

### **Ironwork Guardian Dogs (Komainu)**

These precious ironwork guardian dogs were dedicated to the Takachiho Shrine by the first shogun of Japan, Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147–1199), during the Kamakura period (1185–1333). They were designated as a National Important Cultural Property in 1971 due to their age and cultural value. Originally, the dogs sat on either side of the shrine's entrance to protect against malevolent spirits.

### **Foundation Stone (Shizumeishi)**

This stone is thought to have been used as a foundation stone long ago when the Takachiho Shrine was originally built by order of the eleventh emperor of Japan. Its presence served to appease earth spirits of the ground on which the shrine was built. Today it is a key element of the shrine grounds, and has become a site for praying to ease one's worries and find peace. Some say that spiritual energy can be felt emanating from it.