

# ALL ABOUT



## Itoigawa's Fighting Festival



Fighting Shrines (Kenka Mikoshi)

### KENKA MATSURI

The Itoigawa Kenka Matsuri (Itoigawa Fighting Festival) is held each April 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> at Amatsu Shrine. Centuries old, this festival is held to pray for a bountiful harvest and good catch of fish. Two teams of young men from Itoigawa's Teramachi and Oshiage districts carry 600kg portable shrines, running circles around the shrine grounds and clashing together multiple times in a display of strength. As the fighting concludes, local children and adults perform *bugaku* court dances passed down over the centuries on the central stage.



Amatsu Shrine Worship Hall (Haiden)

### AMATSU SHRINE

Amatsu Shrine was said to have been founded during the reign of Emperor Keikō around 100 AD. The current worship hall (*haiden*), easily recognised by its distinctive thatch roof, was rebuilt in 1662. The main deity enshrined here is *Amenigishi-Kuninigishi-Amatsu-Hiko-Hiko-Ho-no-Ninigi-no-Mikoto*, grandson of the Sun Goddess said to have been sent from heaven to rule Japan.

## ACCESS TO ITOIGAWA & AMATSU SHRINE



Tokyo

via Hokuriku Shinkansen

2 hours

Osaka

via the Thunderbird Express & the Hokuriku Shinkansen

3 hours and 30 minutes

Kanazawa

via Hokuriku Shinkansen

1 hour

Nagano

via Hokuriku Shinkansen

40 minutes

Itoigawa

## FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

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

### April 10th

Around 10:30 am - Arrival of the Gods  
Around 11:00 am - Handing over the mikoshi (from the stage to the carriers)  
Around 1:00 pm - *Bugaku* Dances  
Around 5:00 pm - Festival End

### April 11th

Around 1:00 pm - *Bugaku* Dances  
Around 5:00 pm - Festival End

※ All times are subject to change.  
※ Please take care when observing the event and obey the directions of police and event officials.

## MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ITOIGAWA

### CONTACT US

Itoigawa City  
Tourism Association Office  
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DISCOVER ITOIGAWA  
(English Itoigawa Official Tourist Information Homepage)

# Itoigawa Fighting Festival



## Amatsu Shrine Spring Grand Festival

APRIL 10<sup>TH</sup> - 11<sup>TH</sup>



# 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 distinctively 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 slain 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, unique to Amatsu Shrine, 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 costumes dance while scattering flowers kept in special ornamental chests.



## 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 war 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.