

Ise crib notes



In 2011, Ise Anchoko no Kai group created Japanese crib notes to promote tourism and awareness about Ise City's sacred culture and history.

Ise is where Japan's most revered deity has been enshrined for over 2000 years and the crib notes were created to help visitors quickly and easily learn about the history and beauty of Ise Jingu.

In light of the 2016 G7 summit in Ise Shima, the Ise City Chamber of Commerce created the Ise wo sekaie, Ise kara sekaie committee (Ise City to the world and from Ise City to the world) and worked with our team to publish these English crib notes for foreign visitors to Ise City.

1 ~ 1 2 Relating to the deities (kami) enshrined at Jingu:

Question ?

Answer !

0 1 What is the official name of Ise Jingu?

The official name is "Jingu" but "Ise Jingu" is more commonly used.

0 2 How do you pronounce 「内宮」 ?

「内宮」 is pronounced "Naiku".
(In Ise, people often call it "Naikusan.")

0 3 How do you pronounce 「外宮」 ?

「外宮」 is pronounced "Geku".
(In Ise, people often call it "Gekusan.")

0 4 What is the official name of Naiku?

It is called Kotaijingu.

0 5 What is the official name of Geku?

It is called Toyo'uke-daijingu.

0 6 What is the name of the main deity enshrined at Naiku?

The name of the main deity is Amaterasu-omikami.

0 7 What is the name of the main deity enshrined at Geku?

The name of the main deity is Toyo'uke-no-omikami.

0 8 What type of deity is Amaterasu-omikami?

Amaterasu-omikami is referred to the sun and is an ancestral deity of the Japanese Imperial family.

0 9 What type of deity is Toyo'uke-no-omikami?

Toyo'uke-no-omikami provides sacred food to Amaterasu-omikami so therefore is known as the deity of all industry.

1 0 What are the three sacred treasures?

The three sacred treasures are the holy mirror, the holy sword and the holy jewel. These treasures have been continually passed down by successive emperors of Japan.

1 1 Are Shinto maidens (mikosan) called something different at Jingu?

Yes. Mikosan are officially called "bujo" but people in Ise commonly call them, "maihime."

1 2 ~ 2 2 Relating to buildings and places of Jingu:

1 2 Is there one jinja at Jingu?

No. Including Naiku and Geku, there are 125 jinja associated with Jingu.

1 3	Is the architectural style of the jinja at Jingu special in some way?	Yes. All the jinja at Jingu are created using the Yuiitushinmeizukuri style which is unique among all the shrines in Japan.
1 4	What is difference between the main palace of Naiku and Geku? (Part 1)	The number of horizontal beams on the roof of the main palace are different. At Naiku, the main palace has ten beams and the main palace at Geku has nine.
1 5	What is difference between the main palace of Naiku and Geku? (Part 2)	The cut angles on the rafter ends are different. The rafter ends at Naiku are cut horizontally and the rafter ends at Geku are cut vertically.
1 6	What is the total area of Jingu?	Jingu is 5500 hectares wide and is about one quarter of the land area of Ise City.
1 7	When was Naiku established in Ise?	Naiku was established approximately 2,000 years ago in Ise.
1 8	When was Geku established in Ise?	Geku was established in Ise about 1500 yeas ago after being relocated from Tanba, Kyoto.
1 9	What is Magatamaike Pond?	It is a comma-shaped pond created within the grounds of Geku in 1889.
2 0	Why are black and white pebbles placed around jinja?	It's widely believed that white and black symbolize heaven and earth, therefore it is considered a great combination for happiness.
2 1	How large is Ujibashi Bridge?	It is 101.8 meters long and 8.4 meters wide. It is the longest wooden bridge in Japan.
2 2	When was the current Ujibashi Bridge built?	It was rebuilt in 2009, four years before the sixty-second Shikinen Sengu, an Ise Jingu ritual held every 20 years to remake all of its jinja from scratch.

2 3 ~ 3 1 Relating to history and customs

2 3	Why is Jingu in Ise?	During her search for a suitable enshrinement area for Amaterasu-omikami, Yamatohime-no-mikoto, daughter of the 11th Emperor Suinin, received a divine message from the deity itself suggesting Ise was the most appropriate.
2 4	Why should people walk on the left side of the pathway within the area when visiting Geku?	Because the ablution font (temizusha) is located on the left side.
2 5	Are there some things that other jinja have that Jingu does not?	Yes. Other jinja usually have lion-shaped guardian dog statues (komainu), jinja bells and fortune slips.
2 6	Why doesn't Jingu have fortune slips?	Because to worship at Jingu is regarded as good fortune.
2 7	Why are there roosters at Jingu?	Because roosters are considered messengers for the deity.
2 8	What is the origin of the name of Kamijidori street?	One bit of folklore says that at night, the deity of the moon, Tsukiyomi-no-mikoto rides a white horse from Geku to Tsukiyomi-no-miya along Kamijidori street.

2 9	How many sacred horses are there at Jingu?	There are two sacred horses at each of Naiku and Geku.
3 0	Is it true that sacred horses also worship?	Yes. The sacred horses are brought to the main sanctuary of Jingu on the first, eleventh and twenty-first of each month at about 8:00 AM to worship.
3 1	How are the sacred horses chosen?	The emperor personally chooses the horses.

3 2 ~ 4 8 Relating to worshipping

3 2	When does Jingu open?	It opens at 5:00 AM.
3 3	Is Jingu open at night?	No, it is closed at night except for a few selected nights around the new year's holiday. Also, Jingu's hours vary slightly depending on the season.
3 4	Is there a dress code when visiting Jingu?	There isn't a dress code but respectful clothes are recommended when greeting deities.
3 5	What is the appropriate way to worship?	Visitors should bow deeply twice and then clap twice. Then, they should make one final deep bow.
3 6	Which one should be visited first, Naiku or Geku?	The long-standing custom is to visit Geku first.
3 7	Why is Geku visited first?	It follows Jingu's custom since Jingu always conducts their main rituals at Geku first.
3 8	What is the recommended route at Naiku?	The recommended order is to visit the main sanctuary first, then Aramatsuri-no-miya, followed by Kazahinomi-no-miya and finally Takimatsuri-no-kami.
3 9	What is the recommended route in Geku?	The recommended order is to visit the main sanctuary first, then Taka-no-miya, followed by Tsuchi-no-miya and finally Kaze-no-miya.
4 0	Are there any merits to worshipping at Jingu?	By giving thanks to the deity, you might come to realize how lucky you are.
4 1	Does Ise Jingu conduct wedding ceremonies?	No, it doesn't. However, some people visit Jingu to declare their marriage to the deity.
4 2	Is there anything that we shouldn't do at Jingu?	Yes. Visitors shouldn't unnecessarily touch the trees or rocks or take any pebbles home with them.
4 3	Can pets be brought to Jingu?	No, they can't. However, visitors can leave their pets at the guardhouse in front of Ujibashi Bridge while they visit Jingu.
4 4	Are eating and drinking allowed at Ise Jingu?	In order to show respect for the deity and fellow visitors, Jingu hopes guests will refrain from eating or drinking.
4 5	Is there anything to commemorate a visit to Jingu?	Yes. Visitors can get a collective ink stamping at both Naiku and Geku.
4 6	Why do some people bow in front of a Shinto gate (torii)?	The first gate (torii) marks the entrance to a jinja, therefore, people bow to show their respect before entering the area.

4 7	Can pictures be taken at Ise Jingu?	Pictures can be taken within the area except in front of the main sanctuary. Also, visitors should be mindful of their surroundings when taking pictures.
4 8	Where are some good places to see a special sunrise?	On the summer solstice, the Sun appears to rise between the Meotoiwa rocks in Futami and on the winter solstice, the Sun appears to rise from the center of Ujibashi Bridge torii.

4 9 ~ 6 2 Relating to rituals and ceremonies.

4 9	What sort of things are dedicated to the deity (kami) at Jingu?	Rice, water, salt, seasonal vegetables and fishes are offered daily.
5 0	Where do those foods come from?	All the foods, as well as the dishes they are served on, are produced at Jingu.
5 1	What is hounou?	Hounou is an offering of food, goods and / or entertainment that might please the deity (kami) at Jingu.
5 2	What is okagura?	Okagura is ceremonial music and dance that is offered in appreciation of the deity (kami).
5 3	How can okagura be arranged?	Okagura can be arranged at the Kaguraden hall in Naiku or Geku.
5 4	How many annual rituals are conducted at Jingu?	Over 1500 rituals are conducted annually at Jingu.
5 5	What is the most frequent ritual performed at Jingu?	Every morning and evening, Higoto-asa-yu-omike-sai is conducted at Geku.
5 6	What is the most important ritual of the year?	The most important ritual of the year is Kanname-sai, conducted between October 15th and 17th at the main shrines at both Naiku and Geku.
5 7	What is kanname-sai?	Kanname-sai is a Jingu ritual when the first harvested rice of the year is offered to the deity (kami) in appreciation for the bountiful harvest.
5 8	What is Shikinen Sengu?	Shikinen Sengu is a ritual held every 20 years at Jingu to remake all of their palaces, sacred apparel and furnishings and then transfer them along with the divine treasures from the old to the new palaces.
5 9	What is Okihiki?	It is an event where mostly Ise residents play a part in moving (pulling) some of the logs destined for Jingu as part of the Shikinen Sengu rebuilding ritual.
6 0	When are the Okihiki events held?	Okihiki events are held six years and seven years prior to the Shikinen Sengu rebuilding ritual.
6 1	What is Oshiraishimochi?	It is an event where mostly Ise residents carry white pebbles to the sacred grounds at Jingu and place them where the new main palace will be built as part of the Shikinen Sengu rebuilding ritual.
6 2	What is Hamasangu?	Hamasangu is a custom in which people purify their bodies and minds in the sea in Futamigaura before worshipping at Jingu.