

## **Yin and Yang Rocks**

These two moss-covered rocks are known as the Yin and Yang rocks. The taller, narrower rock is the male rock (yang), and the shorter, wider one is the female rock (yin). These rocks are associated with fertility, and couples often stop here when visiting the Yoryu Kannon Hall to pray for a safe and easy childbirth.

This area of Nikko is strongly associated with fertility and childbirth. Shodo Shonin (735–817), who established many of the temples in Nikko and is enshrined in the nearby Founder's Hall (*kaisando*), felt a special connection to both Kannon and Jizo. Shodo saw visions of the two bodhisattvas in the Nikko area, and both are associated with children. Willow Kannon (*yoryu kannon*) is enshrined in the adjacent building; Jizo, a bodhisattva who aids all sentient beings, is enshrined in the nearby Kaisando along with a statue of Shodo, and Shodo is buried behind the Kaisando.

The theme of children and family are further reflected in Nikko's three sacred mountains. The mountains are thought to be incarnations of Buddhist and Shinto deities and form a family. Mt. Nantai is the father, Mt. Nyoho is the mother, and Mt. Taro is the child.