

# Aomori Port Office Mail Magazine — Vol. 1

~Summer~

■ “Aomori Nebuta Festival,” – one of Japan’s premier fire festivals – once again takes centre stage in Aomori, the northern most prefecture of mainland Japan

With calls of “Rassera! Rassera!” echoing throughout the city of Aomori, the Nebuta festival took place once again this year from the 2nd to the 7th of August.

Although Aomori City is located in the Tohoku area, neither the city nor the port suffered any damage from the 2011 Tohoku Earthquake. However, in addition to the usual vibrancy of the festival, there was a particularly strong sense of emotion this year, as you could feel that the participants’ hearts were with those in the disaster-stricken areas.

Nebuta is a summer festival in which large illuminated floats called “Toro” are created in the shape of popular, traditional figures before they are paraded through the city at night to the beat of drums and other musical accompaniment. The illuminated floats are so big that they reach a size of 30 feet in width, 23 feet in depth and 16 feet in height, and can weigh up to 4 tons. Many of the figures depicted in the floats are samurai and characters from Japanese Kabuki. Painted in bright colors, they are nothing short of breath-taking.

Every year twenty-two large floats participate in the festival. This year, with their formidable appearance, they once again impressed the large number of spectators gathered along the procession course in downtown Aomori.



### ■ The energetic “Haneto” dance fires up the “Ganbarou Tohoku” mood

An integral part of this festival is the dancers called “Haneto” who accompany the parading floats. Haneto dancers are dressed in a Yukata fastened with a sash, and each one of them jumps around by taking large steps, whilst calling out the traditional cry of “Rassera.”

When thousands of Haneto dancers - with bells attached all over their costumes - jumped in unison, the jingling became a roar and the festive mood soared. This year, phrases wishing for the revival of the disaster-stricken areas, such as "Ganbarou Tohoku" (which literally translates as “Keep moving forward, Touhoku”) were often heard in the Haneto dance and seen on the floats. The festival was held in markedly high spirits, with many spectators being so impressed that they hoped to come and see it again next year.



■ One of top points of Aomori:“gourmet”sushi made with fresh, high quality and locally-sourced ingredients

In Aomori, July and August are the high seasons for summer sightseeing. You can go to many great spots such as scenic landscapes and hot springs by bus from the Port of Aomori. Along with this, one of the best parts of travelling anywhere is having the opportunity to try out the local cuisine. Surrounded on three sides by the Pacific, the Japan Sea, and Mutsu Bay, Aomori prefecture has come to be renowned for its fresh seafood. Many sushi restaurants in Aomori serve superb sushi made with fresh and locally-sourced fish and shellfish, such as the famous Oma tuna, scallop, abalone, Sakhalin surf clam, flounder, and squid. If you visit Aomori, trying out the gourmet sushi is most definitely a must!

