

## Watching Sumo Wrestling tournament

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Part of the experience while living in Japan is learning about their culture and history. In one of my recent adventures, I went to a Sumo Wrestling tournament.

Sumo is a competitive full-contact wrestling sport where a wrestler (*rikishi*) attempts to force another wrestler out of a circular ring (*dohyō*) or fall to the ground. The sport originated in Japan, and is the only country where it is practiced professionally.



But Sumo wrestling is more than a trial of strength in combat; it is an ancient martial art dating back some 1500 years. The first sumo matches were a form of religious ritual dedicated to the gods with prayers for a bountiful harvest and were performed together with sacred dancing and dramas within the precincts of the shrines.

Sumo has managed to survive with its formalized ritual and traditional etiquette intact making it unique among sports. On each day of tournament, the colorful *doyo-iri* or "entering the ring" ceremony takes place. The wrestlers, wearing ceremonial aprons, climb into the ring and go through a short ritual ancient in sumo tradition. These aprons are beautifully made of silk, richly embroidered with different designs, and hemmed with gold fringe.



Learning Japanese language has helped me gain a better understanding of Japan's traditions; and has allowed me to experience the Japanese culture in a more authentic way. Studying the language has given me an insight of their society; and has given me more appreciation of their beliefs, culture, and history.