

## Ise Jingu (short version)

Ise Jingu, officially known as “Jingu,” is the most important *jinja* (Shinto shrine) complex in Japan. It was originally built over 2,000 years ago for the imperial court to honor the sun deity Amaterasu-Omikami. Over time, Ise Jingu gained wide recognition as Japan’s spiritual heart. In the eighteenth century, there were years when over four million people made pilgrimages to Ise.

Ise Jingu is composed of 125 *jinja*, centered around the Naiku and Geku. These are dedicated to Amaterasu-Omikami and Toyouke-no-Omikami (the deities of food, clothing, and shelter) respectively. The deities symbolize nature’s blessings. People acknowledge these blessings not only in ancient rituals giving thanks for harvests but also through conservation efforts. A 200-year cypress-planting project was introduced in Ise Jingu’s own forests in 1923.

The nutrients from this forest are carried by the Isuzugawa River, enriching farmlands and eventually the sea. This nourishes Ise-Shima’s rice paddies, vegetable plots, and plentiful marine life. Visitors to Ise Jingu also experience nature’s blessings when ritually purifying themselves by washing their hands in the Isuzugawa River’s clear waters.