

ALL ABOUT



Nou's Hakusan Shrine Spring Grand Festival



Bugaku (Court Dances)

NOU MATSURI

This festival is held every April 24th at Nou Hakusan Shrine in Itoigawa City. Beginning in the 15th century, it centers on 11 *bugaku*. The festival starts with the *Shishimai* (Lion's Dance.) Two men dressed as a mythological lion dance around the shrine grounds. Around noon, the running of the Shrines begin, where young men carry three *mikoshi* portable shrines on their backs, running in circles around the shrine grounds. Following the Running of the Shrines, 11 different bugaku court dances are performed by adults and children, some as young as 4! These dances culminate in the dramatic Ryōō Dance performed in the light of the setting sun.

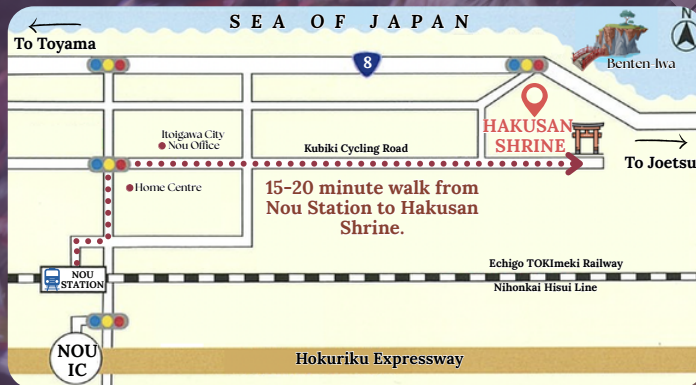


Nou Hakusan Shrine Worship Hall (Haiden)

NOU HAKUSAN SHRINE

Nestled at the base of Mt. Oyama (87m), the current main sanctuary (*honden*) was built in 1515 following a fire, and is registered as a Nationally Important Cultural Property. Nou Hakusan Shrine enshrines local goddess Princess Nunakawa, her husband Onamuchi-no-Mikoto and the primordial god Izanagi-no-Mikoto. Despite being a Shinto Shrine, Nou Hakusan Shrine also houses many Buddhist icons and treasures, remnants of a time where the lines between these two religious traditions were blurred.

ACCESS TO ITOIGAWA CITY'S NOU REGION



Tokyo,
Nagano or
Kanazawa



via the Hokuriku
Shinkansen

Itoigawa



via Echigo TOKImeki
Railway or Nihonkai
Hisui Line

Nou

FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

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

April 24th

Around 9:00 am - Shishimai Dance
Around 12:00 pm - Mikoshi Running Grand Festival
Around 1:00 pm - Bugaku Court Dances (Important Intangible Folk-Cultural Property)

※ 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

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(English Itoigawa Official Tourist
Information Homepage)

Itoigawa Nou Festival



Nou Hakusan Shrine Spring Grand Festival

APRIL 24TH

BUGAKU COURT DANCES OF NOU HAKUSAN SHRINE



Shishimai (Lion Dance) - 2 Adults

These two dancers dress as a *shishi*, a mythological lion-like creature. They dance in front of the procession to purify the ground. The *shishimai* is not considered one of the *bugaku* dances.



1. Enbu (Waving Spears) - 2 Children

In the first dance of the *bugaku* performance, 2 children dance with spears to purify the stage and dispel evil spirits.



2. Sōrai (Worship Dance) - 4 Children

This quiet, elegant dance is performed in white silk crepe garments and flower-adorned crowns.



3. Dōrari - 1 Child

Only 5 min long, this is a very short dance and the only child's dance which uses a mask. The movements are simple and comical. Watch for the part where the dancer pretends to fall.



4. Chikyuu - 4 Children

Thought to have arrived in Japan from China in the 8th century, the true origins of this dance remain a mystery. Four children dance gracefully in beautiful crowns adorned with flowers.



5. Noh Batō - 1 Adult

A wild-looking man returns from the mountains celebrating victory over the beast that had killed his father. The baton in his hand represents the weapon used to slay the beast.



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

In red and gold robes like those once worn by warriors into battle, they dance holding swords and spears. This dance celebrates the suppression of chaos and a return to righteous order.



7. Nasori (Dragon Dance) - 2 Adults

Also called the Dance of the Two Dragons, this dance represents two frolicking dragons. The dancers wear frightening masks and hold ceremonial batons.



8. Kyūhōraku (Archery Dance) - 4 Children

Four children in nobleman's crowns dance with bows and arrows. They each shoot arrows around the stage, shooting another just before leaving.



9. Chigo Batō - 1 Child

Wearing a celestial crown of flowers and purple robes and holding a ceremonial fan, a single child dances quietly and elegantly.



10. Ringa (Flower Song) - 4 Children

In purple silk crepe robes and flower crowns, these children dance with flowers in this final dance of solemn elegance before the finale.



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

One proposed origin for this dance is the legend of a Chinese King who rose from the grave to aid his son in battle. The sunset was an omen of the prince's defeat, so the king made it rise. As the sun sets over the Sea of Japan, this dance beckons the sun to rise again.