



## 『 The Summer Tradition of Obon 』

夏の伝統行事「お盆」について



In Japan, we have a cultural tradition called “Obon”. Today I’d like to introduce this summer event, the origins of which are said to date back to the Asuka period.

- What is Obon?

Obon is an annual event, during which one’s ancestors are honoured and welcomed. A fusion of ancient Japanese beliefs about ancestral spirits and Buddhism, it is thought that during Obon, the spirits of our ancestors return to our world for a short time to visit their relatives.

- Obon period

Generally, Obon takes place between 13 and 16 August, but this can differ according to region.

- Obon customs

The customs associated with Obon vary depending on the area or Buddhist sect, but in most cases, the following traditions are carried out:

- ✧ Mukaebi (welcoming fire): On the evening of 13 August, a fire is lit in front of the home, so the ancestral spirits do not lose their way. Lanterns may also be used.
- ✧ Shōryō-dana/Bon-dana: An ornamental shelf for one’s ancestors is set up inside the house, with fruit and flowers laid out as offerings.
- ✧ Visiting graves: During Obon, we pay a visit to our ancestors’ graves, wash them, and leave offerings.
- ✧ Okuribi (sending fire): On the evening of 16 August, a bonfire is lit in the garden or by the gate, and lanterns are floated down a river or out to sea, to see the spirits off.



During the Obon period, there are also various events and festivals held in each region of Japan. Some are well-known, such as Gozanno okuribi in Kyoto, Awa-odori in Tokushima, or the lantern floating ceremony in Hiroshima’s Peace Memorial Park. In Miyazaki, we also have our own traditions to celebrate Obon.

- ✧ Nagare Kanjō: A lantern floating ceremony held every 18 August along the banks of the Ose River in Nobeoka. Open to the public.
- ✧ Mimitsu shōryō-nagashi (spirit boat procession): On 16 August, lanterns are sent from a fishing boat in Mimitsu Port out to the Hyuga Sea. Open to

the public.

This summer, I hope you'll take the chance to experience a unique and enjoyable Japanese tradition in Obon!

※ The original Japanese version of this article will be uploaded onto the website of the Miyazaki International Foundation soon.

If you have any questions, opinions, or requests about this piece, please contact the Miyazaki International Foundation.

TEL : 0985-32-8457      FAX : 0985-32-8512

Email : [miyainfo@mif.or.jp](mailto:miyainfo@mif.or.jp)

If you have any questions or queries regarding everyday life, please consult the Miyazaki Support Center for Foreign Residents.

TEL : 0985-41-5901      FAX : 0985-41-5902

Email : [support@mif.or.jp](mailto:support@mif.or.jp)