

Yashamon Gate

This is the final gate that defends the approach to Iemitsu's mausoleum. It takes its name from the four *yasha* spirits that guard the way. *Yasha* are supernatural beings, Hindu in origin, who are followers of the deity Bishamonten. These four, in particular, vowed to protect the teachings of the Buddha, and each guards one of the cardinal directions. A series of dragons and lions carved on the exterior also protects the mausoleum. On the transom, wainscoting, and walls appear many carvings of peonies, which is why the gate is sometimes called the "Peony Gate." The peony is considered the king of flowers and is a symbol of wealth and rank. This flower frequently appears as a motif on kimono even today. The prominent cusped gable over the entranceway is a Japanese interpretation of a Chinese style.