

The Kami-Daigo Area

Kami-Daigo is the site of the original temple that was founded by Shōbō in the 9th century. A tree-lined mountain path from the lower temple complex leads through the cedar forest to the summit of Mt. Kasatori to the Kami-Daigo precinct. A spring, which is believed to be a source of sacred water, wells up at the entrance to the area. According to legend, it was the presence of this spring that inspired Shōbō to choose this site.

Some of the architecture date back to the oldest era of the temple, the Heian period, such as the Yakushi-dō or Hall of the Medicine Buddha, a designated National Treasure. Many of the other buildings in Kami-Daigo are designated Important Cultural Properties. Although some buildings have been destroyed by fire and others replaced, the panoramic view from the summit, the original layout and the legendary sacred spring transmit an unequalled sense of pristine heritage.

The Nyoirin-dō dedicated to the Bodhisattva of the Wish-fulfilling Jewel, another widely venerated Bodhisattva Daigo-ji is particularly famous for, along with the founder hall of Kaizan-dō with a seated statue of Rigen-Daishi, have been rebuilt by the regent Hideyoshi in 1606. Albeit the current Godai-dō dating to 1940 and being one of the newly erected halls, it symbolizes the original devotion to the Five Wisdom Kings by Rigen-Daishi Shōbō. The statues that had adorned the Yakushi-dō and the Godai-dō can be viewed in the Reihō-kan Treasure Chamber today.

The innermost holy precinct on Kami-Daigo, accessible to visitors, is the hall of Okuno-

in situated next to an ascetic cave, reachable beyond the triple Torii gate right of the Kaizan-dō, with a cliff to its right. Here, ascetics still contemplate their inner anguish in order to draw closer to enlightenment, such as in the asceticism of *nozoki*, where one is hung over a steep cliff by a fellow ascetic.