

Moriyama Shrine

In communities across Japan, the most ancient form for shrines was often a grove or wooded hill, known as a *moriyama*. This liminal space between human habitation and the higher land rising beyond, where kami are understood to dwell, was used for rituals and other rites.

Moriyama Shrine is quite literally just this kind of place. It is the starting point for the township's semiannual *takemairi* pilgrimages to Mt. Yoshida, performed after participants have purified themselves with seawater at the beach below. Taokihooi, a deity associated with the manufacture of shrine structures and implements as well as safe childbirth, is worshipped here, as is Benzaiten, patron of music, poetry, and learning, and one of the gods associated with wealth and good fortune.

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To book a village tour in Yoshida, visit yakushima.jp online or the Yakushima Environmental and Cultural Village Center in person at:

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