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Information Desk Support Staff (English)

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Daikugata



Danjiri

Famous Autumn Festivals in Japan



Dressed with twisted headbands and in a "happi" coats.

Japan's autumn is a season where you can enjoy refreshing weather and temperatures with clear air. *Aki Matsuri* or autumn festivals are traditional events, many of which thank the gods for the harvest, and they are held all over the country. You can savor the unique traditions and cultures of each region, that are also popular with local people and tourists.

Here, we would like to introduce autumn festivals in the country that get you to feel the season: the *Kishiwada Danjiri* Festival in September, the *Nagasaki Kunchi* and *Jidai* Festival in Kyoto in October, and the *Tori-no-Ichi* in Tokyo in November. Please experience the Japanese autumn through each of these festivals.

The *Kishiwada Danjiri* Festival is an autumn festival that has continued for over 300 years in Kishiwada City, Osaka. It is said to have originated in 1703, in the mid-Edo period (1603–1868), to *Gokoku Hōjō*. In 2025, the festival was held on 13th and 14th of September. Young people, with *hachimaki* or twisted headbands and *happi* jackets, energetically pull the four-ton *danjiri* floats and race through the town. Everyone's attention is focused on the *Daikugata* or master carpenters who dance atop the *danjiri*, that is about four meters high, while waving fans in both hands. Please make sure, you should watch them leap and spin their bodies, as well as the move called *Hikōki-nori* or acting like he's flying on a plane, where they spread both arms and stand on one leg. The festival reaches its climax with the *Yarimawashi* — a typical way the *danjiri* turns a street corner at a right angle — and the quick and masterful turn of the *danjiri* with the wheels squeal.

【Danjiri】 A large, elaborately carved wooden float pulled through the streets during a festival. The carvings are intricate and very luxurious.

【Gokoku Hōjō: bumper crop and abundant harvest】 A prayer for a bountiful harvest of crops like rice and

wheat, so that everyone has enough food.

【Daikugata: Master Carpenter】 The people who play an important role in the Danjiri Festival, riding atop the danjiri, beating drums and giving signals to the others. They are called this because in the past the carpenters who built the danjiri were the ones who rode on it.

The *Nagasaki Kunchi* is the autumn festival of *Suwa Shrine*, a shrine in Nagasaki dedicated to *Ujigami*, and is a major event held by the townspeople collaboration for three days every year starting on October 7th.

The *Nagasaki Kunchi* is said to have begun in 1634, when two women performed a dance called *Komai* or small dance before the gods to express their gratitude. The word *Kunchi* is believed to come from the Chinese custom of celebrating longevity on the ninth day of the ninth month of the *Kyūreki*, with the term *ku-nichi* or nine-day being read as *Kunchi* to mark the festival day. It is designated as an *Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property of Japan*, and its performances are characterized by an atmosphere that feels as if you are in a foreign country. The *Hōnō Odori* or dedicatory dances, which have been influenced by foreign cultures like Portugal and the Netherlands, are very powerful and memorable. Representative dances are the *Ja-Odori* or Dragon Dance, where a dragon dances beautifully, and the *Kasahoko* or floats with luxurious decorations carried by many people. The districts that perform the *Hōnō Odori* each year are called *Odori-machi* or dancing towns. Today, there are a total of 58 districts in Nagasaki City, divided into seven groups. Since they rotate through the groups over seven years, it means to take seven years if you want to see all the dances of the *Nagasaki Kunchi*.



【Ujigami: Local Guardian Deity】 The guardian deity who protects the area where one lives.

【Kyūreki: Lunar Calendar】 The calendar system that was based on the movement of the moon, as opposed to the current calendar (New Calendar) which is based on the movement of the sun.

【Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties】 These are traditional events, customs, and practices that the Japanese government seeks to protect.

【Hōnō Odori: Dedicatory Dance】 A dance performed to express gratitude and requests to the gods.

【Kasahoko: Umbrella-Shaped Ornament】 A large, umbrella-shaped ornament used in festivals. It serves as a landmark to welcome the gods or to purify the path.

The Jidai Festival or Festival of Ages is held on October 22nd. It started as a celebration commemorating 1,100th anniversary of Kyoto becoming the capital of Japan, and it is one of Kyoto's three most famous festivals, allowing visitors to feel the rich history of Kyoto. Nearly 2,000 participants dress in historical costumes and carry antique tools, forming a procession about 2 kilometers long that parades through the streets of Kyoto. The procession is extremely spectacular, featuring figures from various eras, spanning from the Heian Period (794–1185)

all the way up to the Meiji Restoration (1868–1912). Famous figures in Japanese history, such as *Oda Nobunaga* and *Murasaki Shikibu*, also appear. The costumes and items are meticulously created based on extensive historical research, giving you the feeling like you've stepped back into that time. The Jidai Festival plays a vital role in rediscovering and passing on Kyoto's history and culture to the next generation. It is also a very important festival for preserving Kyoto's *Dentō Kōgei* and dyeing techniques.



Oda Nobunaga

【Oda Nobunaga】 A Prominent warrior leader in the 16th century.

【Murasaki Shikibu】 A woman who wrote the famous story "The Tale of Genji" (Genji Monogatari) during the Heian Period.



Murasaki Shikibu

【Dentō Kōgei: Traditional Crafts】 Traditional Japanese crafts made by hand using special skills passed down through generations.

The *Tori-no-Ichi* or Cock Fair is held annually in November on the Day of the Rooster, *Tori no Hi* at various *Ōtori Shrines* across Japan, which enshrine *Yamato Takeru-no-Mikoto* as their deity. People go to pray for good fortune and prosperous business. While the festival originated at *Ōtori Shrine* in Osaka, it became particularly popular in the Edo, now Tokyo area during the Edo period. The *Tori-no-Ichi* in Asakusa, Tokyo, famous for its auspicious *Engi Kumade* or lucky rakes, is affectionately known as *O-Tori-sama* and is deeply cherished.

【Yamato Takeru no Mikoto】 A legendary prince whose exploits are central to Japanese mythology. He is remembered as a brave warrior and a symbol of imperial authority.

【Tori no Hi】 A specific day represented by the sign "Tori" (Rooster), one of the traditional signs of zodiac based on the Chinese Zodiac. *Tori no Hi* means Day of the Rooster.

【Engi Kumade】 A rake decorated with ornaments, sold at festivals that is believed to be a tool for gathering good fortune, happiness and wealth. *Engi Kumade* means Lucky Rake.



Engi Kumade



Shrine

Information from Nerima City Regional Promotion Section

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We provide all sorts of useful information in some languages for your daily life, including Japanese language classes and so on.

【Venue】 3-1-1、Hikarigaoka, Nerima City

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Counseling service in English, Chinese, Korean, Tagalog and Japanese is available at Nerima City Regional Promotion Section. Counseling on phone is also available.

【Venue】 Regional Promotion Office, 9th floor of Nerima City Main Building

6-12-1, Toyotamakita, Nerima City

【Telephone Number】 03-5984-4333

【Open】 1:00p.m.-5:00p.m.

【Languages】 English : Mon.~Fri. Chinese : Mon.~Fri.

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For more information

【Nerima City Official HP】

<https://www.city.nerima.tokyo.jp/gaikokunohitomuke/bunka.html>

【QR】



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