

Zaodo (Main Hall)

The main building of Kinpusenji Temple, the Zaodo, has been designated a National Treasure. It houses three huge statues of Zao Gongen (the principal object of worship for the Shugendo religion), which are only occasionally exhibited to the public. Visitors will find many other treasures within this impressive hall, the second-largest traditional wooden building in Japan after Todaiji Temple's Great Buddha Hall in Nara.

Most of the massive supporting columns in the hall are not painted, and still show the natural knots and grain of the wood from trees such as pine and cedar.

According to legend, the founder of Shugendo, En no Gyoja (634–701), established the temple on this spot sometime during the seventh century. Zaodo burned down several times over the years. The current hall is still quite ancient, dating back to 1592.

Priests hold a daily fire ritual, known as *goma*, in which wooden prayer plaques (*gomaki*) are burned inside the hall. The ritual is held each morning and is open to the public.