

Nikko Futarasan Shrine

Main Shrine

Nikko Futarasan Shrine is one of the oldest shrines in Japan, dating back to the eighth century. The shrine consists of three sites, the Honsha main shrine, the Chugushi middle shrine, and the Okunomiya inner shrine.

Mt. Nantai and the surrounding mountains of Nikko were regarded as sacred in the Shinto religion from ancient times. A small shrine was built on the peak of Mt. Nantai in the late eighth century by the holy ascetic Shodo Shonin (735–817). This is now the Okunomiya. Later, the Chugushi was built at the foot of Mt. Nantai, and the Honsha was established closer to where the people lived.

The Shrine is the highest-ranking shrine in Tochigi Prefecture, and over its long history not only local people but also samurai and the powerful have come to worship here.

The main hall enshrines three Shinto kami deities: Onamuchi no Mikoto, Tagorihime no Mikoto, and Ajisukitakahikone no Mikoto. These deities are incarnations of the three mountains of Nikko: Mt. Nantai, Mt. Nyoho, and Mt. Taro.

Haiden, Worship Hall

The haiden worship hall is where prayers to the kami deities are offered. It is also used for festivals. The architecture is simple but powerful, and the decoration in red and black is understated. The samurai statue protects the enshrined deities and the painting is of a sacred deer, which is the messenger of the kami. This building was donated in 1619 by the second Tokugawa shogun, Hidetada (1579–1632).

Honden, Main Shrine

The main shrine building, the honden, is connected to the haiden by a corridor. The main shrine is where the three deities of Nikko Futarasan are enshrined: Onamuchi no Mikoto, Tagorihime no Mikoto, and Ajisukitakahikone no Mikoto. The main shrine was donated by Tokugawa Hidetada, the second shogun of the Tokugawa shogunate which ruled Japan from 1603 to 1867.