

## **World Heritage: Shrines and Temples of Nikko**

The Shrines and Temples of Nikko World Heritage Site comprises two shrines and one temple.

Nikko Toshogu is a Shinto shrine dedicated to Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616), founder of the Tokugawa shogunate that ruled Japan from 1603 to 1867. The shrine buildings are famous for their ornate architecture and many carvings of auspicious figures.

Futarasan Jinja Shrine is one of the oldest Shinto shrines in Japan, tracing its history back to the first religious sites in Nikko that were established in the eighth century. It is sacred place for followers of Shugendo mountain worship.

Nikko-zan Rinnoji Temple is a Buddhist temple that now has 15 sub-temples and is the successor to Shihonryuji Temple, which was founded by the mountain ascetic Shodo Shonin (735–817).

The many buildings that make up this shrine-temple complex are surrounded by giant Japanese cedars that are hundreds of years old. The buildings and the trees together form a cultural landscape blending history, architecture, and nature.

Nikko's shrine-temple complex was designated a World Heritage site in 1999 by the twenty-third session of the World Heritage Committee in Morocco. The committee recognized the complex for its unique combination of architectural and artistic genius integrated into a natural landscape, the influence of Nikko's buildings on subsequent Japanese architecture, and its distinctive expression of Shinto values of balance and harmony with nature.