

## The Origins of the Hita Gion Festival

The Gion Shrine worships Gozu Tenno, a deity providing protection against contagion. Gion shrines were located throughout the Hita area four to five centuries ago, including in Kuma, Mameda, Ikebe, Kabu, and Tsutsumi, each with its own festival. In about 1655 the first small-scale *kakiyama* (carried floats) appeared, accompanied by bells and drums, and in 1714 the first great Yamaboko Festival was held in Kuma and Mameda.

The Gion music energizing the Yamaboko evolved into its current form in the early Edo period, when the first manager of the Koyama-gumi troupe researched music at the request of the local magistrate. The music was later refined by his son, Matsukichi.

The Hita Gion Hikiyama was designated as a National Intangible Folk Culture Asset in 1996, and inscribed on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2016. The floats run on the first Saturday and Sunday after July 20 each year, with four in the Kuma-Takeda district, four in the Mameda district, and the Heisei float at Yasaka Shrine.



### Access

From JR Hita Station: About a 10-minute walk (0.8 km)  
 From Hita Bus Center: Take the loop bus for Onsen Ryokangai, and get off at Kumamachi Iriguchi. About a 2-minute walk  
 From Hita Interchange: About 10 minutes by car (3.4 km)

### Hours

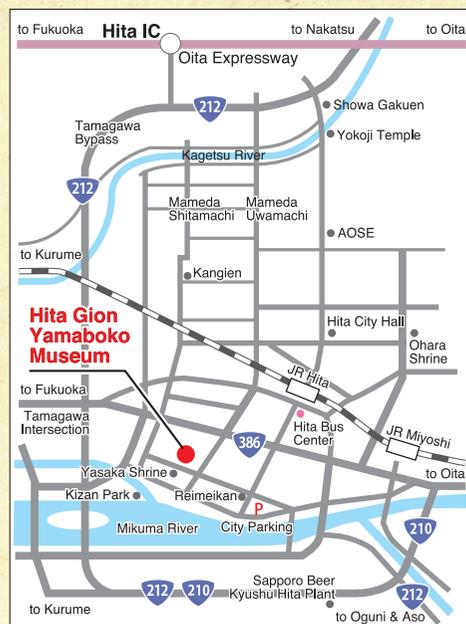
Open: 9:00 to 17:00  
 Closed: Wednesdays (or the following day, if Wednesday is a holiday)  
 New Year holidays (Dec. 29 to Jan. 3)

### Admission

	Individual	Groups of 15 or more
Adult	320 yen	270 yen
Student (elem. through high school)	220 yen	150 yen

Show disabled passbook for free entry with one caretaker.

### Map



## Hita Gion Yamaboko Museum

2-7-10 Kuma, Hita, Oita 877-0044 Tel/Fax: 0973-24-6453

## UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Hita Gion Hikiyama Festival

### Hita Gion Yamaboko Museum





## Museum guide

1st floor: One decorated float is on display, along with five of the Yamaboko floats carried through the community for the festival. Inside the case you can see the *miokuri-maku* (the hanging on the back of the float), and the *mizuhiki-maku* (the hanging on the front).

2nd floor: Ceremonial dolls used in festivities in March and May, with a video of the annual festival.

### Hita Gion Festival schedule

July 1

- ◆ *Koya-iri*: The first step in building the float. This ceremony marks the start of full-fledged construction work.

Two weeks before

- ◆ *Kuruma-age*: The float wheels are lifted up out of the pond, where they are usually placed.
- ◆ Assembly and decoration: The painted *yakata* (float box) and wheels are assembled, and decorated with *paipai* bamboo charms, and handmade pine trees and flowers such as peonies, irises, and plums.

One week before

- ◆ *Mikoshi-arai*: The float is ritually washed and purified late at night on the Saturday one week before the Gion Festival, using water from the Mikuma River.

Two days before

- ◆ *Nagare-hiki*: The float is given a "test drive" to check balance and stability.

Festival Day

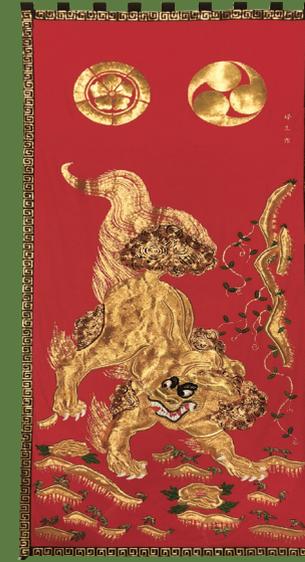
- ◆ Gion Festival: The mikoshi (portable shrine) ritual is held, and the floats are carried through the town, starting at about 9:00. The floats begin to move at about 9:00, gathering at shrines for ritual prayer, then tour through the community.

Next day

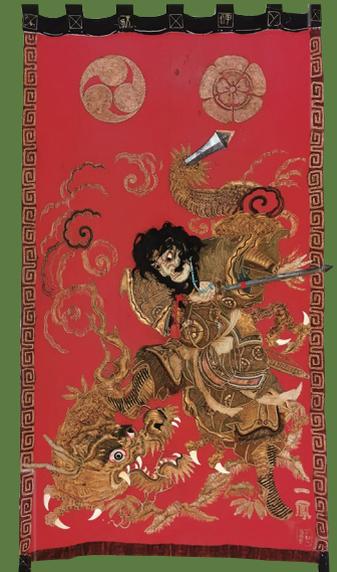
- ◆ *Yabu-iri*: The people involved in the festival celebrate another successful year, and store the items away for the future.

## Museum displays

### *Miokuri-maku* (float rear hangings)



◆ Karashishi Lion (Wakamiya-machi)



◆ Susanoo-no-Mikoto and the Great Snake (Kawahara-machi)

The *miokuri-maku* is the hanging on the back of the Gion Yamaboko float, and is usually based on a painting by a famous artist. The deep-red felt was originally imported and rare, but is still used today embroidered with gold thread, together with animal claws of ivory, and eyeballs of brilliant glass.

### Yamaboko floats on display in the museum



◆ Heisei Yamaboko



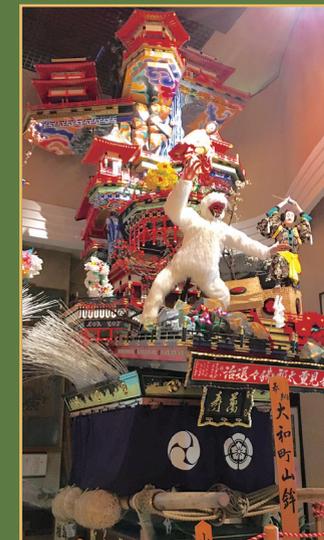
◆ Mikuma-machi Yamaboko



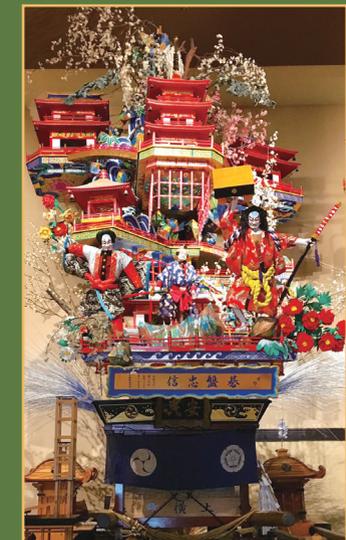
◆ Wakamiya-machi Yamaboko



◆ Kawahara-machi Yamaboko



◆ Yamato-machi Yamaboko



◆ Kazari (decorated) Yamaboko