

1st Sun. of Mar. Date City
"Tsutsuko-hiki" Tug-of-War Festival

This tug-of-war by scantily clad sturdy men competing for the massive "Tsutsuko" straw bag (containing steamed glutinous rice) is staged in the cold to forecast the coming season's harvest. One of Fukushima Prefecture's most interesting festivals.



[Place] Hobara-machi Itsukushima Shrine
 [Info.] Tsutsuko-biki Festival Executive Committee (Yoichi Ohtake, Itsukushima Shrine) Tel: +81(24)576-4062
 [Access] 7 min. walk from Hobara Sta. on Abukuma Kyuko Line; or 20 min. drive after exiting Fukushima-Iizaka I.C. on Tohoku Expwy

Early Mar. Soma City
"Taste Treats from the Sea" Festival

Enjoy complimentary codfish soup. Crab rice is available for sale at a most reasonable price.



[Place] Marine Products Direct Sales Center
 [Info.] Marine Products Direct Sales Center Tel: +81(24)38-8956
 [Access] 10 min. by car from Soma Sta. on JR Joban Line

Mid-Mar. Mishima Town
Japan Woven Crafts Exhibition

Woven crafts from around Japan, using natural materials such as bamboo, bines and bark, are on display.

[Place] Mishima Town Seikatsu Kogei-kan
 [Info.] Mishima Town Seikatsu Kogei-kan Tel: +81(241)48-5502
 [Access] 30 min. drive from Aizu-Bange I.C. on Ban'etsu Expwy

Spring Equinox Day Bandai Town
Funehiki Festival



In this *shinto* rite, a wooden boat loaded with straw rice-bags is pulled from both sides in a tug-of-war, hoping to foretell the coming season's harvest. A rich harvest is promised if the East side wins whereas rice prices will rise if the West side wins. An intangible folk cultural property of Fukushima Prefecture.

[Place] Bandai Shrine
 [Info.] Bandai Town Office (Industry Sec.) Tel: +81(242)74-1214
 [Access] 15 min. walk from Bandai-machi Sta. on JR Ban'etsu-saisen Line; or 7 min. drive from Bandai/Kawahigashi I.C. on Ban'etsu Expwy

Late Mar. Kitakata City
"Kan-zarashi" Soba Festival

Soba buckwheat, soaked and bleached in the cold Ichinoto River water, enhances the taste. Noodles made from such buckwheat are overwhelmingly enjoyed in this special festival.

[Place] Yamato Gymnasium
 [Info.] Yamato Sogo Branch Tel: +81(241)38-3841
 [Access] 5 min. walk from Yamato Sta. on JR Ban'etsu-saisen Line

Late Mar. to late Aug. Soma City
Matsukawaura Beach Shell Gathering

The Matsukawaura Beach is the only place in Fukushima that nurtures short-necked clams. Shell gathering here is an exciting family pleasure.

[Place] Obama (shell gathering ground), Soma City
 [Info.] Matsukawaura Tourist Information Center Tel: +81(244)38-7666
 [Access] 40 min. by car from Soma Sta. on JR Joban Line



Early Apr. Kitakata City
Fukuju-so (Amur adonis) Festival

The Numanodaira area is home to one of Japan's largest colonies of "fukuju-so" (Amur adonis) plants (one million plants with an area of 5 hectares). In season, the yellow flowers carpet the whole area. Toward the end of the season, charming "katakuri" (dogtooth violets) can also be enjoyed.

[Place] Yamato Numanodaira
 [Info.] Yamato Sogo Branch Tel: +81(241)38-3841
 [Access] 40 min. drive after exiting Bange I.C. on Ban'etsu Expwy

Apr. 1 Minami-Aizu Town
Opening of Mountain Stream Fishing

Try challenging mountain stream fishing for *yamame* and *iwana* trout amid a grand natural setting.

[Place] Rivers in Minami-Aizu Town
 [Info.] Western Minami-Aizu Fisheries Cooperative Tel: +81(241)72-2110
 [Access] 90 min. drive after exiting Nishi-Nasuno/Shiobara I.C. on JR Tohoku Expwy; or 100 min. drive after exiting Bandai/Kawahigashi I.C. on Ban'etsu Expwy

Apr. 3 Tamakawa Village
Odera Yakushi Festival

Young girls, aged between 7 and 12, group dance wearing colorful kimono and flower-decorated sedge hats - exquisitely charming! A prefecture-designated important intangible cultural property.



[Place] Tofuku-ji Temple (at Minami-Sugama area)
 [Info.] Tamakawa Village Office (Planning & Industry Sec.) Tel: +81(247)57-4629
 [Access] 10 min. drive after exiting Fukushima-Kuko I.C. on Abukuma-kogen Doro Expwy; or 15 min. by taxi from Izumigo Sta. on JR Suigun Line

Apr. 5 & 6 Shirakawa City
Katakuri Festival

A flea market, sales of agricultural products, a hands-on experience corner (fish grabbing, bambooware making, etc.) are featured. On-stage events with audience participation are also popular.

[Place] Shirakawa Seki-no-Mori Park
 [Info.] Shirakawa Tourism Association Tel: +81(248)22-1147
 [Access] 30 min. by bus from Shirakawa Sta. on JR Tohoku-honsen Line; or 25 min. drive after exiting Shirakawa I.C. on Tohoku Expwy

Mid-Apr. Motomiya City
Ukishima-jinja Daidai-kagura Dancing

Prefecture-designated as an intangible cultural property in 1977, this ancient sacred dancing had been performed by shinto priests of Ukishima Shrine until the late 19th century Meiji Restoration. Today, the tradition is preserved by members of the local preservation society.



[Place] Ukishima Shrine (Miyanoshita, Shiraiwa, Motomiya City)
 [Info.] Masamitsu Kokubun (Ukishima Shrine chief priest) Tel: +81(243)44-2678
 [Access] 15 min. drive from Motomiya Sta. on JR Tohoku-honsen Line; or 20 min. drive after exiting Motomiya I.C. on Tohoku Expwy

Apr. 13 to May 13 Yanaizu Town
"Jusan-ko Mairi" Temple Visitation

Long practiced by local residents, the temple is visited to pray for the sound growth of children in their 13th calendar age.

[Place] Fukuman Kokuzo-son Enzo-ji Temple
 [Info.] Yanaizu Tourism Association Tel: +81(241)42-2346
 [Access] 10 min. walk from Aizu-Yanaizu Sta. on JR Tadami Line; or 10 min. drive after exiting Aizu-Bange I.C. on Ban'etsu Expwy

Mid- to late Apr. Minami-Soma City
"Man'yo-no-Sato" Kashima Spring Festival



Highlighting ancient martial arts demonstrations, this festival is held in concert with Kashima-Miko Shrine's spring festival. The area around the shrine becomes a pedestrians' paradise where open-air stalls attract a plethora of visitors. Also in this season, blooming cherry trees on the Mano River banks are illuminated with lanterns.

[Place] Kashima district
 [Info.] Kashima Tourism Association Executive Committee (c/o Commerce & Industry Association) Tel: +81(244)46-2250
 [Access] 5 min. walk from Kashima Sta. on JR Joban Line

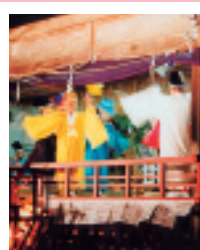
3rd Sun. of Apr. Kunimi Town
Uchiya Kasuga Shrine Daidai-kagura Dancing

During the cherry blossom season, sacred music and dancing are offered at the Kagura-den Hall of the Kasuga Shrine, performed by local residents. During their performances, the dancers scatter rice cakes to the audience as a blessing.



[Place] Kasuga Shrine in Uchiya district
 [Info.] Daidai-kagura Preservation Society Tel: +81(24)585-4085
 [Access] 5 min. drive from Fujita Sta. on JR Tohoku-honsen Line; or 5 min. drive after exiting Kunimi I.C. on Tohoku Expwy

3rd Sun. of Apr. Otama Village
Kamiharada Shrine Festival Juni-kagura Dancing



Dating back some 300 years, this sacred music and dance performance, which originated in Izumo, is offered in prayer for a rich harvest. A village-designated intangible folk cultural property.

[Place] Kamiharada Shrine
 [Info.] Otama Village Tourism Association Tel: +81(243)48-3131
 [Access] 10 min. drive from Motomiya Sta. on JR Tohoku-honsen Line; or 15 min. drive after exiting Motomiya I.C. or Nihonmatsu I.C. on Tohoku Expwy

Late Apr. Minami-Soma City
"Nomaoui" Spring Horse Racing

In this event, Soma Nomaoui horsemen (in *samurai* costume) stage a horse race, changing their attire from armored *samurai* to that of jockeys. The many other events that also take place, attract throngs of visitors.

[Place] Hibarigahara Festival Site in Haramachi district
 [Info.] Soma Nomaoui Executive Committee Tel: +81(244)22-3064
 [Access] 20 min. walk or 10 min. drive from Haranomachi Sta. on JR Joban Line

Apr. 24 Aizu-Wakamatsu City
Memorial Service for "Byakko-tai" Corps

A memorial service for the members of the heroic "Byakko-tai" young *samurai* corps (late 19th century) together with a "Byakko-tai" sword dancing by local high school students is offered before their very graves.

[Place] In front of Byakko-tai members' graves on Iimoriyama Hill
 [Info.] Aizu-Wakamatsu City Office (Tourism Sec.) Tel: +81(242)39-1251
 [Access] 4 min. by "Akabeh" downtown loop bus from Aizu-Wakamatsu Sta. on JR Ban'etsu-saisen Line, alighting at Iimoriyama stop, then 5 min. walk



Late Apr. Naraha Town
Spring Festival in Tenjin

This festival promotes harmonious relationships between parents, children and local residents. On-stage events and outdoor attractions at an open space encourage participants to enjoy the day.

[Place] Tenjin-misaki Sports Park
 [Info.] Naraha Town Commerce & Industry Society (Youth Div.) Tel: +81(240)25-2256
 [Access] 5 min. drive or 20 min. walk from Tatsuta Sta. on JR Joban Line; or 10 min. drive after exiting Hirono I.C. on Joban Expwy

Apr. 28 Yukawa Village
Shojo-ji Temple Festival

Local residents dance to the rhythm of drums and gongs while chanting "Nenbutsu" Buddhist prayers. This dance festival is intended to lead followers to deeper faith, offer tranquility to departed souls, and pray for peace and a rich harvest.



[Place] Josho-ji Temple precincts
 [Info.] Yukawa Village Community Hall Tel: +81(241)27-4107
 [Access] 15 min. drive after exiting Aizu-Wakamatsu I.C. on Ban'etsu Expwy; or 5 min. drive from Shiokawa Sta. on JR Ban'etsu-saisen Line

Late Apr. Koori Town
Slow-Strolling Meet along the Peach Road



This is a leisurely strolling event along a path through beautiful peach orchards which the Crown Prince and Princess once visited. Along the way, a luncheon party, a photo session together with "Miss Peach" and sales of fresh vegetables are featured.

[Place] Danzaki Yoshinuma-mae district, Koori Town
 [Info.] JA Date Mirai Koori Sogo Branch Tel: +81(24)582-2272
 [Access] 30 min. walk from Koori Sta. on JR Tohoku-honsen Line; or 10 min. drive after exiting Kunimi I.C. on Tohoku Expwy

Late Apr. to early May Yamatsuri Town
Yamatsuriyama Azalea Festival

Some 50,000 azaleas tint in crimson the slopes of Mt. Yamatsuri (part of Oku-Kuji Prefectural Natural Park), attracting numerous visitors. The best blossoms can be enjoyed during the Golden Week holiday period (late April to early May).

[Place] Mt. Yamatsuri (Oku-Kuji Prefectural Natural Park)
 [Info.] Yamatsuri Town Tourism Association Tel: +81(247)46-4575
 [Access] 1 min. walk from Yamatsuriyama Sta. on JR Suigun Line; or 60 min. drive after exiting Naka I.C. on Joban Expwy



May 1 to 5 Namie Town
"Obori Soma-yaki" Grand Pottery Festival

All the Obori Soma-yaki pottery makers, with a tradition of 300 years, participate in this grand earthenware market.



[Place] Toge-no-Mori Obori
 [Info.] Obori Soma-yaki Pottery Cooperative Tel: +81(240)35-4917
 [Access] 15 min. drive from Namie Sta. on JR Joban Line

May 3 to 5 Nihonmatsu City
"Man-nin Komori Jizo-son" Festival



In this festival, followers express their thanks to the Jizo (guardian deity of small children) by returning "Child Jizo" images they have borrowed from the temple, and offer prayer for renewed protection for the coming year. A colorful dance performance by small children is offered to the deity.

[Place] Man-nin Komori Jizo-son Temple
 [Info.] Iwashiro Tourism Association Tel: +81(243)65-2803
 [Access] 25 min. By bus from Nihonmatsu Sta. on JR Tohoku-honsen Line

May 3 Tamakawa Village
Fukushima Airport Festival

Stage performances and various other events are held.

[Place] Fukushima Airport Terminal Building, etc.
 [Info.] Tamakawa Village Office (Planning & Industry Sec.) Tel: +81(247)57-4629
 [Access] 5 min. drive from Fukushima-kuko I.C. on Abukuma-kogen Doro Expwy; or 10 min. by taxi from Izumigo Sta. on JR Suigun Line