral souls. Traditions carried over from this are said to be the reason that the Ukaishimo-gumi's *kiriko* always stops at the beach in front of Myogonji Temple before departure and after the end of the festival. As can be seen in the 'Ishikawa Prefecture Suzu Publication' (issued in 1923), "At the Ukai-ushima, bringing out the large *kiriko* was a form of entertainment for mature males," the Tanabata Festival was thought of as a *kiriko* festival, resulting in its evolution into a grand festival.

Date

August 7

Locations

Kiriko from each district gather at the square at the Ukaigawa river estuary (known as the Kiriko Hiroba) and move on to Ukai Fishing Port. After this, they return to Kiriko Hiroba and enter the ocean from the left bank of Ukaigawa River.



Duration to the festival venue

■ Approximately 45 minutes by car from Noto Airport (interchange)

*These contents are based on 2015 information.

Inquiries

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2015
The Japan Heritage Promotion Project
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Houryu Tanabata Kiriko Festival



Japan Heritage

The Noto Peninsula: Where the Light Dances
-The exciting Kiriko Festivals-



| Dates |
August 7

| Location |
Ukai, Horyu-machi, Suzu City



Festival schedule

The *kiriko* are erected on the morning of the 6th, and lit from dusk. The eve of the festival is celebrated at Kiriko Hiroba.

● August 7

- 18:30 *Kiriko* from each district start to depart.
- 19:00 All *kiriko* gather and line up at Kiriko Hiroba.
- 20:00 The procession makes its way to the right bank of Ukaigawa River towards Ukai Fishing Port.
- 21:00 The *kiriko* once more gather in Kiriko Hiroba.
- 22:00 The procession makes its way to the beach.
- 22:30 With the launch of fireworks, the *kiriko* enter the ocean and dance around the flaming torches set in the waters.
- 23:00 The *kiriko* come out of the ocean to return to their respective districts.

*Times for each event are estimates.

The number of *kiriko* and their workmanship

There are six 14-meter large *kiriko*, from the districts of Nakanokama, Yamanote, Ukaishimo-gumi, Kuromine, Ukaikami-gumi and Mitsuke-Asahi. Each *kiriko* weighs approximately two tons. The children's *kiriko* are

approximately six meters high; however, due to the declining birthrates, the number of the children's *kiriko* comes down, and there is now only one children's *kiriko*.

Tanabata *kiriko* are mostly made with untreated wood. Of the six *kiriko*, only one has a varnish finish. Iron plates have been attached to the foundation (legs) of the *kiriko* to withstand the wear and tear from asphalt pavements. Almost no carved decorations are attached due to weight saving issues, but as the festival has some elements similar to summer evening festivals, these *kiriko* have paper lanterns, paper shades, wind-bells and paper streamers to create a cool summer visual.

Styrofoam is placed under the carrying poles when entering the ocean to aid buoyancy. Six people hold on to hand-held ropes in the ocean to prevent the *kiriko* from tipping over.

Festival music, songs

There are no songs for this festival. The music is performed by one gong player, two drum performers and one bamboo flutist on each *kiriko*, and there are three different patterns of music for stopping, moving and dancing.

Relations to other *kiriko* festivals

This festival used to purchase second-hand *kiriko* from Yanagida, Noto-cho. However, after new *kiriko* were made, districts started to compete in terms of size. Because of the lack of carriers and the increase in *kiriko* sizes, many *kiriko* festivals now pull these lanterns on wheels. However, the Houryu Tanabata Kiriko Festival is particular about carrying the *kiriko*, making these the largest *kiriko* to be manually carried in the Noto region.

Characteristics

Other *kiriko* festivals often use the *kiriko* as an item to join *mikoshi* (portable shrines) in their travels. However, the Houryu Tanabata Kiriko Festival has no relationship with shrines, meaning there are no *mikoshi* or rituals when entering shrines. Their main feature is having the *kiriko* as the focus of the festival. There is no *Yobare* banquet tradition for this festival either.

The dancing *kiriko* in the ocean, reminiscent of the ceremony to send off spirits (with floating lanterns in the water), is the highlight of the festival.