

Karamon Gate (National Treasure)

Karamon Gate stands before the worship hall and sanctuary of Tōshōgū Shrine. The white pigmentation and intricately carved figures of this Chinese-style gate are symbols of the strength and wealth of the Tokugawa shogunate. The gate was only used on special occasions by dignitaries from the shogunate or the emperor's court.

Curved gables (*karahafu*) indicate prestige and authority in a building, and this gate has such gables on all four sides. The carving above the lintel depicts an audience with the legendary Chinese emperor Shun, who was renowned for his virtuous character. Mythical Chinese sages are depicted in the carvings under the front gable and over the lintels on the sides.

Several dragons adorn the structure, including one rising into the heavens and another returning on the front columns. The white pigment (*gofun*) on the columns is made from crushed seashells and was a rare and expensive material when the gate was built in the 1600s.

Gomadō (Important Cultural Property)

This hall was originally used for the *goma* fire ritual, a religious rite largely associated with esoteric Buddhism. However, when Buddhist practices and images were removed from Tōshōgū following a series of government orders to separate Shinto and Buddhism in 1868, the building became a shrine. People pray at the Gomadō for various blessings and protections, such as their family's health and safety during travel. The statues of the Five Great Wisdom Kings and Twelve Celestial Beings that were once venerated here are now housed in the Dai-Gomadō at Rinnōji.

Sleeping Cat

The small figure of a sleeping cat over the East Corridor leading to the inner shrine of Tōshōgū is one of the best known symbols of Nikkō. The carving is attributed to the famous Hidari Jingorō, an ambidextrous master carpenter (*hidari* means "left-handed") who was allegedly active in the early 1600s.