

## **Kawaguchi Asama-jinja Shrine**

Kawaguchi Asama-jinja Shrine was founded after the Jogan Eruption of 864 to appease the volcano deity known as Asama or Sengen. Sengen shrines dedicated to Mt. Fuji had existed for over a century on the southern side of the mountain, but the destruction in 864 was so severe that the imperial court ordered a new shrine founded to the north. The location, facing Mt. Fuji across Lake Kawaguchiko, was chosen partly to protect the shrine in case of further eruption.

Kawaguchi Asama-jinja Shrine is known for its approach lined with sacred cedars. There are seven other sacred cedars on the shrine precincts that are over 1,200 years old, predating the shrine.

In the early nineteenth century, along with other Sengen shrines, Kawaguchi Asama-jinja came to worship Konohanasakuya-hime, a flower goddess who is the daughter of the mountain deity Oyamatsumi. The flower goddess's grandson, Ugayafukiaezu no Mikoto, is honored at an affiliated shrine on Cape Ubuyagasaki. The two shrines celebrate *Magomi no hi*, "grandchild-viewing day," on April 25, and the ceremonies include carrying the flower goddess in a portable *mikoshi* shrine to visit her grandson on the cape.

### **Chigo no Mai: The Children's Dance**

The architecture of Kawaguchi Asama-jinja Shrine is in the *wari-haiden* ("divided worship hall") style characteristic of Sengen shrines, with two main buildings separated by an open space under a single roof. At this shrine, the open space is used for the traditional Chigo no Mai, the "Children's Dance."

Chigo no Mai is a sacred offering performed in traditional costume by local girls aged 7 to 12. The dance is staged twice a year: before the April 25th "grandchild-viewing" ritual, and as part of the sacred *kagura* music festival on July 28.