



The recess in the sacred cave at Kasovama Shrine



From a long time ago, Japanese people have thought that the gods inhabit everything in creation.

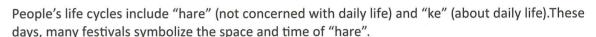
It is said that there are many gods and they are found everywhere including in heavenly bodies such as the sun and the moon, in weather conditions such as wind and thunder, in land and topographical features such as rice fields, other fields, rivers, boulders, and in the kitchens, old ovens, and bathrooms of houses.

The great shapes of mountains and volcanoes can produce feelings of belief, awe and veneration.

It is believed that when spring comes to villages at the foot of a mountain, the gods descend into the villages and become "rice field gods". When the fall harvest is finished, it is believed that the gods go back up into the mountains.

The real meaning of festivals is to worship the gods. Such annual events and rites of passage are related to and deeply connected to Japanese people's daily life cycle.

Sasagami-sama (bamboo grass diety)



However, you can easily see how Japanese people have always treasured these festivals in their hearts.

The Nikko mountain chain rises in the northern part of the Kanto plain.

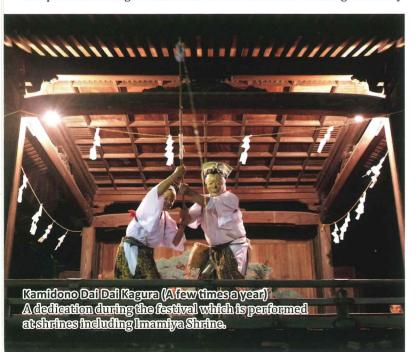
One mountain in the chain, Nantai San, was a place of worship during the Nara Period (710—794) and also the site of ascetic training.

Kanuma people also began to revere worshipping the gods in the mountains of the Nikko chain.



A Shinto rite in Imamiya Shrine

Rice ceremony at Hakkoji (every January 3rd)
The person in charge of the festival holds an ascetic training ceremony



### IN KANUMA, THERE ARE NUMEROUS FESTIVALS

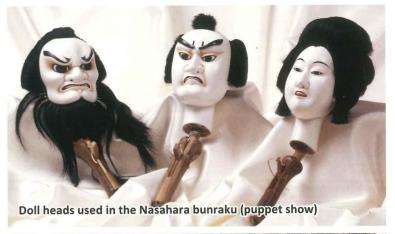


Kanuma is located between Tokyo and Nikko. It's a short 100km from Tokyo.

There are still many festivals here in Kanuma where you can catch a glimpse of Japanese people's hearts and daily lives.

This festival is a cultural asset which depicts our very old lifestyle and has been designated a leading festival among many national festivals.

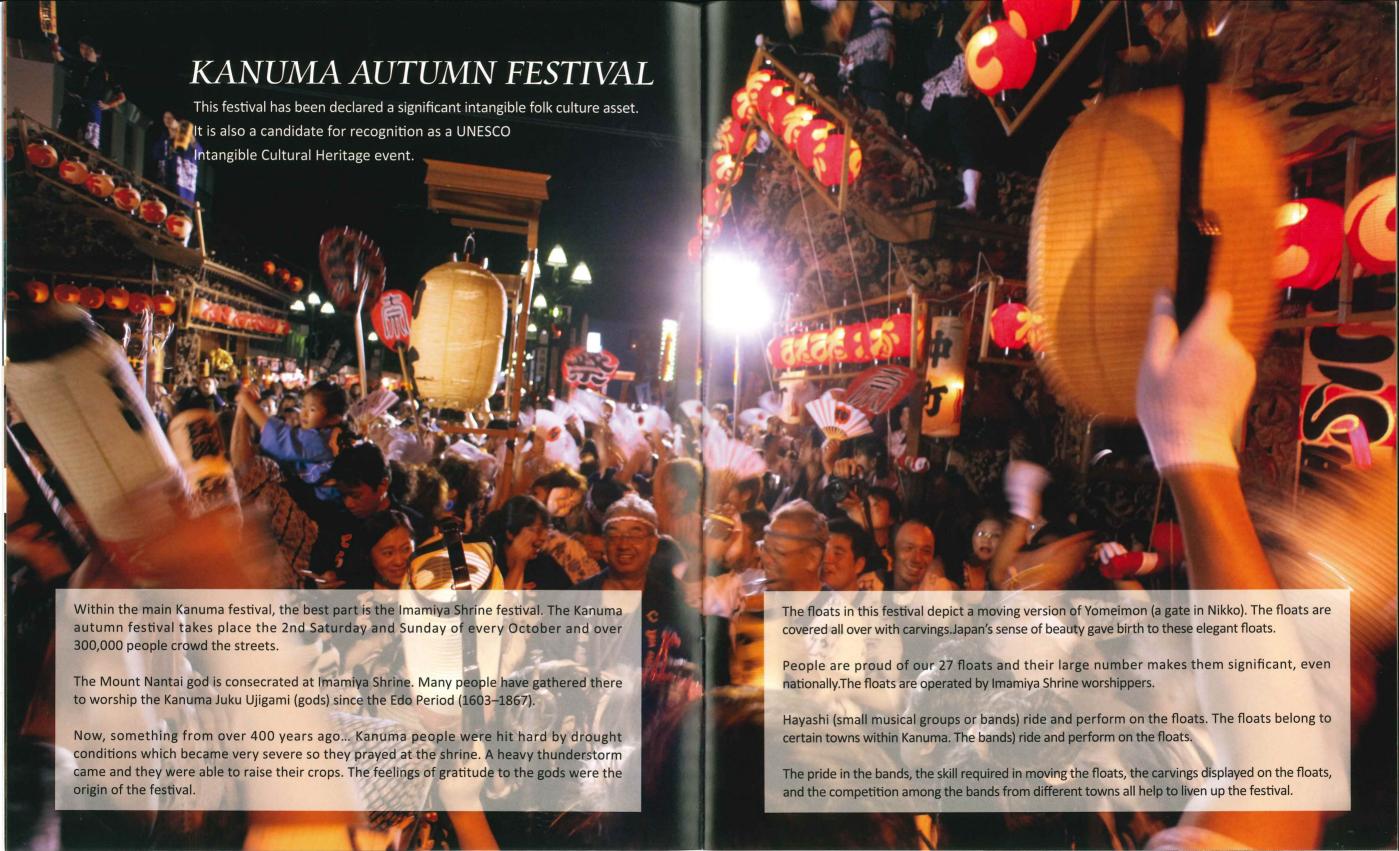
Please visit Kanuma to see our festival and discover the Japanese heart.

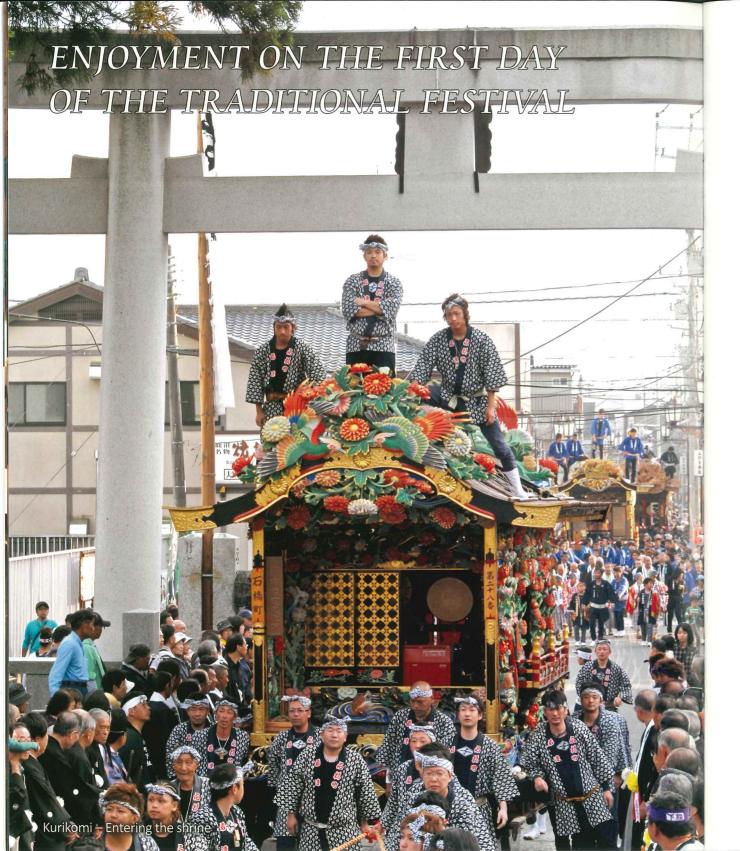




Nasahara bunraku (a few times every year)
Three people operate one doll and conduct the show.







The first day of the festival is a chance to get your fill of traditional things. The main event is held at Imamiya Shrine.

The highlight of the first day of the festival is the pulling of the carved floats into and out of the shrine. The worshippers express their gratitude and reverence to the Imamiya gods for the safe previous year.

When the carved floats are pulled onto the shrine grounds, they pass under the tori (sacred arch) and the bands play as an offering. A maximum of 27 carved floats pass along the road leading to the shrine and solemnly enter the grounds one at a time.

When the assembled floats are pulled out of the shrine grounds, they pass back under the tori (sacred arch) and back along the shrine road. The light from the lanterns and the traditional ways tempt everyone into a world of fantasy.

The floats follow various traditional customs. Over the years, many things have been handed down by our ancestors and have become integral parts of the Kanuma Autumn Festival.

The festival is composed of many traditions so take the time to enjoy them. Japanese people and,in particular, Kanuma people feel it is important to treasure and appreciate traditional ways.

Please enjoy the traditional things on the first day of the festival.



Carved floats waiting their turn to exit the shrine grounds



Kuridashi - Leaving the shrine



A customary ceremony before the floats leave the shrine



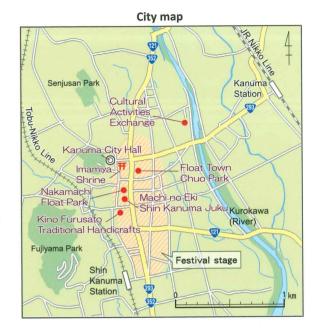
On the second day of the festival, everyone's excitement is running high. The center of the city becomes the stage for the festival.

The festival participants are free from the first day's nervousness and can enjoy the festival. They feel a lot of pride as the carved floats are introduced in the parade.

The festival is overflowing with people, marching bands, dances, etc.

The greatest highlight on both days is the call for the bands to battle each other. The bands on the floats have a chance to put on a show and all at once the festival is teeming with even more excitement.

Meanwhile, historical picture scrolls are also being rolled. The Imamiya Shrine gods promise to keep the various towns in Kanuma safe as the procession winds its way around. This event is called gojyunko (making the rounds).

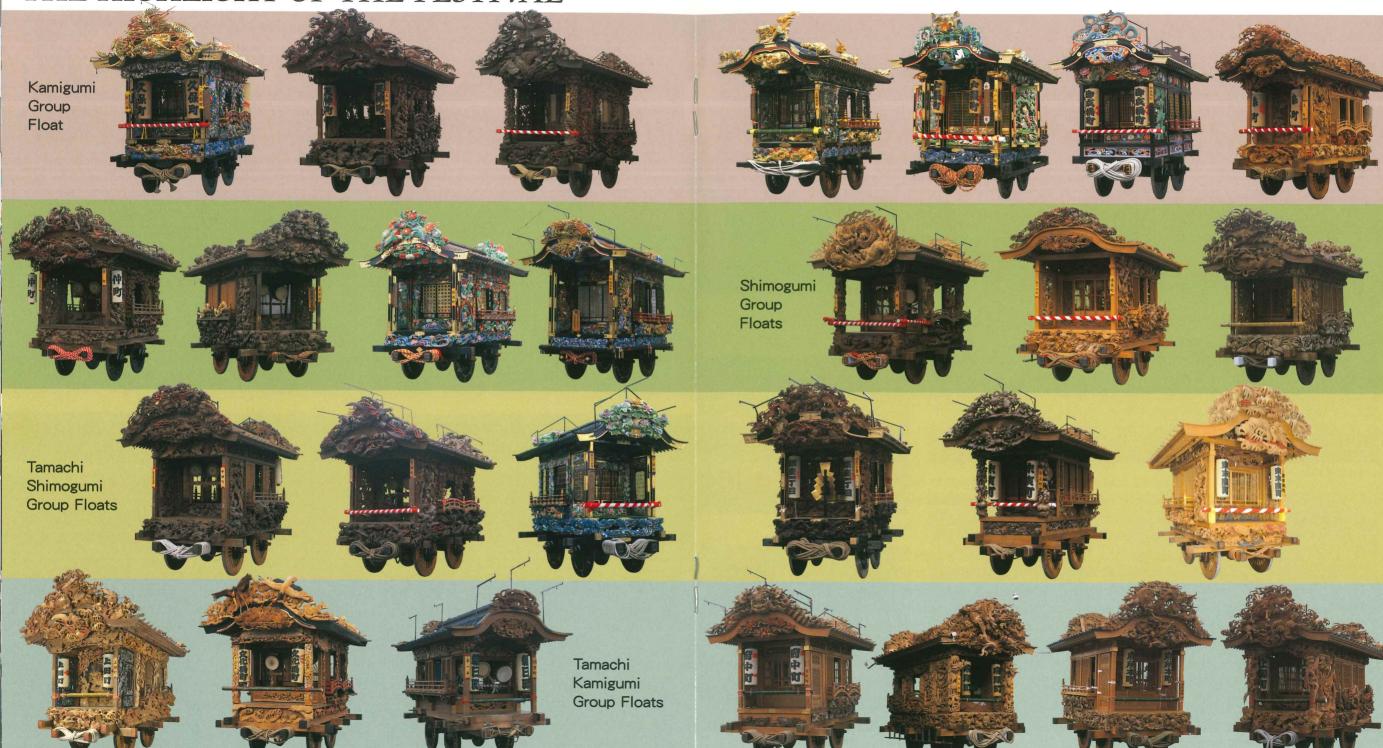


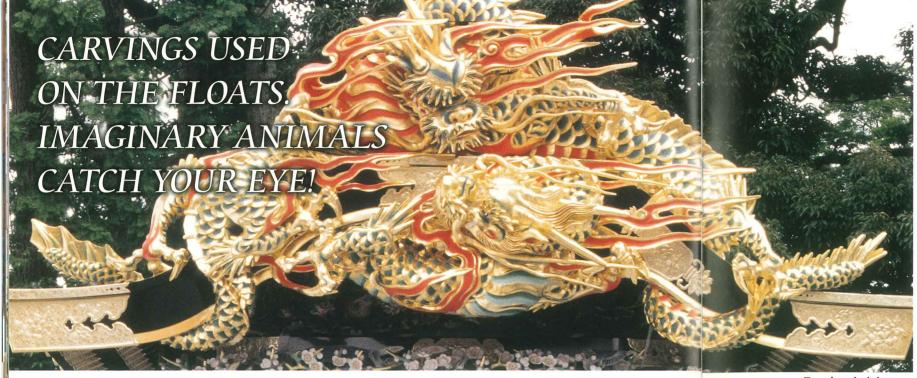




## THE 27 CARVED FLOATS TOGETHER ARE THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE FESTIVAL

Of all the festivals in the country, what's rare here is the number of floats that come together to participate. Fourteen of the 27 carved floats in Kanuma were made in the Edo Period using two kinds of paint and unvarnished wood.





Two-headed dragons

It's wonderful and unprecedented nationwide that we have floats with so many carvings. Kanuma's carved floats are also called "moving Yomeimon" (They resemble the Yomei gate in Nikko).

The Edo Shogunate's prestige and the influence of Edo culture are evident in the construction of Nikko Toshogu. The traditional skills handed down to local craftsmen built the structures. The Toshogu carvings are the result of the energy and effort put into them by master carpenters.

The front and rear of the roofs include oniita and kegyo which are the most spectacular parts of all the carvings. They form a motif of, among other things, marvelous dragons, lions and Chinese phoenixes. Paulownia trees are arranged in the background behind the phoenixes while the imaginary animals render the background even more astonishing. The whole composition has a very old meaning and a sense of beauty.

On the other hand, a large number of real animals, birds and plants can also be seen in the floats' carvings. The sense of beauty that Japanese people had in the Edo Period can be felt everywhere.



Magpies in cherry trees



Squirrels in grapes



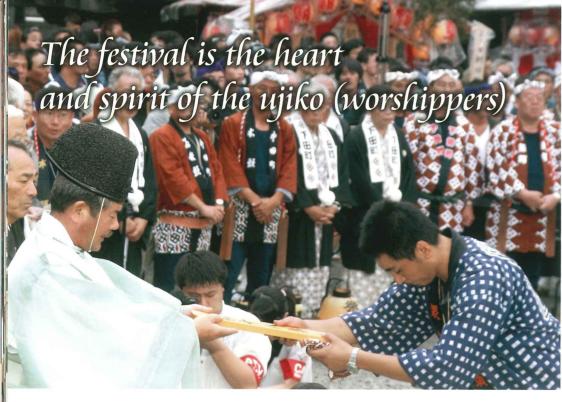
Chinese phoenixes in paulownia trees



Lions in peonies



Golden pheasants in chrysanthemums



Imamiya Shrine worshippers and the bands support the festival. Worshippers from the 34 towns within the city show the gods their gratitude and enjoy themselves on "hare" days ("not concerned with daily life") once a year. People from the city's outlying areas perform in the bands. The music from the bands unifies and lifts the

The peak of the festival is reached when the hearts of all the participants in the festival have become one.

hearts of the worshippers who are pulling the floats.







The music performed by the bands has been handed down from the Edo Period. The bands are based on the old godan bayashi (bands). The origin of the festival bands in the outlying Kanto areas is said to be the Edo kasai bayashi (kasai bands).

by "kotoba fu" and oral tradition. The float bands are made up of one flute, one oodo, two shimedaiko (type of drum), and one surigane for a total of 5 musicians. The sound of the bands raises the mood of the festival higher and higher.





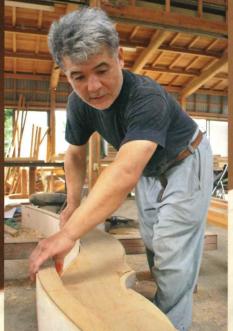
### **COPPER CRAFTSMAN**

Using a chisel, he carves out a pattern in the copper plating little by little. The craftsman then presses and burns gold leaf onto the float fittings three times.

### PAINTER

Minerals are crushed up and used as pigments for painting the float carvings. Gold leaf provides the gold color. Japanese traditional skills are alive.





## SUPPORTING THE FESTIVAL...

It's not only the worshippers and bands which lend support to this Edo Period festival. Excellent float skills handed down by our ancestors also contribute to the festival.

Since the carved floats were made during the Edo Period, they have been repaired over and over again resulting in the way they appear today.

## SKILLS AND CRAFTSMEN

Those highly skilled repairs account for Kanuma's pride in its craftsmen.

Carpenters and wheelwrights built the float chassis while carvers produced carvings to decorate the body. After the carvings were done, the painter painted the carvings and the decorator did the fittings. Throughout the whole country, there are few craftsmen who can make or repair floats.



### CARVER

Wood from horse chestnut, ginkgo, willow and other trees is used for the carvings. With the complete design existing only in his mind, the carver wields his chisel.

### WHEELWRIGHT

The center part or hub of the wheel is made from zelkova wood but oak is sometimes used.

Nails are not used to make the wheels even though they have to support a 2 to 3 ton body.

### CARPENTER

Mostly cypress is used in the body. In contrast to an immoveable building, the float structure is designed to accommodate shaking.



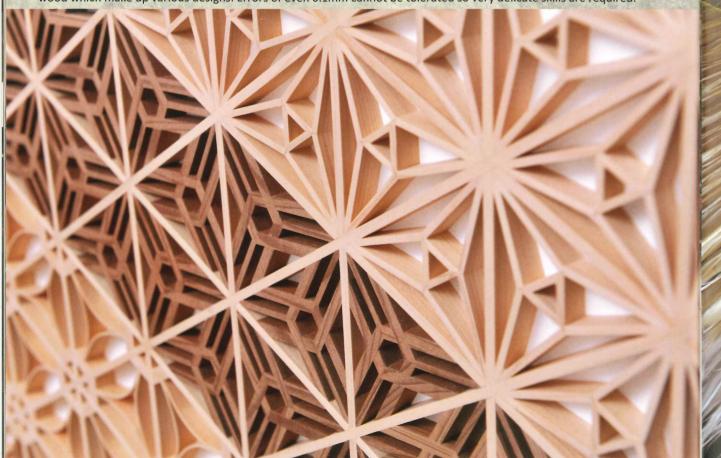
## KANUMA'S TRADITIONS HAVE BEEN PASSED DOWN FOR GENERATIONS

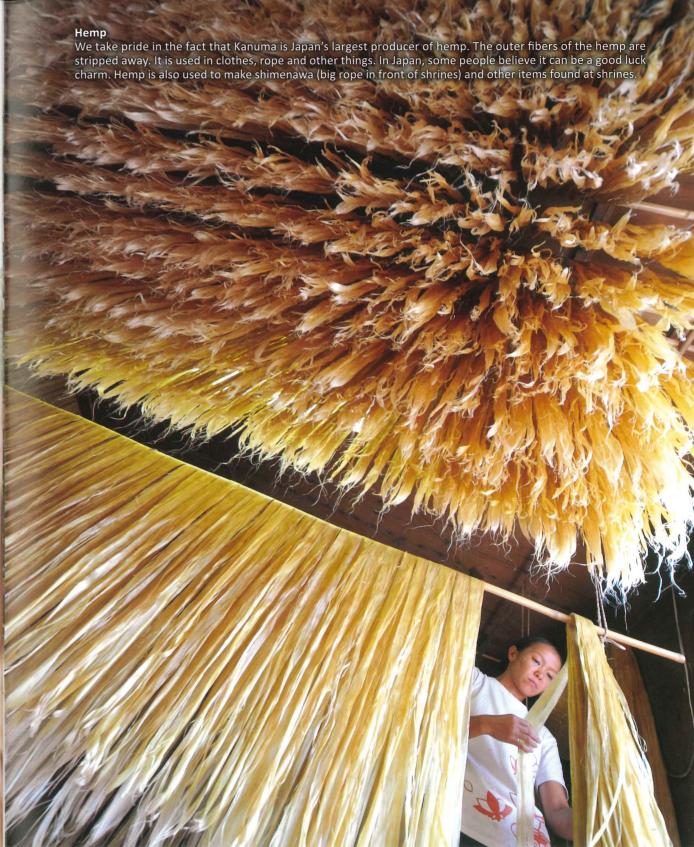
The carved floats were made in the Edo Period at a time when the production of wood and hemp flourished in villages around Kanuma. Specially made wood and hemp products were collected in Kanuma and sent by river to Edo which was an area of high consumption.

Many craftsmen and merchants who dealt in wood and hemp lived in Kanuma. Even now, the industries which took over that tradition are thriving. Even today, craftsmen who work with carved floats still live in Kanuma just as their skilled predecessors did.

### Kanuma Kumiko (designs made with strips of wood)

Japan takes pride in its chic artistic woodworking which involves traditional skills. The designs incorporate the interior decorations found in a traditional Japanese room. No nails are used in assembling the 1-5mm strips of wood which make up various designs. Errors of even 0.1mm cannot be tolerated so very delicate skills are required.





# 90 MINUTES FROM TOKYO BY TRAIN. MOUNTAINS, RIVERS AND THE COUNTRYSIDE HAVE BEEN NURTURED IN JAPANESE CULTURE. IN KANUMA, THEY UNFOLD BEFORE OUR EYES.

North from Tokyo, it's only about 100km (90 minutes) by train. Leave Tokyo and stretch your legs a little. You can enjoy lots of traditional scenery around Kanuma and Nikko is only 20 minutes away.

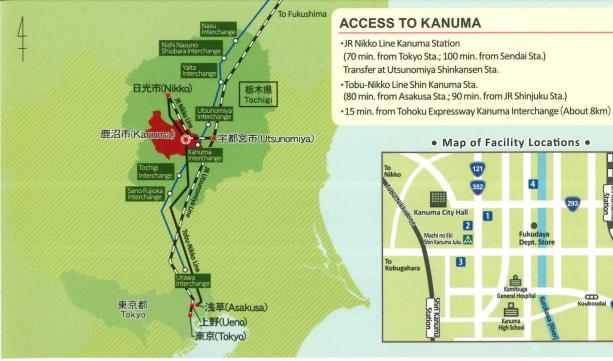
Many festivals reflecting the Japanese heart and traditional scenery still survive in Kanuma.

Downtown Kanuma is at an altitude of about 150m but the west part of the city rises to 1,300m and it's there you can enjoy mountains, expansive highlands and beautiful nature to your heart's content.

Our abundant nature and Kanuma Brand local products produced by Kanuma people are all attractive features.













The carved floats can still be seen even when it's not festival season.

There are 4 facilities which you can visit.

They are located within a 15 minute walk from JR Kanuma Station or Tobu Shin Kanuma Station.

While walking around the city, you can enjoy 7 different floats.

- 1 Float Town Central Park (Closed Mondays; Adults ¥200)
  Three carved floats and festival details on display.
  Gift shop with local products.
- 2 Naka machi float building (Closed Tuesdays; Admission free)
  One float on display. There's a fascinating old style storage building.
- 3 Kino Furusato traditional handicrafts building (Closed Tuesdays; Admission free)
  One float on display. Made from kumiko (thin strips of wood) and other types of wood. Traditional Kanuma handicrafts on display.
- 4 Cultural Activities Exchange (Closed Mondays; Admission free)

Two floats on display.

City history and a traditional crop (hemp) are also featured.

