

Shimogamo-jinja Shrine



Kamo (Aoi) Festival May 15th

The history of Shimogamo-jinja Shrine, a World Heritage Site, extends at least two thousand years. A recent excavation of the Tadasu-nomori, the shrine's forest, unearthed artifacts from as long ago as the Yayoi period (circa 400 B.C. – A.D. 300). Fragments of plates and arrowheads were found in good condition throughout the forest excavation site. Artifacts dating from later periods document the evolution of society around the shrine. On the north side of the shrine is Kawai-jinja Shrine, dedicated to a guardian deity for women, and popular for praying for beauty. Also within the shrine grounds is Koto Shrine, a series of sub-shrines dedicated to the 12 animal signs of the zodiac.



Yabusame Ritual

Yabusame, or Yabosame, refers to the shooting of Kabura-ya arrows (arrows shaped like a turnip) from horseback. Every year on May 3rd, this equestrian archery ritual takes place on the day before the Aoi Festival.



Mitarashi Festival

In the Heian period, nobles used to perform purification rites at the turning of the seasons in order to be free of sin and uncleanness. It was said that on Doyo no Ushi no Hi (late July), soaking your legs in the Mitarashi Pond would purify you, and be effective against disease and good for the easy delivery of babies. Every year on this day, there is a foot bathing ritual at Mitarashi Pond, enshrined at the Mitarashi Shrine within the shrine grounds. Men and women of all ages come to soak their legs and pray for sound health.

Annual events

New Year rituals

- Jan 1 Hobei Ritual, Heihaku Donation, Oyakushu Offering, Wakamizu Offering, New Year's Festival, Gonaigi Gokito Festival
- Jan 15 Okayu Festival (Mitobiraki Ritual)

Spring rituals

- Feb 3 Setsubun Festival, Tsuinayumi Ritual, Tsuinamemaki, Gomagi Ritual, Goshinpushono Ritual

Aoi Festival rituals

- May 4 Saioudai Omisoginogi Ritual (alternating yearly with Kamigamo-jinja Shrine)
- May 14 Katataku Gonin Funa Hoken Festival

Summer rituals

- Jun 1 Kifunesha Festival

Autumn rituals

- Oct 23 Shoko Festival

Winter rituals

- Nov 23 Niiname Festival
- Dec 13 Aioisha Festival
- Dec 22 Gonaigi Gokito Festival
- Dec 31 Joya (New Year's Eve) Festival, Oharai-shiki (Great Purification Rite)

