

Meiji Jingu is one of the largest shrines in Tokyo. It enshrines the deified spirits of Emperor Meiji (1852–1912), the 122nd Emperor of Japan, and Empress Shoken (1849–1914) as *kami*, Shinto deities. The Emperor Meiji reigned from 1867 to 1912, during one of the most dramatic periods in Japanese history. After the end of the feudal era, control of government was returned to the Emperor in 1868, and the modernization of Japan began. The shrine was dedicated in 1920, after the death of the Emperor in 1912 and the Empress in 1914. Meiji Jingu receives the most people of any shrine in Japan for *hatsumode*, the first shrine visit of the New Year.

On the way to the main shrine buildings deep within the sacred forest there is a beautiful Japanese garden, which includes an iris garden. The iris garden was a favorite spot of Empress Shoken, and the visits of the Imperial couple to the iris garden was the reason for this area being chosen as the site of Meiji Jingu.

The shrine is open daily from sunrise until sunset, and entry to the shrine precincts is free. Entry into the garden, however, requires a ¥500 donation for its maintenance. Last entry is around 30 minutes before sundown.