

Main Hall

The stately building seen inside the Southern Great Gate (Nandaimon), is the Main Hall, or Golden Hall. Built during the latter half of the eighth century, the single-story structure is seven bays wide and four bays deep. The curved hipped roof projects over raised aisles (*hisashi*) that run around the outside of the building's core (*moya*). The aisles are without walls, described in architectural terms as *fukihanachi*, and also provide a base for the pillars that support the roof. Each pillar is topped by a system of brackets and supporting blocks, which connect to and support the eaves. The number of brackets changes according to the degree to which a roof projects, and the bracket complexes also serve an important decorative function. In the corners small supporting blocks are carved with the faces of ogres called *jaki*.

Inside, natural light from the lattice windows illuminates a dais displaying a group of statues. At the center sits the temple's principal image, Rushana Buddha, while to the left stands the Thousand-Armed Kannon Bodhisattva, and to the right, Yakushi, the Buddha of Healing, all statues designated National Treasures.

Examination of the building has revealed remnants of frescoes believed to date back to the hall's inception. These show similar qualities to paintings found at the Mogao cave temples in Dunhuang, which has led to the belief that among the disciples who accompanied Ganjin on his trip to Japan were artists who possessed outstanding painting skills.