

Nakatsu-miya

Nakatsu-miya, one of the three main Munakata Taisha shrines, is located at the foot of Mt. Mitake on the island of Oshima, a short ferry ride off the west coast of Kyushu. It has a commanding view over the fishing port and main harbor, and is at the center of island life.

Mt. Mitake

Nakatsu-miya enshrines Tagitsuhime no Kami, one of the Three Female Deities of Munakata. An ancient ritual site that predates Nakatsu-miya is located at the summit of Mt. Mitake. A path behind the shrine leads up the mountain to Mitake Shrine, built on the ritual site. It takes about 20 minutes to walk to the top of Mt. Mitake.

The origin of the Three Female Deities

Within the grounds of Nakatsu-miya is a small spring, Amanomanai, that feeds into the Amanogawa River. The spring can be reached by following a path leading down from the left side of the main sanctuary. It is written in Japan's oldest chronicles, the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* (early eighth century), that the sun goddess Amaterasu broke her brother's sword into three pieces and purified them in a spring in heaven, called Amanomanai, which gave this spring its name. She then chewed up the pieces and blew out her three daughters, enshrined here as the Three Female Deities of Munakata. Drinking the water is said to grant a long and happy life and also improve your calligraphy skills. Local children mix the spring water with their ink in hopes of improving their brushwork.

Sacred water

Okinoshima also has natural spring water, which made it a convenient stopping point for ancient seafarers. Because the public is not permitted to visit the shrine on Okinoshima, Nakatsu-miya offers amulets containing water from Okinoshima—which is the only substance that can be removed from the island—along with amulets containing water from the spring at Nakatsu-miya and shrine stamps (*goshuin*) from Okitsu-miya.