



JAPAN INFORMATION  
AND CULTURE CENTER  
在米国日本大使館広報文化センター

# TEACHING TUESDAY

## DAIMYO GYOURETSU

November 3rd marks Culture Day in Japan. A national holiday, a variety of cultural activities and festivals are held on this day. One such festival is the Daimyo Gyoretsu 大名行列 in Hakone, or the Feudal Festival.

The Daimyo Gyoretsu is a procession that re-enacts the Sankin Kotai of the daimyo from around Japan. During the Edo period, the Sankin Kotai was a system which forced feudal lords to alternate between spending time in their own domains and serving in the capital. When they travelled to Tokyo on the Old Tokaido road, they often held processions like these. The towns prepare the costumes throughout the year, making sure to stay as close as possible to the historical reality. In Hakone, when the day finally comes, a procession 170 people strong, composed of the daimyo (feudal lord) himself, his liegemen, maidservants and other retainers march for about 6 km along the Old Tokaido and through the town.

Nowadays, the feudal procession is also joined by marching bands and other performers and historical re-enactors. There are also floats holding dioramas based on Japanese history and mythology. The tail end of the parade consists of a series of trucks decorated with lanterns that carry dancers, kids, and floats with papier-mâché statues. These participants usually wear shorts and brightly colored happi coats. Other cities, such as Yuzaka and Sanjo, hold similar Daimyo Gyoretsu festivals.