

Ueno Tenjin Shrine

Ueno Tenjin Shrine is a place of worship for the deified version of Sugawara Michizane (845–903), who is revered as the kami (deity) of learning, Tenjin. The Ueno Tenjin Festival begins here and spreads Tenjin’s blessings as the parade travels through the town.

When Matsuo Bashō (1644–1694) was twenty-nine years old, he compiled a collection of commentary on 30 pairs of haiku—including two of his own—comparing the poetic merits of each in a lighthearted tone. This was Bashō’s first publication, entitled Seashell Game (*Kai-ōi*), and the only work he ever penned under his birth name, Matsuo Munefusa. He dedicated the collection to Ueno Tenjin Shrine before setting out for Edo (now Tokyo) to become a professional poet.

Because the principle deity is Tenjin and the shrine is associated with Bashō, many people come to Ueno Tenjin Shrine to pray for success in writing and learning. As the main shrine of Iga, Ueno Tenjin Shrine holds various festivals and ceremonies throughout the year.