

Kinpusenji Temple

Kinpusenji Temple is the head temple of the Shugendo religion, a form of mountain worship that combines ancient Japanese nature worship, Buddhist beliefs, and Taoism. The temple is believed to have been established by En no Gyoja (634–701), the founder of Shugendo. Kinpusenji is still an essential base for the many Shugendo practitioners in traditional garb who undertake the arduous trail to Mt. Sanjogatake.

The Zaodo, or main hall, has been designated a National Treasure. It is the second-largest traditional wooden building in Japan after the Great Buddha Hall of Todaiji Temple in Nara, and enshrines three large, deep-blue statues of Zao Gongen, manifestations of three Buddhist deities who appeared to En no Gyoja on this peak. These Important Cultural Properties are only occasionally shown to the public.

Kinpusenji Temple is an important site within the collective “Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range,” designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2004.