

Reisai (Annual Festival)

Date: March 18th

Every Shinto shrine has an annual festival to pay respects to the enshrined deities on a date that is significant for that particular shrine. Such a festival is usually called a *reisai*. In the case of [Usa Jingu Shrine](#), it is said that the deity Hachiman first manifested on the first Day of the Hare in the second month of 571. This date corresponds to March 18th in the modern calendar and was chosen for the Usa Jingu *reisai*.

Usa Jingu is one of 17 highly-ranked shrines regularly visited by *chokushi* (imperial messengers) who perform prayers and rituals on behalf of the emperor. Reflecting this high standing, *heihaku* (offerings from the imperial court) are presented during the *reisai* to the shrine's three deities: Hachiman, the Hime Okami, and Empress Jingu. In the festival procession, priests in white robes carry three chests containing the *heihaku*, followed by higher-ranked priests in formal attire historically worn by courtiers. After a purification rite at the Haraedo platform, the procession heads toward the [Jogu \(Upper Shrine\)](#), where all three sanctuaries are open for the prayer service. The head priest conducts the solemn ceremony, which includes presenting the imperial offerings to the deities and a *kagura* dance performed by a shrine maiden as a prayer for peace. Visitors are welcome to watch the procession, but the ceremony can only be observed from outside the covered corridors of the main sanctuary area.

The *reisai* festivals for the [Gegu \(Lower Shrine\)](#), [Wakamiya Jinja Shrine](#), and [Togu Jinja Shrine](#) are held a day earlier, on March 17th.