

History of Oku-Nikko

Oku-Nikko is a naturally dramatic region with a recorded history dating back to the Nara period (710–792). In 767, the monk Shodo, who was born in Tochigi Prefecture, set out to climb Mt. Nantai in Nikko, a mountain considered sacred. On his third attempt, he reached the summit of the mountain and founded the Okunomiya inner shrine of the Futarasan Shrine in 782. Oku-Nikko became a particularly sacred region in Japan for *yamabushi*, followers of *Sangaku Shinko*, or mountain worship. This practice is still popular today. In 788, Shodo discovers Yumoto Onsen hot springs. Over the following centuries, Oku-Nikko drew many religious practitioners from around Japan and became a pilgrimage destination.

After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, international travelers began to visit Japan, and Oku-Nikko was popular as a place to escape the summer heat in Japan. In 1872 British diplomat Ernest Satow's first visited Oku-Nikko. There are a number of former diplomatic summer residences in Nikko. In 1873 Iwana char were released into Lake Chuzenji for the first time by a local resident, and in 1878 British travel writer Isabella Bird visited Oku-Nikko.

In 1934 Nikko was designated a national park.