

# Travel DreamScapes

"Little by little, one travels far-" J.R.R. Tolkien



## Japan: Nagano (Suwa Onbashira Festival)

Japan is known for its festivals and some such as the Enshu Arai Tezutsu Hanabi (Arai Handheld Cannon Fireworks Festival) is a true demonstration of masculinity. However, in my opinion, one of the most dangerous demonstrations of masculinity is a 1,200 year old matsuri celebrated in the Suwa Region of Nagano Prefecture.

The Onbashira (御柱) is a festival held every six years in Lake Suwa, which draws over 500,000 spectators. The matsuri lasts several months (April 1 to June 15) and consists of two segments: Yamadashi and Satobiki. The literal translation of "Onbashira" is "the honored pillars" and entails men riding massive logs measuring 55 feet in length and weighing 20,000 pounds, as they are slid down perilous slopes toward Suwa Taisha.

Following a Shinto purification ceremony, carefully selected logs are chopped down using axes that are specially manufactured for this occasion. During Yamadashi, teams of men drag the logs down the mountain towards Suwa Taisha, which is one of the oldest shrines in existence. The event during which the men prove their bravery by riding the logs down the treacherous, rough terrain is known as Kiotoshi.

The second part of the festival known as Satobiki involves parading the logs (16 logs to be exact), through the narrow streets and symbolically placing them into the corner posts of the foundations of the four shrine buildings at Suwa Taisha. The idea is that by replacing the pillars every six years, the area around the shrine is renewed spiritually. For those of you who were around at the time, you may recall that this ritual was performed as part of the opening ceremonies of the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympics.

The journey from the mountain side to the shrine is approximately 6 miles and requires 3 days to complete.

The Onabashira has been held without fail for 1,200 years. The latest festival since the compilation of this book took place in 2016 with the next one slated for 2022. If you would like to watch this amazing event in person, do note that participation in Onbashira is not open to outsiders!



<https://traveldreamscapes.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/20080513003258.jpg>



<https://traveldreamscapes.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/0.jpg>



<https://traveldreamscapes.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/1682ced8a8238935751493ac79f2d929-618x411.jpg>



([https://traveldreamscapes.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/0000000573\\_0000012688.jpg](https://traveldreamscapes.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/0000000573_0000012688.jpg))



(<https://traveldreamscapes.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/10050526.jpg>)



[https://traveldreamscapes.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/img\\_02.jpg](https://traveldreamscapes.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/img_02.jpg)





<https://traveldreamscapes.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/7a9f82ff.jpg>



(<https://traveldreamscapes.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/6a00cd96fe8e7d4cd50137a57f0bf8860d.jpg>)





[https://traveldreamscapes.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/500\\_10469139.jpg](https://traveldreamscapes.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/500_10469139.jpg)



[https://traveldreamscapes.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/500\\_31322407.jpg](https://traveldreamscapes.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/500_31322407.jpg)



[https://traveldreamscapes.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/2010\\_04\\_16\\_001.jpg](https://traveldreamscapes.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/2010_04_16_001.jpg)



[https://traveldreamscapes.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/2010\\_06\\_06\\_301.jpg](https://traveldreamscapes.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/2010_06_06_301.jpg)



<https://traveldreamscapes.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/1005055.jpg>



[https://traveldreamscapes.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/b0141970\\_16585133.jpg](https://traveldreamscapes.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/b0141970_16585133.jpg)



<https://traveldreamscapes.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/cimg4514.jpg>



<https://traveldreamscapes.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/10050536.jpg>