

Japanese Traditional Culture

In Japan, there are five seasonal festivals throughout the year, referred to in Japanese as the *go sekku*. On March 3rd, for example, there is the *Hina matsuri* – the doll festival held to celebrate girls, also known as *momo no sekku* (often translated simply to “Girls’ festival”), and Children’s Day on May 5th is held to celebrate boys, and is referred to as *tango no sekku* (often translated to “Boys’ festival”). The Boys’ Festival on May 5th is an important festival for families with boys, and celebrates the safe and healthy growth of all children. That’s why, in this month’s *Living In Miyazaki*, we’d like to explain a little bit about the Children’s Day festival and the associated Japanese traditional culture.

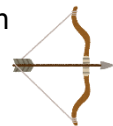


Goqatsu Ningyō (Boys’ Festival Dolls), Samurai Armor



During the Edo Period (1600-1868), an important festival was carried out on May 5th in which, if a boy had been born to the Shogun, their armor and helmets would be decorated extravagantly. Nowadays, to symbolize the parents’ desire for their children to grow up into strong, reliable and keen-minded adults, their houses are decorated with armor, helmets and samurai dolls. The armor and helmet are the most important part, but the dolls also often have a sword on their right side, and a bow and arrows on their left.

The armor, helmet, sword and bow represent the spirit and mindset of the samurai lifestyle (often called bushido, literally “the way of the warrior”), that has been passed down for centuries. If you’re interested in armor, at the International Festival hosted by the Miyazaki International Foundation, visitors from all over the world were able to enjoy trying on a hand-made suit of armor and helmet made by a local volunteer. There is also a swordsmith in Hyuga who is working hard to try and promote Japanese swords all over the world. Plus, most of the longbows made in Japan are actually produced in Miyakonojo. We hope that you are all able to experience Japan’s traditional culture through these seasonal festivals while you are here. We want to work hard to protect our culture and traditions, too!



If you have any questions, comments or suggestions regarding this column, please contact the Miyazaki International Foundation (MIF):

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Also, if you ever have any questions or concerns about daily life in Miyazaki, please feel free to get in touch with the Miyazaki Support Center for Foreign Residents:

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