

Naritasan Shinshoji Temple

Naritasan Shinshoji Temple is the center of Narita city. It was founded in 940, and today it is one of the most popular temples in eastern Japan with over 10 million visitors a year. The temple is the most visited of all Japan's temples for *hatsumode* (first shrine or temple visit of the New Year) when it welcomes 3 million people. It is one of three leading temples of the Chisan sect of Reformed Shingon Buddhism, a school of esoteric Buddhism, which today for many Japanese is defined by its consecrated fire ritual. The *Goma* fire rite is performed daily before the Fudo Myoo, one of the Wisdom Kings in Buddhism, who protects by burning away all impediments and defilements, thus aiding people towards enlightenment. The ritual is held twice each day. There are five buildings that have been designated Important Cultural Properties on the temple's 220,000 m² of grounds. These are the Komyodo and Shakado, which previously served as the main hall of the temple, and the Sanjuno to (three-storied pagoda), the Niomon Gate, and the Gakudo. Some of the structures date back over 300 years and are important examples of early modern temple architecture.