

Ōmiya Bridge

This bridge crosses the Ōmiya River on the approach to Nishi Hongū (Western Main Shrine), which was formerly called Ōmiya Shrine. The river plays an important role in the founding legend of the shrine. According to the legend, the warrior Koto no Mitachi Ushimaru built a shrine here in the seventh century and became its priest after a fateful meeting with the deity, Ōnamuchi. He erected the shrine along the river about five kilometers northwest of Karasaki where the ripples of the water were said to murmur passages from the *Nirvana Sutra*. Today, a canal surrounds Nishi Hongū to ensure the sound of the running water will always be heard.

The current granite bridge was built in 1669 and is patterned faithfully on an earlier wooden bridge. It even replicates the mortise-and-tenon joinery in the columns although they are no longer structurally necessary. Two other bridges cross the river downstream. All are designated Important Cultural Properties, but Ōmiya Bridge is the largest and most elaborate of the three.