

Hall of Dreams

The octagonal Hall of Dreams is one of Horyuji Temple's most impressive buildings. The scholar-priest Gyoshin Sozu commissioned it in 739 as a monument to Prince Shotoku. The building was constructed on the site of the prince's private palace, where he lived until his death in 622. The Hall derives its name from a legend that a golden Buddha once appeared to Prince Shotoku in a dream.

A flaming jewel sits atop the roof in the shape of a reliquary. Japan adopted the construction of octagonal wooden halls for use as memorial chapels, and this Hall is an example of this usage. Services in honor of Prince Shotoku were held in the hall, which houses the Guze Kannon, a life-size statue modeled after Prince Shotoku, considered to be a masterpiece of seventh-century Buddhist art. The Guze Kannon is believed to have the power to save those in the world from suffering. Other important statues in the hall are a Nara period (710–794) dry-lacquer statue of the priest Gyoshin Sozu and a Heian period (794–1185) clay sculpture of the priest Dosen Risshi, who oversaw the restoration of the Hall during the Heian period.