

Tachiki Kannon (Important Cultural Property)

This carving of Senju Kannon (Thousand-Armed Bodhisattva of Compassion) is the principal deity at Chūzenji Temple. According to legend, Shōdō Shōnin (735–817) was inspired by a vision of the bodhisattva rising above Lake Chūzenji and carved her image from a living katsura tree. The name Tachiki means “standing tree.” The arms that project out to the sides were carved separately and joined to the body at the back. The 6-meter-tall statue is enshrined in the Kannon Hall and is believed to be the oldest Buddhist image in Nikkō.

Senju Kannon is said to hear the pleas of all sentient beings and to come to the aid of all who pray for help. Her many hands make this possible, and each one holds a tool for fighting evil or providing spiritual or physical assistance.

Chūzenji Temple

Chūzenji is a Tendai Buddhist temple that was founded by Shōdō Shōnin in 784. It was originally located on the northern shore of Lake Chūzenji, but a landslide during the Ashio Typhoon of 1902 destroyed most of the temple and sent the Tachiki Kannon into the lake. The statue was found in good condition on the shores of Utagahama Beach on the lake’s south side. Chūzenji Temple was rebuilt near the site where the statue was found. It is the 18th temple on the Bandō 33 Kannon Pilgrimage route.