

Amano Iwato Shrine

Amano Iwato (Heavenly Stone Cave) Shrine is a shrine dedicated to Amaterasu Omikami, the sun *kami* deity who rules the heavens. The shrine has two separate sanctuaries: the West Sanctuary (Nishi Hongu) and the East Sanctuary (Higashi Hongu). The West Sanctuary honors Amaterasu as she was known in her childhood, under the name of Ohirume no Mikoto. It marks the location believed to be described in a famous Japanese myth in which Ohirume (Amaterasu) hid herself in a cave, plunging the world into darkness, and was lured back out with a staged festival hosted by the *kami* deities of the Heavenly Realm. A short trail from the West Sanctuary leads to a riverside cave called Amano Yasukawara, where the *kami* deities of the Heavenly Realm are thought to have gathered to plan how to lure Amaterasu out of hiding.

The East Sanctuary, on the other hand, enshrines Amaterasu as she is known following her re-emergence from hiding, honoring the place where Amaterasu is thought to have once resided on earth.