

Central Golden Hall

Completed in 2018, the Central Golden Hall is Kofukuji's newest building and its first full-scale reconstruction in more than three centuries. A "golden hall" refers to the main hall of the temple that enshrines its principal image. Since these images are usually gilded, they reflect light and emit a golden glow that is compared to Buddhist teaching illuminating the world with the light of wisdom.

Historically, Kofukuji had three Golden Halls. The oldest and most important was the Central Golden Hall, so named because of its position between the Eastern Golden Hall and Western Golden Hall at the center of the complex. Constructed between 710 and 714 at the behest of the founding patron of Kofukuji, Fujiwara no Fuhito (659–720), the original Central Golden Hall housed an image of the historical Buddha Shakyamuni with four attendant bodhisattvas, images of the Four Heavenly Kings, as well as two sets of images portraying the Pure Land of Maitreya (Jp. Miroku), the Buddha of the Future.

Over the centuries, the Central Golden Hall burned down a total of seven times. In 1819, about 100 years after the seventh fire, donations from the people of Nara allowed for the construction of a smaller, temporary hall. However, more than 150 years from that time, it had aged considerably, and another temporary structure was erected in 1975 on the ruins of the auditorium north of the original site. The current Central Golden Hall was reconstructed in the same size and architectural style as the 714 original. It was consecrated in October 2018 with an elaborate series of rituals and is now open to the public.