**Ama no Iwato Shrine: West and East Sanctuaries**

This shrine honoring the sun goddess Amaterasu Omikami is made up of two sanctuaries, West (Nishi Hongu) and East (Higashi Hongu). The exact details of the shrine’s founding are unknown, though it is thought both sanctuaries were originally from different shrines. The West Sanctuary is dedicated to the goddess in her aspect as a child known as Ohirume no Mikoto. This wing is near the Ama no Iwato cave where Ohirume went after falling out with her mischievous brother, Susano O, and leaving the world in darkness, finally to be lured back out by an amusing dance performed by Ame no Uzume. The cave where she hid is known as Ama no Iwato, and West Sanctuary venerates her today through the cave, hidden behind trees. The cave is so sacred that it may not be approached directly, but may be viewed from the shrine observatory located across the gorge. A trail from Nishi Hongu leads to the riverside cave of Ama no Yasukawara, where the *kami* deities are believed to have met to consult about how to bring Amaterasu and her light back into the world.

The East Sanctuary, which was incorporated into Ama no Iwato Shrine in 1970, sanctifies the first place that Amaterasu Omikami was thought to reside after emerging from her cave.