

Naritasan Shinshoji Temple

Naritasan Shinshoji is one of the main temples of Shingon Buddhism with a history dating back over 1,000 years. Shingon Buddhism is one of the major schools of Buddhism in Japan. Shingon Buddhism was brought back from China by the famous monk Kukai (Kobo Daishi) in the ninth century. It is a school of esoteric Buddhism, which holds that enlightenment is possible in this very life, through the practice of rituals and meditation. The temple is one of the largest and most popular in eastern Japan, covering 220,000 m² and welcoming 10 million visitors every year. Five of Shinshoji temple's buildings are designated Important Cultural Properties, including the two former main halls and the Sanju no to, a three-storied pagoda. The famous image of Fudo Myoo, a Buddhist deity of fierce compassion, which is enshrined in the Daihondo Great Main Hall, is also an Important Cultural Property.

“Naritasan” is the *sango* (the “mountain name” prefix; *san* means mountain) of Shinshoji Temple. Buddhist temples were often built on mountains, and it became common to prefix temple names with the name of the mountain on which they are located.