



Colorful fireworks adorn the night sky while lanterns light up the surface of the sea

Miyazu Toro Nagashi Fireworks Festival Lights Up Miyazu Bay

The Miyazu Toro Nagashi Fireworks Festival is held annually on August 16 in Miyazu City, Kyoto Prefecture. On this night, following the enchanting sight of lanterns floating on Miyazu Bay, the event comes to a climax with a grand fireworks display. We spoke with a person in charge of organizing the event. (Text: TANAKA Nozomi)

Miyazu City, located in northern Kyoto Prefecture, is a coastal town facing Miyazu Bay on the Sea of Japan. Within Miyazu Bay lies Amanohashidate¹, ranked as one of the three most scenic views in Japan. The grand fire festival known as the Miyazu Toro Nagashi Fireworks Festival takes place in the bay on August 16 every year. MINATO Nanaka, a

staff member of The Miyazu Chamber of Commerce and Industry talked with us about the festival.

“Miyazu’s Toro Nagashi, or lantern-floating, dates back around 400 years. The event was originally held to see off ancestral spirits welcomed during Obon² by floating small offerings and candles out to sea. Exactly 100 years ago in 1924, fireworks were added to cel-



Photo: PIXTA

Amanohashidate faces the Sea of Japan on the Kyoto Prefecture side. It is characterized by beautiful pine forests and sandy beaches.

celebrate the opening of the railway, and the tradition has continued since then. In recent years, the event was canceled due to COVID-19 but resumed in 2023 after a four-year break, drawing approximately 75,000 attendees.”

Toro Nagashi is characterized by floating both boat-shaped lanterns called *seireisen*, adorned in various colors, and box-shaped lanterns decorated in red and white (see photo). Families experiencing their first Obon after a loved one’s passing prepare and decorate *seireisen* in a vibrant and elaborate manner. It is believed that by floating boats lit with fire, the souls of ancestors are sent to paradise. The box-shaped lanterns are also referred to as *okkake-toro* (chasing lanterns) because they are floated downstream as if following the lantern boats.

“By around 7pm, as the sky retains some daylight, we launch the *seireisen* boats followed by fire-lit lanterns into the sea. As the sun sets, around 10,000 red and white lanterns light up the entire Miyazu Bay. The *seireisen* boats, also lit on the water, gradually catch fire due to the motion of the waves and other factors, slowly burning away. Around this moment, the night sky bursts with approximately 3,000 varied fireworks launched both individually and in synchronized displays, reaching the climax of the fireworks festival,” explains MINATO.

“Local residents make the red and white lanterns by hand each year. The Miyazu Toro Nagashi Fireworks Festival is a cherished event which we strive to uphold and pass down as a precious tradition for our entire community.”

During the day, visitors explore Amanohashidate. At night, they witness the emotional spectacle of thousands of red and white lanterns being lit and floated in the ocean—a tribute and prayer for the souls of the departed that occurs but once a year in summer. The event comes to the climax with a magnificent fireworks display filling the night sky over Miyazu Bay. The day promises an unforgettable experience and visiting Miyazu is highly recommended. 🗨️

1. Amanohashidate is a sandspit approximately 20 to 170 meters wide and 3.6 kilometers long, adorned with approximately 6,700 pine trees. Its appearance resembles a bridge floating in the sky, which is the essence of its name ‘Amanohashidate’ in Japanese.
2. In Japanese folklore, Obon is a traditional event where it is believed that the spirits of deceased ancestors return to the mortal world periodically and are subsequently sent off again to their own world. This custom has taken root in various regions.



Photo: PIXTA

In 2023, 33 pairs of *seireisen* boats were floated, with each one set alight on the sea.



Photo: PIXTA

Both *seireisen* boats and red-and-white lanterns sway on the waves, gradually catching light and burning.



Photo: The Miyazu Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Lanterns light up the sea surface as fireworks explode in the night sky.