

# Obihiro Religiously

Religion in Japan can befuddle even the most knowledgeable professors, and there really seems to be no simple explanation for any of it. However, this month we will be introducing a little bit about Shinto (one of the major religions in the country) along with the Obihiro Shrine (the main shrine in Obihiro)



The Obihiro Shrine

**R**ecently there has been a big hub-bub made regarding a famous shrine in the middle of Tokyo called the Yasukuni Jinja. There are compelling arguments for both sides of the dispute, but there are also many foreign observers who may be misunderstanding the religious beliefs behind that shrine. This article aims not to add or take away from the current debate, but rather to focus on a less famous shrine and slightly explain a little bit about the religious beliefs behind it.

Let me start by spinning your head around. Shinto literally means "Way of the Kami". The Japanese word "kami" is usually translated into English as "a god", but this is a little off. If you're going to understand these Japanese religious beliefs, you're going to have to forget any preconceptions you have about what is or isn't "a god" (or you could just forget about translating the word "kami" into English!). A kami can be anyone and anything, and are more like guardian spirits. The two beings who created Japan in Shinto legend were kami who received assistance from more powerful kami. Many great scholars, philanthropists, and warriors have been enshrined as kami. There are river kami and mountain kami, and even dead relatives become kami that people worship in small shrines in their own home.



Izanami and Izanagi: kami that created Japan (in Shinto lore).

The Obihiro Shrine actually has 3 kami enshrined in it's facilities, which may be why it is the main shrine in Obihiro. It houses the Okunitama (kami of Hokkaido), the Onamuchi (kami of land management and pioneering), and the Sukunahikona (kami of land management, medicine, and sake making). There was a large anniversary festival at the shrine last month, to celebrate the creation of the shrine. The next big event is the Shichigosan Festival in November that celebrates the growth of children aged 3, 5, or 7 years old. The next huge festival at the shrine is the biggest of them all; Oshogatsu. In Japan during Oshogatsu (the new year's

celebration) countless numbers of Japanese people make a visit to their shrine on the first day of the year.

**When you enter the shrine grounds** you will first pass under the giant torii gates that lead to the entrance of most shrines in Japan. As you walk up the paved path to the shrine, don't forget to wash your hands at the small basin on your left. Walk on the left side of the path because the center is where the kami walk, and that would be rude to get in their way! After washing your hands, you will approach the gate to the main shrine building (honden). Pass through the center door of the gate and approach the money chest and window that let's you peek into the shrine. Throw your money in, clap twice, make a wish or pray, and then bow. If you peer inside to the very depths of the shrine you will see 2 doors that look like a cabinet. Inside that cabinet is where the kami reside, and only the highest priest in the shrine is allowed to touch those doors!



# Tokachi Events

## October 2007



When	What	Where/Contact #
10/7 (Sun) 9:50-14:00	<b>Autumn Wine Matsuri:</b> Come to the Ikeda Wine Castle and enjoy all the wine and food that you can fit in your stomach! They're going to roast an entire cow, have a wine guessing contest and a huge sausage eating contest as well, so come check it out! (Adult: 3800yen. Entrance closes @ 13:30!)	ワイン城横イベント広場 Ikeda Wine Castle 01557-2-2467
10/7 (Sun) 10:30 - 16:00	<b>Traditional Japanese Folk Dancing:</b> A Hokkaido dance group is going to showing off their performing abilities today in Obihiro. Admission: 1500 yen	帯広市民文化ホール Obihiro Citizens' Culture Hall 0155-24-3397
10/6-7 (Sat-Sun) 10:00 - 15:00	<b>Shikaoi Soba Festival:</b> You haven't eaten soba until you've had Shikaoi soba. Learn how to cut your own soba, and then watch a stage lecture on how to cook them! There will be other food stands, but a ¥1000 soba ticket gets you 3 soba dishes so, eat up!	鹿追町民ホールの前 Shikaoi Citizen's Hall front parking lot (on Highway 274) 0156-66-2311
10/7 (Sun) 10:00 - 14:30	<b>Iwanai Gorge Autumn Colors Festival:</b> Journey deep into the enchanted woods where spirits are said to protect the trees. There will be vegetable auctions, a fresh vegetable market, and singing performances. Also come to enjoy the changing colors of the leaves while eating jingiskan and other tasty foods!	岩内仙峡 Iwanai Senkyo 0155-22-8600
10/21 (Sun) 10:00 - 13:30	<b>Chuurui Dontokoi Festival:</b> daiko Stage shows, a fresh produce market, and other food for sale. There will be a "fishin' for beans" game, a "Block of Cow BBQ" at 11am, and special singing performances to follow!	忠類道の駅 Chuurui Visitor Center 01558-8-2111
10/25 (Thu) 16:00-21:00	<b>RALLY JAPAN - Ceremonial Start:</b> Come see all the shiny race cars and get autographs of drivers from around the world. The cars "start" the race ceremonially at 18:30. Everyone's gonna be there!	藤丸百貨店の前 Downtown Obihiro in front of the Fujimaru Department Store 0155-21-3799
10/27 (Sat) 18:00 - 20:00	<b>Pumpkin Carving:</b> We need 4 or 5 "Pumpkin Carving Gurus" to come down to the TIRC and teach us how to carve a cool face or other object into a pumpkin in preparation for the big Halloween party!	森の交流館・十勝 Tokachi International Relations Center (in the gymnasium) 0155-34-0122
10/28 (Sun) 15:00-19:00	<b>Mori no Halloween Party!!!:</b> Calling all Vampires, Zombies, and Bob Sapps! Come on down to the TIRC for some Halloween fun! There's going to be lots of fun games, face painting, and a haunted house. If you are older than middle school age, we could use your help as a volunteer! We can't say if you'll get a trick or a treat for your efforts though...	森の交流館・十勝 Tokachi International Relations Center ***This party is for middle school kids or younger ***Remember to RSVP!!! 0155-34-0122 tirc@city.obihoro.hokkaido.jp
10/30- 11/4 (Tue - Sun) 9:00-17:00	<b>Obihiro Chrysanthemum Gala:</b> There's going to be a flower bed made up of over 3000 chrysanthemums along with a 1000 flower ring. There will be goods from our sister cities Tokushima and Oita on sale, and there will be stage performances including traditional Japanese dancing and a koto concert. If you prefer more peaceful activities, recharge your "wa" at the tea ceremony in the traditional Japanese garden area.	中央公園 Obihiro Central Park (two blocks East of City Hall) 0155-22-8600