

■FESTIVALS

DOGO=ONSEN NENMATSU OSOJI (Year-end cleaning) 9:00

The Dogo bath buildings are cleaned at the end of the year so that everything will be clean for the New Year. Big bamboo brooms for cleaning are about 6 meters long and 2 meters wide. The bath houses are closed on the days of cleaning. (Tel. 089-921-5141)

Honkan (Main House), Ashiyu (foot bath) Dec. 1

Bekkan (Annex Houses) Asuka-no-yu and Tsubaki-no-yu Dec. 2

Dec. 6 HARI-KUYO (Memorial Service for Needles)

Hari-kuyo started in the 18th century in the Edo era with the intention of allowing women to take a rest in those days of danson-johi (predominance of men over women). Broken or old needles were placed at a small altar and people gave thanks to the needles' faithful service. Women did not do needlework on that day. This traditional event has been handed down as an annual event of schools for tailors, dress and kimono makers. In Matsuyama it is observed at Matsuyama Business College in 1-bancho 1chome 4, where students of fashion-beauty course stick about 1,300 needles used in dress-making classes into large konnyaku (devil's tongue) cakes at an altar, giving thanks to them and praying for better sewing skills. And the priest of Shoju-ji chants a sutra. Then the needles are put in Harizuka (a burial mound for needles) at the temple.

Dec. 14 GISHI MATSURI (Faithful Retainer Festival)

A memorial service will be held from 12:00 at Kosho-ji temple (Tel. 089-941-4471), in Suehiro-machi, about 100m south of Shieki. After taking revenge for their master's death, the famous 47 ronin, masterless warriors of Ako fief, were caught, divided and sent to four fiefs. One group was sent to Matsuyama fief. In those days it was forbidden to take revenge for their master's death so their only honorable alternative was to commit ritual suicide (seppuku). One samurai of Matsuyama fief helped two of the ronin, Otaka Gengo and Kimura Okaemon, to kill themselves (kaishaku) in 1703. He brought back hair cut from the topknots of those men and a monument with their hair buried in, was built at Kosho-ji. A ceremony for their departed souls is held every year.

Gishi parade 10:00 Kamishibai (picture-story show) 11:00

Uchiiri-soba (revenge buckwheat noodles) 11:00 250 yen

Memorial service 12:00

Otaka Gengo was known as a haiku poet and his dying poem was as follows,

ume de nomu drinking sake under ume blossoms

chaya mo arubeshi there should be a tea house

shide no yama in the other world

Dec. 15 HO-ONKO (The memorial service for St. Shinran)

At Enko-ji temple on Gintengai Street near Matsuyama City Station

Furofuki-daikon No Osettai (Service of Daikon simmered in

kelp broth with yuzu (citrus)-flavored soybean paste sauce) 10:00 Fare: Free

St. Shinran (1173-1262) was a Buddhist monk of the Kamakura era (1185-1333), who founded the True Pure Land Sect (Jodo-shinshu). It is said that furofuki-daikon was introduced to Shikoku by Ogyu Sorai (1667-1728), who was a famous Confucian scholar in the Edo era (1603-1867) and it is still our favorite food. Enko-ji was built about 350 years ago. When

Matsuyama City was established in 1889, the city office was placed at the temple for about two years until the new office was built. In the precinct stands a stone monument on which “the Birthplace of Matsuyama City” is written. Now there are benches and swings for children, giving people a place to rest. Why don't you give thanks to Buddha and taste furofuki-daikon?

Mid to late Dec. SHIWASU (The year-end rush)

Shiwasu was the name used for December in old days when Japan followed the lunar calendar. It is still being used today to mean the last month of the year, when everybody is very busy trying to tidy up loose ends. The shi in shiwasu means a teacher or master in learning or the arts, or a religious leader such as a priest. Wasu means to run. In other words, shiwasu is the time when even the teacher, who is ordinarily calm and dignified has to run around trying to get everything done.

Dec. 22 TOJI (Winter Solstice)

It is said that you won't get a cold or paralysis if you eat pumpkin or azuki-gayu, porridge with azuki beans, on toji, the shortest day of the year. Some people take a bath with yuzu peel (citron).

Dec. 31 OMISOKA (New Year's Eve)

On this day people finish doing the yearly house cleaning and prepare osechi-ryori, the New Year's food. Late at night people eat toshikoshi-soba, buckwheat noodles, and go to a local temple to ring out the evils of the past year and pray for health and happiness in the coming year.

Dec. 31 JOYA-NO-KANE (The watch-night bell)

Joya-no-kane are temple bells which are rung before midnight on New Year's Eve. The bells are struck 108 times to relieve the human suffering caused by men's earthly desires, which amount, according to Buddhist belief, to 108. In Matsuyama, one of the most popular places to go at midnight is Ishite-ji. There you ring the bell, rub smoke from the large incense burner over your body to insure good health and are given a pair of chopsticks and small mochi, rice cake.

Closed on the last few days of the year

Government offices: Dec. 29 to Jan. 3

Shimin service centers ----- Iyotetsu Takashimaya: Dec. 29 to Jan. 3

Fuji Grand Matsuyama: Dec. 29 to Jan. 3

Banks: Dec. 31 to Jan. 3 / Post offices: Dec. 31 to Jan. 3

City libraries ----- Chuo, Mitsuhamama, Hojo, Nakajima: Dec. 28 to Jan. 4

City passport center: Dec. 29 to Jan. 3 (Fuji Gran Matsuyama Annex 2F)