

## **Ama no Iwato Shrine: Riverbed of Ama no Yasukawara**

The steep trail following a branch of the Gokase River gushing through Takachiho Gorge descends gradually into a cool realm between rock walls and noted for its place in legends surrounding sun goddess Amaterasu Omikami. The trail leads to the riverside cave of Ama no Yasukawara, where the heavenly gods convened to consult about how to lure Amaterasu, who had darkened the world by retreating into another cave, to come out again and bring light back to the world.

Along the trail are stone cairns left by pilgrims and visitors. As the stones are often set up as forms of prayer, they must not be disturbed.

Another Shinto myth says this is the place where Ninigi no Mikoto came when his grandmother, Amaterasu, sent him to earth. This direct descendant of the sun goddess is considered responsible for Japan's rice-planting agriculture as well as the progenitor of its unbroken line of emperors.