

'25 Hongu Matsuri 本宮祭

The Annual Spring Festival,
Kumano Hongu Taisha Grand Shrine

April 13 (Sun.) ~ 15 (Tue.), 2025

Hongu Matsuri is the biggest festival of Kumano Hongu Taisha. It is a festival depicting scenes when Kumano deities first descended. It is also a festival to pray for the rich harvest.

April 13 (Mon.)

<Yunobori-Shinji Ritual 湯登神事> (Procession from Yunomine Onsen to Oyunohara)



Yunobori-Shinji is the ritual to start Hongu Matsuri. In this ritual, fathers have to walk steep uphill and downhill holding their two or three-year-old sons on their shoulders. It is believed that **deities stay on the sons during the procession, so the sons cannot touch the ground.**

Schedule

13:00 Procession of fathers departs Yunomine Onsen holding their sons on the shoulders, and walks over the mountain towards Oyunohara. *"Dad, break your legs!"*

<Miyawatari-Shinji Ritual 宮渡神事> (Evening procession in Hongu Town)

17:00 A procession of priests and worshippers visits Kumano Hongu Taisha, Oyunohara, and Manai-sha by turns with singing songs and beating the drums in order to pray for the safety and peacefulness of the festival.

April 14 (Tue.)

<Ubuta-sha Annual Festival 産田社例祭> (at Ubuta-sha Shrine)

11:00 Ubuta-sha enshrines Izanami-no-Mikoto Goddess. It is a guardian deity of women, and offers them safe delivery, recovery from any ailments, and so on.

<13:00 Japanese flute playing is offered.>

April 15 (Wed.)

<Honden-sai Festival 本殿祭> (at Shojoden Pavilion)

9:00 Honden-sai is **the most sacred and important ritual** of Hongu Matsuri. It is to praise Kumano deities and pray for peace and security of the nation. Only the designated people can participate in it.

<Togyo-sai Festival 渡御祭> (Kumano Hongu Taisha ~ Oyunohara)



In Togyo-sai, Kumano deities make a homecoming to the original site Oyunohara. In this festival, they are temporarily transferred onto Mikoshi portable shrines and carried by participants on the street (Route 168). Participants sing songs and offer flowers. **This Mikoshi procession is said to be the most attractive scene among all the events and rituals in Hongu Matsuri.** The audience should stand-by on both sides of the street.

Schedule

13:00 • Many Mikoshi depart Kumano Hongu Taisha. They are carried to Oyunohara on the street with a stop at Manai-sha. Participants shake Mikoshi and shout, ***“Wasshoi wasshoi!”***.

<at Oyunohara>

- Rituals are offered, and various kinds of dances are performed.
- Temporary shops open.
- “Mochi” rice cakes are thrown and offered to the audience.
- The festival sites are decorated with “Chobana” artificial flowers. Chobana is offered to the audience at the end.

15:30 • Mikoshi are carried on Gokomichi approach back to Kumano Hongu Taisha.

<Kangyo-sai Festival 還御祭> (at Reimeiden Pavilion)

17:00 Kangyo-sai is held to complete the whole Hongu Matsuri.

※Sarumawashi 猿まわし (Monkey Performing)

- Monkeys walk with Yunobori Shinji procession in April 13.
- They perform at the foot of the Big Torii Gateway in front of Oyunohara in April 13 and 14.