

Stone Lanterns

Kasuga Taisha has the largest and best-preserved collection of stone lanterns anywhere in Japan. Approximately 2,000 stone lanterns line the approach to Kasuga Taisha Shrine.

The oldest lanterns date to the Heian period (794–1185) and are located on the path from the main shrine to Wakamiya Shrine. The lanterns were donated over the centuries by wealthy aristocrats, monks, and members of the warrior class, who could afford to give lanterns to Kasuga Taisha Shrine.

At the start of the Edo period (1603–1867), wealthy merchants began donating lanterns too, and toward the end of that period, common people grouped together to donate a lantern. One famous lantern, located on the right side of the second torii gate, was donated by 800 people.

Until the Edo period, all of the lanterns at Kasuga Taisha Shrine were lit each evening, consuming 280 liters of oil per night. Currently, the approximately 2,000 stone lanterns that line the paths of Kasuga Taisha Shrine are all lit only twice a year, in February and in August.