

Kenka Matsuri



Fighting Shrines (Kenka Mikoshi)

The **Itoigawa Kenka Matsuri** (Itoigawa Fighting Festival) is held every April 10th and 11th at Amatsu Shrine in Itoigawa City. Centuries old, the festival is held each year to pray for a bountiful harvest and good catch of fish.

Two teams of young men from Itoigawa's Teramachi and Oshiage districts carry 600 kilogram *mikoshi* (portable shrines). Mikoshi held high, they run circles around the shrine grounds meeting multiple times to clash their shrines together in a display of strength. The shrines often break in this chaotic atmosphere as spectators escape to shelter.

As the fighting concludes, the raucous atmosphere goes quiet as all attention turns to the central stage where local children and adults perform *bugaku* court dances passed down through the generations for over 300 years.

These dances are registered as a National Important Intangible Cultural Property of Japan.

Amatsu Shrine



Amatsu Shrine Worship Hall (Haiden)

Amatsu Shrine is an incredibly old shrine, said to have been founded during the reign of Emperor Keikō around 100 AD. Like all shrines in Japan it has been rebuilt many times; the current worship hall (*haiden*) was rebuilt in 1662 and the smaller main sanctuary (*honden*) behind it was rebuilt in 1797.

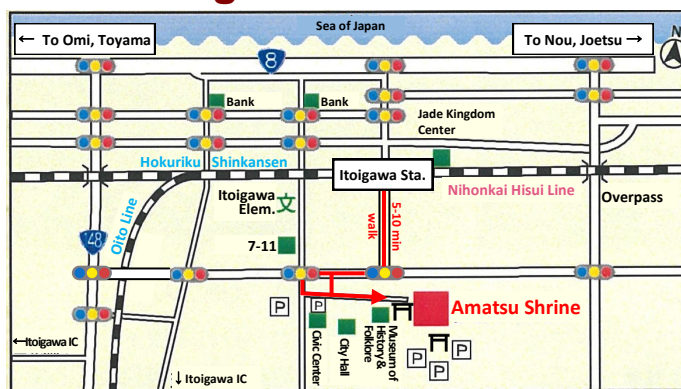
It enshrines the grandson of the Sun Goddess *Amatsuhikohononinigi-no-Mikoto*, said to have been sent to Japan to be its ruler. Alongside him are enshrined *Amenofutodama-no-Mikoto* and *Amenokoyane-no-Mikoto* who followed him to Japan. Also located on the grounds is **Nunakawa Shrine** which enshrines *Princess Nunakawa* and her husband *Yachihoko-no-Kami*.



Getting to Itoigawa

Tokyo/Nagano/Kanazawa	approx. 2 hr / 37 min / 50 min	Itoigawa
Hakuba	18 min	Itoigawa
Hokuriku Shinkansen - Hakutaka Super Exp.		
Oito Line (JR East)	Minami-Otari	Oito Line (JR West)

Getting to Amatsu Shrine



Festival Schedule

※May be canceled or delayed for inclement weather or unforeseen circumstances.

April 10

- 6:20 a.m. Blessing of Mikoshi Shrinebearers
- 10:30 a.m. Arrival of the Gods
- 11:00 a.m. Bearing & Running of Mikoshi Shrines
- 11:30 a.m. Fighting of the Mikoshi Shrines
- 12:30 p.m. Running of the Mikoshi Shrines
- 1:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. Amatsu Shrine Bugaku Court Dances (National Cultural Treasure)

April 11

- 1:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. Amatsu Shrine Bugaku Court Dances (National Cultural Treasure)

※All times are approximate and subject to change.

※The box seating is only open to those with paid reservations. Reservations are sold through an annual lottery to local community members. Please refrain from entering the box seats without an invitation.

More Info About Itoigawa

Itoigawa City Geopark Promotion Office
1-2-5 Ichinomiya, Itoigawa, Niigata 941-8501
Tel: 025-552-1511 Weekdays 9 AM - 5 PM
Email: geopark@city.itoigawa.niigata.jp
URL: <http://www.geo-itoigawa.com/eng/>

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Itoigawa UNESCO Global Geopark



Itoigawa Fighting Festival

Amatsu Shrine Spring Grand Festival



Bugaku Court Dances of Amatsu Shrine



1. Enbu (Waving Spears) - 2 Children

In this first dance, two children wearing celestial crowns dance in unison while holding ceremonial halberds.



2. Ama - 1 Child

This dance is said to have originated in a kingdom located in what is now Vietnam. The dancer's mask and clothing are very foreign in appearance.



3. Keikan (Cockscomb) - 4 Children

Four children dance with flowers wearing butterfly wings and a cockerel's crown. This dance reflects childlike playfulness and peace.



4. Batō - 1 Adult

This wild-looking man returns from the mountains celebrating victory over the beast that had killed his father. There are many suggested origins for this dramatic dance.



5. Hamayumi (Blessed Bows) - 4 Children

Wearing warrior garb with bows in hand and sheathed swords, these children aim their bows in all directions to ward away evil spirits.



6. Chigonasori (Dragon Dance) - 2 Children

This dance represents two frolicking dragons. The masks and hats are round and childlike in shape and the clothing is particularly elegant.



7. Noh Batō - 1 Adult

This dance is unique to Amatsu Shrine. It is similar to the Batō dance, but the dancer's chest and stomach bulge and he wears a Noh mask and pointed hat.



8. Keko (Flower Chest) - 4 Children

Unique to Amatsu Shrine, 4 children dressed in beautiful costume dance while scattering flowers kept in a special chest.



9. Ōnasori (Great Dragon Dance) - 2 Adults

This dance is said to come from the Korean Peninsula and represents two dragons. Their frightening masks are in stark contrast to their playful prancing.



10. Taiheiraku (Song of Great Peace) - 4 Children

In elegant costume, these warriors dance gallantly with their spears and swords to celebrate the end of fighting and return to peace.



11. Kyūhōraku - 2 Children

Wearing the same costume as in the Taiheiraku, these warriors use their swords to dance and pray for peace throughout the world.



12. Ryō-ō (Prince of Lanling) - 1 Adult

This dance celebrates a famous Chinese prince who was known for wearing a terrifying mask into battle to hide his handsomeness. The golds and reds of his costume are brilliantly lit by the rays of the setting sun.