

Rinji Hobeisai Ritual

Date: 2025 (every 10 years)

Rinji Hobeisai is a rare religious event held at [Usa Jingu Shrine](#) when a *chokushi* messenger specially dispatched by the emperor makes a pilgrimage to the shrine. Usa Jingu is one of only 17 shrines in Japan entitled to receive *chokushi*, who read the emperor's prayers and present offerings to the enshrined deities.

The first pilgrimage made by a *chokushi* to Usa Jingu took place more than 1,300 years ago in 720, and over the centuries such messengers have traveled to the shrine many times at the ruling emperor's discretion. Although the practice was suspended between the mid-fourteenth and mid-eighteenth centuries when imperial power was in decline, it was resumed in 1744 and took place every 60 years. When the government revised the rankings of Shinto shrines in 1925, it was decided that imperial messengers would be dispatched to Usa Jingu once every 10 years.

Large crowds have always gathered in Usa for the occasion, hoping to get a glimpse of the *chokushi* on the way to Usa Jingu. Illustrated diaries by [Minomushi Sanjin](#) (1836–1900), a traveling artist, depict the visit of 1864. One entry shows a grand procession stretching along the [Chokushi Kaido Road](#) toward the shrine and another portrays commoners competing to purify themselves at the water font near the shrine entrance after the imperial messenger had used it.

Many rituals and activities are carried out at Usa Jingu when the *chokushi* visits. Upon arrival in Usa, he travels along part of the Chokushi Kaido and enters the shrine grounds through the covered [Kurehashi Bridge](#), which is traditionally used only once every 10 years for this occasion. That night, a group of shrine parishioners bearing lanterns crosses the Kurehashi Bridge into Usa Jingu and pays respects to the imperial messenger. The Rinji Hobeisai is held on the following day, when the *chokushi* presents offerings from the emperor to the deities at the [Jogu \(Upper Shrine\)](#) and reads aloud the missives entrusted to him.

The most recent Rinji Hobeisai occurred in 2015, becoming the 257th recorded *chokushi* visit to Usa Jingu. The next envoy is expected in 2025.