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# Jidai Matsuri

Author



Maria Kosaka

Designers



Kanon Tanaka



Maria Kosaka



Under splendid autumn weather, in October when the leaves start to turn red, Jidai Matsuri, the Festival of Ages, is held in Kyoto. This festival started when the Heian-Jingu shrine was built in 1895, during the Meiji Period. These days were the dawn of a new era of modernization, civilization, and enlightenment. However, the people were still quite inactive because of the many struggles that had occurred throughout the transition and restoration. To revitalize the city, a festival was launched, which could only be held by Kyoto residents; that was the start of Jidai Matsuri. Kyoto has the longest history in Japan. During the festival, you can see all of the ages passing through in an hour and a half.

The highlight of the festival is the parade on October 22nd. Going back in time, from the Meiji Period to Heian, people dressed in costumes of each period walk in a parade from the Kyoto Imperial Palace to the Heian-Jingu shrine. Some of them perform or wave a hand to the spectators, which makes them smile. Additionally, you can also hear announcements that serve as commentaries on those eras. Learning about people's lives, their achievements, and fashion, we feel much closer to them. Such dresses and performances are supported by thorough background research and elaborate craftsmanship. Involving all of Kyoto city, the "vivid history" of this festival is conserved.

The front of the parade represents the Meiji Period; the men are in modern, western-style suits. Then comes the march of the leading spirits of the restoration, along with the courageous sound of the Japanese flutes and drums. Regarding the Edo Period, Shogun Tokugawa appears, accompanied by his valets, and gives a spectacular exhibition that incites loud applause and shouting. Representing the Azuchi-Momoyama Period, renowned warriors, such as Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi, come out, followed by Shogun Ashikaga from the Muromachi Period, Yabusame (Japanese traditional archery on horseback) from the Kamakura Period, and the Fujiwara family as we move to the Heian Period or Middle Ages. There, you will see the Heian Ladies' procession, starting with Tomoe Gozen, the heroine of the Japanese classical war chronicle "The Heike Story (Heike Monogatari)," who looks very dignified and beautiful in her armor. Following her, Sei-Shonagon and Murasaki-Shikibu appear together, the authors of famous Japanese classic literature: "The Pillow Book (Makura-no-soshi)" and "The Tale of Genji (Genji-Monogatari)." They look very elegant in the traditional, noble costumes. In the Enryaku (Early Heian) Period, people are seen wearing various colors, which represent their social positions. At the end of the parade, the main figure of the festival appears; Shinko-Retsu, the procession of the shrine god. Dancers, such as Kalavinka (an imaginary beautiful creature in Buddhism) and Butterfly come first, and then the portable Shinto shrine emerges. The long story of history in Kyoto ends with the tender sounds of Gagaku, Japanese court music, pleasantly spreading all around.

Looking at the entire passage of the thousand years of history passing through in an hour and a half makes one feel as if they were traveling in time. This festival performs a mission to pass down the long history of Kyoto to the new generation. Now, you know why you should come to see the festival and discover new things here!