

# The Giant Kites of Sagami

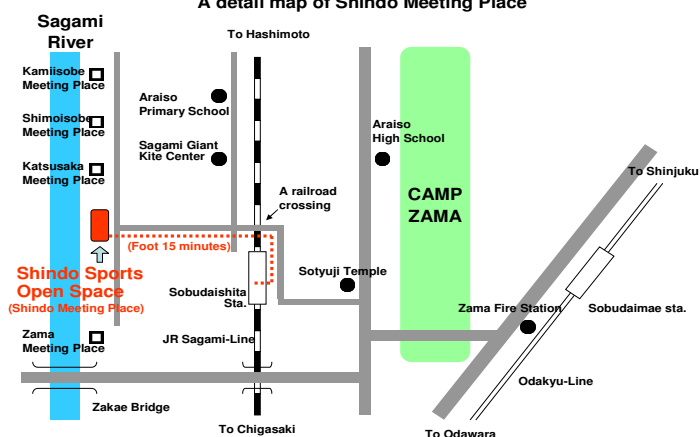
The largest kite in Japan glides gracefully through the sky!  
(14.5 x 14.5 meters in size and 950kg in weight)

The Giant Kite Festival of *Sagami* is a traditional event that has been held in Sagamihara City, which is in Kanagawa Prefecture, since the Tenpou period (around 1830) in the Edo era. The Sagami Giant Kite Preservation Association has passed down the tradition and techniques of making and flying some of the largest kites in the world to the local residents of Sagamihara.

## 1. The Giant Kites of Sagami

The Giant Kites of Sagami are called "Sagami-no-Oodako", the large Japanese kites flown by the Sagami Giant Kite Preservation Association in Shindo, Kamiisobe, Simoisobe, and Katsusaka regions of Sagamihara City, which is located in the middle of Kanagawa Prefecture. On May 4th and 5th this year's Sagami Giant Kite Festival, which is an annual event, will be held at the Sagami River riverbed.

A detail map of Shindo Meeting Place



Specifications of the large kites used in Shindo district

Size	--- 14.5 x 14.5 meters
Weight	--- 950kg
Length of control rope	--- 200m
Thickness of a control rope	--- 3-4cm
Length of a tail	--- 85m
Staff required for kite-flying	--- 80-100 people
Wind speed necessary for flying giant kite	--- 10-15 meters per second

The traditional large kites are made of bamboo and handmade Japanese paper. Specially-trained craftsmen make a curved square bamboo frame. They then tie 16 large pieces of paper to the frame so that it will capture the wind while remaining as light as possible. The paper is easy to remove from a kite if a piece is damaged. Traditionally two Chinese characters are written on the paper in red and green. This is why the kites are known as "Character Kites." The large kites and the paper used in them are made from scratch every year.

The craftsmen and crew of the Giant Kite of *Shindo* take pride in the fact that they make and fly the largest traditionally made square kite in Japan. The Giant Kite of *Shindo* set the record for the longest flight of a traditional large kite in 2001 when their kite remained aloft for 6 hours, 7 minutes and 55 seconds in the air.

## 2. The Origin and The History of The Giant Kites of Sagami

It is said that the history of Sagami Giant Kites began during the Tenpou period (around 1830) in the Edo era. The kites got larger over time until they reached their present size during the middle of the Meiji era. Initially the kites were flown by individual people to celebrate the birth of a child. Over time the tradition expanded to other areas and the reasons for flying them also changed. The kites were eventually flown as a form of prayer to help ensure a good harvest. They were flown mostly by the young men of the community. During the Showa era four young men's associations in Shindo, Kamiisobe, Simoisobe, and Katsusaka regions began to build and fly very large kites in four different districts almost every year.

In 1991, the Giant Kite Preservation Associations were started up in four districts. The Sagami Giant Kite Preservation Association, which was the parent organization of four different districts' associations, was established in 1994. And the first Festival of The Giant Kites of Sagami was held in four districts. From then on the Shindo Giant Kite Preservation Association began to fly the largest kites in Japan.



2006 "shinso"



2005 "kisyo"



2004 "syukuso"