

## **Saiendo**

According to the temple records, Gyoki (668–749) a great supporter of the construction of the Great Buddha at Todaiji Temple in Nara, built the original Saiendo here in 718. The octagonal building was commissioned by Lady Tachibana, the mother of Empress Komyo (701–760), consort of Emperor Shomu (701–756). It was reconstructed in 1250. Inside is a seated Nara period (710–794) statue of the healing Buddha, Yakushi Nyorai. This is one of the largest dry-lacquer Buddhist images in Japan. Octagonal halls were a feature of Buddhist architecture during the Nara period.

Every year in early February, a ceremony to drive out demons that dates back to 1261 is held here. Armed with a pikestaff, Bishamonten, the god of war, chases three demons away from the temple.