

KISHIWADA DANJIRI FLOAT FESTIVAL

The Danjiri Float Festival is said to have its origin in Inari-Sai (Festival of the Grain God), which had been held to pray for a rich harvest of grain by Lord Nagayasu Okabe, the then feudal lord of Kishiwada Castle during the Genroku Era (1688–1704). On those days the castle gate was opened to the public and the townspeople pull Danjiri into the castle ground to show various performances to the Lord.

Later, this festival became the whole events for three villages called SANGO, that is, for merchants, farmers and fishermen. It was really the great for a number of townspeople and greatly supported by them.

In the old days, “Kishiwada Kenka Matsuri” (The Fighting Festival) became the festival’s unofficial name as the excitement turned to competition, and each Danjiri raced and sometimes collided and crashed.

Danjiri Matsuri, whose tradition more than 300 years is the very pride of Kishiwada townspeople, is held on Saturday and Sunday, previous days of Respect for the Aged Day (Monday) of every year with 34 Danjiris playing a soul-stirring and heroic show in the castle town. Today in Japan, we can’t find out similar festivals which are so traditional and cultural as the scale seen in Kishiwada Festival that is excellently managed under orderly control.

Danjiri Terms

Hiki-dashi (Opening Pull) :

The opening of Danjiri Matsuri with high spirits and speed. Danjiris begin a mad dash around the streets of castle towns at the sound of the siren of the city hall at 6:00 AM.

Yari-mawashi (Corner turning) :

Working both front and rear levers in unison, Danjiri can change the direction at each street corner. Done quickly to the beat of drums and shouts of the pullers, this corner turning is one of the most dramatic elements of the festival.

Daiku-gata (Carpenters) :

The privilege and risk of dancing upon the upper roof of each Danjiri belong to the carpenters. The most visible member of Danjiri team, each daiku-gata creates his own style of performances. “Hikoki-nori”, (the airplane dance) performed with arms spread wide and standing on one foot, is particularly famous. He gives the instruction using Uchiwa (fan) which way to go.

Horimono (Wood carving) :

Each of the massive Danjiris is adorned with a number of intricate wood carvings. The carvings depict celebrated battles and records of war in ancient Japan.

Miya-iri (Going to worship at the shrine) :

In the morning on the second day, 34 Danjiris divide into three groups and go to worship at the three major Shinto shrines.

Hi-ire Eikou (Parade of lantern-lit Danjiris) :

In the evening, Danjiris are decked with Chochin red lanterns and do the parade in a slow procession along the main route. The bright lanterns, the rhythmical drums and chants mix harmoniously with the barkers and food smells of the night stands to envelope the whole city in a warm and peaceful atmosphere.

PULLING DANJIRIS SCHEDULE:

1st Day

6 : 0 0	–	7 : 3 0	Hiki-dashi (Opening pull)
9 : 3 0	–	1 1 : 3 0	Parade
1 3 : 0 0	–	1 7 : 0 0	Parade
1 9 : 0 0	–	2 2 : 0 0	Parade of lantern-lit Danjiris

2nd Day

6 : 0 0	–	1 2 : 3 0	Miya-iri (Going to worship at the shrine)
1 3 : 0 0	–	1 7 : 0 0	Parade
1 9 : 0 0	–	2 2 : 0 0	Parade of lantern-lit Danjiris

A Danjiri is built of all zelkova-wood. It weighs about 4 tons and is 3.8 meters high, 4 meters long and 2.5 meters wide. A pulling rope is from 100 to 200 meters long and it is pulled by 500 – 1,000 pullers. The baroque styled Danjiri has the beautifulness as the Yomei-Mon of Nikko Toshogu, which is said to be one of the most beautiful structures of old Momoyama Culrure.

Through the rapid spread of the Internet, many foreign tourists more than about 300 people from about 35 countries visit Danjiri Information Center for Foreigners managed by our International Friendship Association of Kishiwada. They, also, dispatch immediately this Danjiri Festival news through Face Book etc. to the world.

The best known three viewing spots of passing Danjiris are Konakara Zaka (Sunday AM only), Ekimae Dori and Cancan-Ba. In the latter spot, the paid seats are available for reservation in advance.

- STRUCTURE**
- ① Oo-yane (Upper Roof)
 - ② Ko-yane (Lower Roof)
 - ③ Mae-teko (Front Lever)
 - ④ Ushiro-teko (Rear Lever)
 - ⑤ Daiku-gata (Carpenters)

