

PULL OF THE POWER



Thousands of torii gates form a spectacular passage to the inner shrine of Fushimi Inari-taisha shrine.

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Since ancient times, Japan has been the site of such passages as pilgrimages to Ise-jingu shrine in Mie Prefecture and ascents of Mt. Fuji, which was

worshipped as a sacred site. In modern times, places referred to as “power spots,” out of the belief that some people have in the ability of these



locales to invigorate and revitalize people emotionally and spiritually, have been attracting interest from young and old alike. We visit two such

“sacred places” in Japan.

Fushimi Inari-taisha

Over the three days from January 1 to 3, Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples across Japan will be visited by great numbers of people who come to pray for good fortune in the coming year, in a ritual known as *hatsumode*. Fushimi Inari-taisha shrine in Kyoto receives a particularly large number of such *hatsumode* petitioners: more than 2.5 million people from all over Japan will visit this shrine over this three-day period every year.

It is said that the history of Fushimi Inari-taisha begins in 711, when the god Inari, to whom the shrine is dedicated, was first enshrined on Inari-yama mountain. The year 2011 will mark the 1,300th anniversary of that event. The god Inari is widely worshipped by those who wish abundant crops, success in business, and safe households. It is estimated that there are some 30,000 shrines dedicated to Inari across Japan, of which the Fushimi Inari-taisha is the original and preeminent shrine.

The grounds and facilities of Fushimi Inari-taisha encompass some 870,000 square meters, extending over the entire Western foot of Inari-yama, which has an altitude of 233 meters above sea level. The main, or inner, shrine, which represents the heart of the shrine proper, was rebuilt in 1499, and has been designated an important national cultural asset.

Of particular note at Fushimi Inari-taisha shrine is the long series of red torii, the distinctive archways that mark the entrances to Shinto shrines. It became customary in the Edo period (1603–1867) for persons whose wishes came true to erect these torii, such that there are some 10,000 torii at the shrine as of this writing.