

Summer Festivals in Iwaki 2015

Iwaki Fireworks Festival

Also referred to as the Onahama Fireworks, the 62nd Iwaki Fireworks Festival was held on the 1st of August with massive crowds along the shoreline between Aquamarine Fukushima and Iwaki La La Mew. With over 10,000 individual fireworks beautifully arranged with music, it was a great opening feature of the August Summer festivals



Tanabata Festival

Iwaki's Tanabata festival was held in the city centre of Taira for three days between the 6th and 8th of August. Tanabata is usually held in July, but in Iwaki and the rest of Tohoku, it is held on a later date based on the old lunar calendar. Many stalls offering traditional festival feasts such as *yakisoba* and *takoyaki*, as well as games such as goldfish scooping (*kingyo-sukui*) were lined up across the street. All sorts of colourful decorations were draped across the street and people wrote all sorts of wishes on *tanzaku* (colourful little strips of paper). The Iwaki Jangara and Iwaki Odori were also held alongside Tanabata which drew many crowds.



Iwaki Jangara Festival

The Iwaki Jangara Festival was held on the 6th of August and involved groups of dancers playing taiko drums and *kane* bells in carefully coordinated performances. The Jangara dancers performed in three different areas of Taira with individual performances lasting up to 20 minutes. This year they chanted sutras dedicated to the spirits of those who lost their lives in this year's Nepal Earthquake and those lost at the end of World War II 70 years ago. The Jangara Dance is also performed by dancers (photo on left) who visit the homes of families who've lost a relative in the previous year.

Iwaki Odori

The 34th Iwaki Odori is based on a folk dance which first started in the 1980s and was held in various stages across Iwaki. But of course the main event was held in Taira on the 8th of August, where thousands watched or danced along the main street in front of Iwaki station. Dozens of dance groups based on various associations including the Iwaki City Hall and the Iwaki International Association also participated



Natsui River Lantern Festival

This festival involves thousands of floating lanterns which are sent along the river as a way of guiding the ancestral spirits to the other world. With over 90 years of history, it was originally held as a memorial service for the spirits of children who drowned in accidents by the river or those who died in riverside construction projects. This year's festival was held on the 20th of August and marks the end of the Obon period in Iwaki.

