

Mieido Hall

With its steep hip-and-gable roof, the Mieido Hall seems at odds with other buildings within the Toshodaiji precincts. In fact, while other halls and the bell tower were built more in the Chinese style of founder Ganjin's birthplace, the Mieido has a distinctly Japanese flavor, bringing to mind such structures as the Kyoto Imperial Palace. Dating back to the Edo period (1603–1868), the building has served a variety of functions, starting life in Nara Park as a sub temple of Kofukuji. Later, during the Meiji era (1868–1912), it housed Nara's prefectural offices and then its district court. Today situated at the northern extreme of the temple complex, it has been a part of Toshodaiji since 1964 and is listed as an Important Cultural Property. Upon its relocation here, the building underwent repairs, and today a statue of the temple's founder Ganjin is enshrined here. The image, which is a National Treasure, was created by Ganjin's disciples before his death in 763.

Surrounding the statue is a series of paintings on sliding doors and partitions that were dedicated to Ganjin by the celebrated artist Kaii Higashiyama, a recipient of Japan's prestigious Order of Culture in 1969. Higashiyama, who studied Western art in 1930s Berlin but is best known for a genre of Japanese painting called Nihonga, spent 12 years producing the murals, which depict Japanese and Chinese landscapes.

The Mieido Hall is open to the public three days a year, on June 6, the anniversary of Ganjin's death, and one day before and after.

The hall is closed for renovations until March 2022.