

History

Yasukuni Jinja traces its roots to a shrine founded on June 29, 1869, called Shokonsha. Japan at that time was undergoing a historic transformation known as the Meiji Restoration, striving to become a modern nation. The early years of this transition, however, saw an inevitable, unfortunate conflict within the country known as the Boshin War, which resulted in the loss of countless precious lives among those who fought to transform Japan into a modern nation.

Emperor Meiji founded Shokonsha on this site in Kudankita, Tokyo, to honor these lost souls and to preserve their noble deeds for future generations. Shokonsha was renamed Yasukuni Jinja, as it is known today, on June 4, 1879.



Founding Philosophy

The founding purpose of Yasukuni Jinja is captured in a poem composed by Emperor Meiji during his visit to Shokonsha on January 27, 1874. He wrote,

“I assure those of you who fought and died for your country that your names will live forever at this shrine in Musashino.”

As expressed in this poem, Yasukuni Jinja was founded to honor the souls of those who gave their precious lives for their country with hopes of peace and to preserve their noble deeds for future generations.

The name “Yasukuni” bestowed by Emperor Meiji means “to preserve peace throughout the nation.” The shrine thus embodies the Emperor’s desire to bring peace to the land and his vision of building a harmonious country.



Enshrined Spirits

Yasukuni Jinja enshrines the spirits of more than 2,466,000 individuals who have sacrificed their lives to protect their country. These are people who, since 1853, fought for Japan during the Meiji Restoration, the Boshin War, the Seinan War, the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars, World War I, and the Greater East Asian War (World War II), with the single-minded hope for a peaceful nation. Regardless of their social status, achievements, or gender, they are all equally revered as divine spirits who gave their lives for their homeland.

In addition to soldiers, Yasukuni Jinja also enshrines the souls of numerous military civilians, civil service workers, and private citizens. These include leaders who led the Meiji Restoration but perished in the effort, women and schoolgirls involved in battlefield relief operations, and students conscripted to work in munitions factories. Also enshrined are the souls of Taiwanese and Korean people who fought and died as Japanese citizens, soldiers and military civilians who died during internment in Siberia, and people sentenced to death by military tribunals at the end of the Greater East Asian War.

Such a diverse group of individuals is uniformly and equally enshrined at Yasukuni Jinja as divine spirits who gave their lives for their homeland precisely because the shrine’s founding purpose is to “honor the souls of those who sacrificed their precious lives for their country and to preserve their noble deeds for future generations.”



Last Messages for This Month

To share the thoughts of the noble souls who gave up their lives for the country they loved, Yasukuni Jinja displays a selection of last messages at the front of the shrine every month.

The last messages that have been displayed have been compiled and published as a series of books titled *Eirei no Kotonoha* (Words of Noble Souls) and widely distributed.



Shinto Faith

Japan still maintains the culture and tradition of respecting and worshipping the deceased. The Japanese have long believed that spirits of the deceased remain eternally on earth and guard their descendants. Even in today's Japan, people consider their ancestors as their “guardian deities,” and thus as an object of worship because such traditional way of thinking along with the belief of Shinto is still inherited.

In addition to this, Japanese people have respected and worshipped spirits of those who made prominent contribution to regional and national communities – not only to family communities as such.

Yasukuni Jinja is an example which represents such genuine Japanese culture.

Yasukuni Jinja is a place to commemorate in a manner of Shinto, a traditional Japanese faith and a place for all the Japanese to show their appreciation and respect to those who died to protect their country. The spirits of these deceased are the object of worship at Yasukuni Jinja.

Therefore, the shrine has completely different nature from that of tombs where bodies or bones of fallen soldiers are buried.

Worshipping

Foreigners will understand the nature of Yasukuni Jinja comparing with similar facilities in their countries if they are explained that the shrine is a place for Japanese people to show their appreciation and respect to those who died to protect their mother country, Japan.

The difference between Yasukuni Jinja and other foreign memorial institutions for war dead is that the shrine enshrines the spirits of those who died on public duty of protecting their mother land. This difference might be causing misunderstanding. However, the nature of the shrine has its origin in the traditional Japanese way of thinking which is to commemorate the deceased eternally by enshrining them as object of worship. It is not an abnormal institution.

Probably, people who cherish their own culture will understand the difference and will understand the importance of Yasukuni Jinja which was established to commemorate and to show appreciation and respect to those who dedicated their precious lives to their mother country.

Today, many people visit Yasukuni Jinja regardless of their religion, thought and nationalities. This fact tells that the shine is a place to show respect to those who died to protect their mother country and that the shrine has public nature.

Festivals and Rituals

Yasukuni Jinja hosts various festivals and rituals throughout the year, the most important being the Reitaisai annual spring and autumn rites.

The Mitama Festival, held from July 13 to 16 during the Bon season, is another well-known summer tradition in Tokyo. More than 30,000 votive lamps and lanterns adorned with calligraphy light up the grounds of the shrine and welcome lively crowds of worshippers.



New Year's Rites



Annual Rites

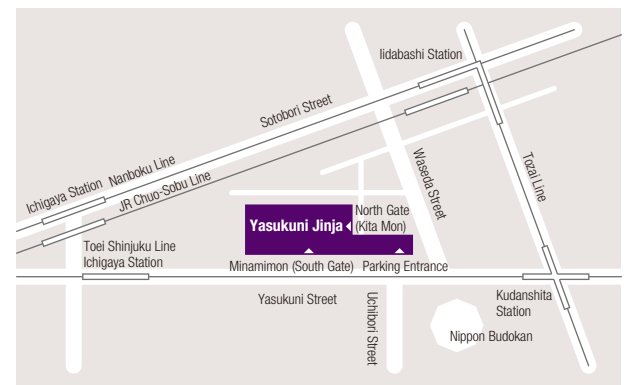


Mitama Festival

Schedule of Festivals and Rituals

January 1: **New Year's Rites**
February 11: **National Foundation Day Rites**
February 17: **Rites for a Good Crop**
February 23: **Rites for the Celebration of the Emperor's Birthday**
April 21–23: **Annual Spring Rites**
April 29: **Rites for the Emperor Showa**
June 29: **Rites for Yasukuni Jinja's Anniversary**
June 30: **Biannual Purification Ceremony**
July 13–16: **Mitama Festival**
October 17–19: **Annual Fall Rites**
November 3: **Rites for the Emperor Meiji**
November 23: **Ritual Offering of Newly Harvested Rice by the Emperor**
December 25: **End-of-Year Cleaning Rite**
December 31: **Biannual Purification Ceremony, New Year's Eve Rites**
On the first, 11th, and 21st of each month: **Monthly Rites**
Daily: **Morning Offering of Consecrated Rice, Evening Offering of Consecrated Rice, Memorial Service (Sacred Dance Ceremony)**

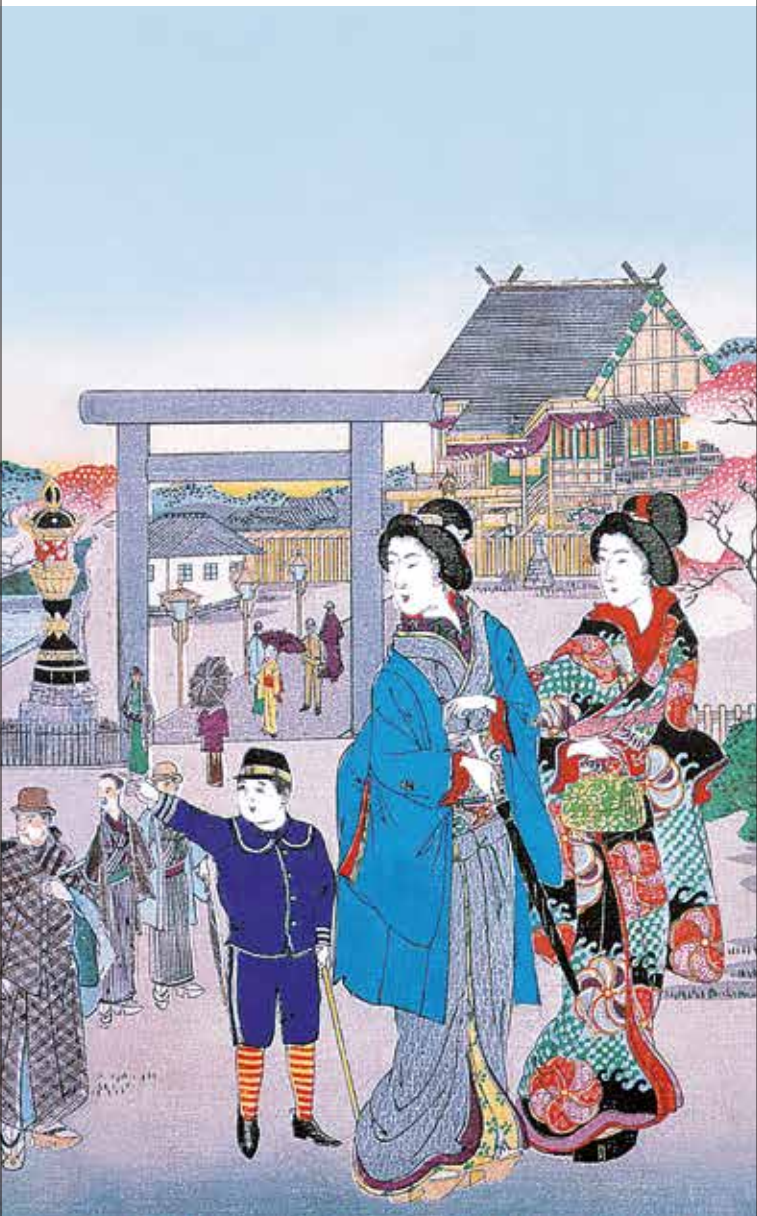
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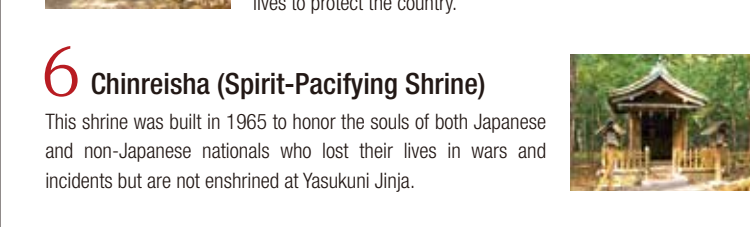
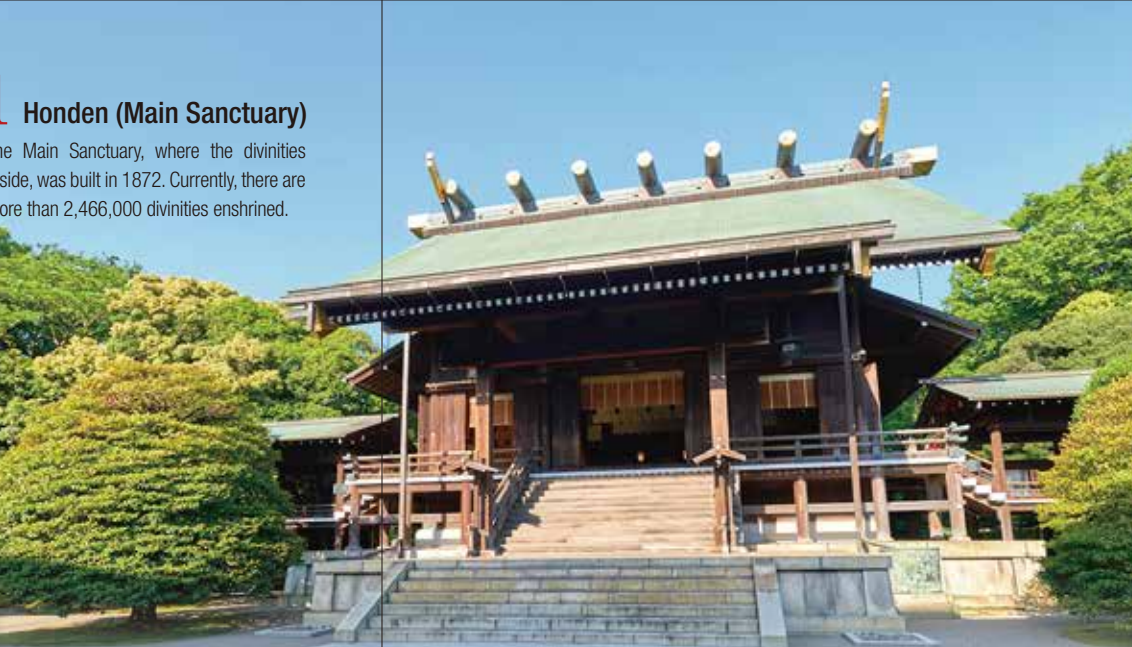


JR ● 10-minute walk from Ichigaya and Iidabashi stations (Sobu and Chuo lines)
Subway ● 5-minute walk from Kudanshita Station on the Tozai, Hanomori, and Toei Shinjuku lines
● 10-minute walk from Iidabashi Station on the Tozai, Yurakucho, and Toei Oedo lines
● 10-minute walk from Ichigaya Station on the Nambu, Yurakucho, and Toei Shinjuku lines
City Bus ● 1-minute walk from the “Kudan-ue” stop served by the Kudanshita-Takadanobaba line



Guide to Yasukuni Jinja





Precinct Map

Recommended Worship Route

●180-minute course

- Daiichi Torii (First Shinto Shrine Arch) [spot 32]
- Irei no Niwa (Soul-Comforting Garden) and Cherry Blossom Ceramic Tiles [spot 38]
- Worship at the Main Hall [spot 3]
- Shinchu Teien (Sacred Pond Garden) [spot 15]
- Yushukan Museum [spot 28]
- Gaian Rest Area [spot 39]

●60-minute course

- Daiichi Torii (First Shinto Shrine Arch) [spot 32]
- Irei no Niwa (Soul-Comforting Garden) and Cherry Blossom Ceramic Tiles [spot 38]
- Worship at the Main Hall [spot 3]
- Gaian Rest Area [spot 39]

1 Honden (Main Sanctuary)

The Main Sanctuary, where the divinities reside, was built in 1872. Currently, there are more than 2,466,000 divinities enshrined.

2 Reijibo Hoanden (Repository for the Symbolic Registry of Deities)

This building, located behind the Main Sanctuary, was constructed in 1972. It houses the Symbolic Registers of Souls, listing the names of all the divinities worshipped here at Yasukuni Jinja. They are written on handmade Japanese paper.

3 Haiden (Main Hall)

The Main Hall was built in 1901. Generally, visitors come here to pay their respects.

4 Chumon Torii (Third Shinto Shrine Arch)

This arch, standing at the entranceway to the Main Hall, was rebuilt in 2006 using Saitama-grown cypress.

5 Motomiya (Original Shrine)

Sympathizers of Imperial loyalists who led the Meiji Restoration but perished in the effort built this shrine to honor their souls. Originally built in Kyoto, it was relocated and dedicated to Yasukuni Jinja in 1931. Known as Motomiya, meaning "original shrine," it paved the way for Yasukuni Jinja to enshrine the divine spirits of those who sacrificed their lives to protect the country.

6 Chinreisha (Spirit-Pacifying Shrine)

This shrine was built in 1965 to honor the souls of both Japanese and non-Japanese nationals who lost their lives in wars and incidents but are not enshrined at Yasukuni Jinja.

7 Minamimom (South Gate)



8 Saikan / Shamusho (Purification Retreat / Shrine Office)



9 Otemizusha (Main Purification Font)

The purification basin in the pavilion was presented to Yasukuni Jinja in 1940 by Japanese residents of the United States. It is made of granite, and weighs more than 18 tons. Before you pay your respects at the Main Hall, please rinse your hands and mouth here.



10 Shinmon (Main Gate)

This magnificent cypress gate was completed in 1934. Each of its two doors bears a chrysanthemum crest measuring 1.5 meters in diameter.

11 Daini Torii (Second Shinto Shrine Arch)

The Second Shrine Gate was built in 1887. It is the biggest bronze torii gate in Japan.



12 Nogakudo (Noh Theater)

Built in Tokyo's Shiba Park in 1881, the Noh Theater was presented and moved to Yasukuni Jinja in 1903. Noh dramas and traditional Japanese dance are performed on its stage in honor of the resident divinities.

13 Sanshuden (Assembly Hall)

Individuals and groups of bereaved family members and worshippers who visit Yasukuni Jinja for a formal worship service may use the reception area, waiting room, and stamp office in this hall.



14 Tochakuden (Reception Hall)



15 Shinchu Teien (Sacred Pond Garden)

This garden was created early in the Meiji era. Its restoration in 1999 led to it being rediscovered as one of the finest gardens in Japan. It is a strolling garden, and its centerpiece is a waterfall in a setting so serene that visitors may think they are deep in the mountains. The granite right bridge here is the longest bridge of its kind in Japan.



16 Senshintei

17 Seisentei

18 Kountei

19 Shokon Saitei

20 Keishokan (Seminar Room & Multipurpose Building)

Keishokan was built in 1938 as a dressing and waiting room for sumo wrestlers and renovated in 2010. Today, it is also used as a seminar room by worshippers.



21 Sumo Ring

In 1869, a sumo wrestling exhibition was held at Yasukuni Jinja to celebrate the shrine's founding. Since then, exhibitions by professional sumo wrestlers, including grand champions or Yokozuna, take place at the Annual Rites. The facility becomes filled with many people who enjoy the matches free of charge.

22 Yasukuni Kaikan

23 Yasukuni Kaiko Bunko (Yasukuni Archives)

Open to the public, the Yasukuni Archives boast a collection of some 140,000 materials on the souls enshrined at Yasukuni Jinja and resources for studies of modern Japanese history.



24 Visitors' Rest Area

Bathrooms and vending machines are located here.



25 Memorial Statue of War Widow with Children

This statue, built in 1974, stands as a symbol of respect and gratitude toward war widows who raised their children amid immense hardships and loneliness during and after the war. War-orphaned children who have since grown up dedicated the statue to Yasukuni Jinja with feelings of deep love for their mothers.

26 Monument to Dr. Pal

This monument was completed in 2005 to honor Dr. Radha Binod Pal, the representative judge from India during the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (commonly known as the Tokyo Tribunal). Among all the judges on the tribunal, he was the only one who judged all the defendants as not guilty.



27 Memorial Statues Honoring Horses, Carrier Pigeons, and Dogs

This bronze, life-sized statue of a fine steed was presented to Yasukuni Jinja in 1958 to honor the memory of the horses that served the military loyally.

The statue of a carrier pigeon atop a globe honors the birds that were faithful messengers in wartime. Made of bronze and named "Pigeons and the Globe," it was presented to Yasukuni Jinja in 1982.

The statue of a German shepherd, also bronze, represents the soldiers' beloved canine comrades, and was donated to Yasukuni Jinja in March 1992.



28 Yushukan Museum

The Yushukan Museum showcases the last messages and personal effects of the souls enshrined at Yasukuni Jinja, along with valuable historical materials that convey their thoughts and deeds to the present. Established in 1882, the first two characters of its name, "Yushu," mean "a place where high-minded people come together to learn." The museum houses a vast collection of 100,000 items, including paintings, works of fine art, weapons, armor, and other armament.

29 Kitamon (North Gate)

Bathrooms and vending machines are located here.

30 Dove Cote

Almost 500 white doves live on the grounds of Yasukuni Jinja. It is said that only one in 10,000 doves is pure white.



31 Statue of Omura Masujiro

Omura Masujiro, the founder of the modern Japanese Army, devoted a great deal of effort to the establishment of Yasukuni Jinja. This statue was installed in 1893.



32 Daiichi Torii (First Shinto Shrine Arch)

Japan's largest torii, or shrine gate, was erected in 1921. Described in a poem as "the great gate that seems to pierce the sky," it was a notable landmark for visitors. But because of damage from exposure to wind and rain over the years, the gate was removed in 1943. The present torii was dedicated in 1974 by comrades in arms. It is 25 meters high.

33 Shagou Hyou (Stone pillar on which shrine name is engraved)

This stone arch was erected in 1932.



34 Ishi Torii (Stone Shinto Shrine Arch)

This stone arch was erected in 1932.

35 Memorial Monument to the Hitachimaru

This stone arch was erected in 1932.

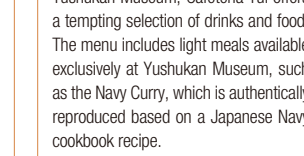
36 Irei no Izumi (Soul-Comforting Spring)

This stone arch was erected in 1932.



37 Statue of Family Members Seeing Soldiers Off to War

Erected in 2020, this statue honors and conveys to future generations the heartbreaking love with which the family members of the enshrined souls sent off their sons, brothers, husbands, and fathers to fight for their country even at the cost of sacrificing their precious lives.



38 Cherry Blossom Ceramic Tiles

Created by local potters using clay from prefectures associated with the enshrined spirits, these ceramic tiles were offered to Yasukuni Jinja and installed in the Irei no Niwa (Soul-Comforting Garden) in 2019.



39 Gaian Rest Area

This rest area, completed in 2019, includes a gift shop directly operated by Yasukuni Jinja and two food and drink establishments.



Outer Garden Shrine Shop SAKURA (gift shop)

Hours: 9:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

True to Yasukuni Jinja's reputation as a famous cherry blossom spot, this shop, operated directly by the shrine, offers a wide selection of cherry blossom-themed gifts, along with original souvenirs and sweets.



Yasukuni Yachiyo Shokudo (restaurant)

Hours: 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Enjoy a re-creation of the rice bowl topped with scrambled egg served by Torihama Torie, known affectionately as the "Mother of the Kamikaze Pilots," at Torihama Shokudo, the designated dining hall of Chiran Airbase in Kagoshima Prefecture. Tasty rice and soba noodles from Aizu and exclusive Japanese sweets are also available in addition to green tea, coffee, and alcoholic beverages.



attic room YASUKUNI GAIAN Cafe & Dining (restaurant)

Hours: 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Take a moment to unwind in the ambience of an old-fashioned cafe housed in a Western-style building reminiscent of the Showa era. Enjoy weekly lunch specials paired your choice of coffee, tea, or an alcoholic beverage.



40 Lantern Tower

This stone arch was erected in 1932.

41 Cherry Trees

It is said that the first cherry trees at Yasukuni were planted at this site in Kudankita in 1870, the year after Shokonsha, the precursor of Yasukuni Jinja, was founded. These trees symbolized Japan and Japan's pride in the souls enshrined there. Today, about 500 cherry trees, mostly of the Someiyoshino and Yamazakura varieties, grace the shrine grounds. A specific Someiyoshino tree among these is inspected each year by the Tokyo District Meteorological Observatory to forecast the cherry tree blooming season.

