

Kongobuji Temple

The head temple of the Koyasan sect of Shingon Buddhism was first established on this spot in 816 by the priest Kukai (known posthumously as Kobo Daishi; 774-835), the founder of Koyasan. Today the temple oversees around 3,600 branch temples across the country. Located at the heart of the sanctuary, the temple precinct houses a fine collection of *fusuma* sliding door paintings, a kitchen that can feed 2,000 people at once, and Banryutei, the largest rock garden in Japan.

The temple has undergone several transformations since Kobo Daishi founded Koyasan. In 1593, Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598), a powerful warlord who rose from humble origins and went on to unify Japan, rebuilt the temple in the style we see today. He converted it into a mausoleum to honor his mother and renamed it Seiganji. The structure was again rebuilt in 1863 and, after merging with a neighboring temple in 1869, was named Kongobuji, or “Diamond Peak Temple.” Reminders of its prior connections include Toyotomi’s original main gate and the family’s paulownia crest emblazoned on the large lantern to the left of the gate.

All of the temple grounds, which encompass the smaller temples, businesses and homes of Koyasan, are considered sacred.