

Kumano Nachi Taisha Grand Shrine

Kumano Nachi Taisha Grand Shrine traces its history back some 1,700 years. It was founded as a new location for the worship that had begun at Nachi Waterfall, and upholds the same tradition of reverence for nature. According to legend, this location was chosen because a great three-legged crow called the Yatagarasu alighted here after guiding the legendary first emperor Jimmu to present-day Nara.

For much of its history, Nachi Taisha and neighboring Seiganto-ji Temple were part of the same religious complex, exemplifying the Shinto-Buddhist syncretism once prevalent in Japan. Following the Meiji Restoration of 1868, the new government ordered the separation of Shinto and Buddhism, and today the temple and shrine are formally distinct.

The Shrine Grounds

The shrine grounds are arranged around a central courtyard. Across from the main torii gate is the Treasure Hall (*homotsuden*) and Miagatahiko-sha, a subsidiary shrine. To the right stands the worship hall (*haiden*).

Behind the worship hall is the inner sanctum, which is closed to the public. This contains six separate sanctuaries (*honden*) enshrining thirteen deities. The chief enshrined deity is Kumano Fusumi-no-Okami. The shrine is well known for the Nachi Fire Festival, when the enshrined deities are carried to Nachi Waterfall in portable shrines for a “homecoming.”

Passage Through the Womb

In front of the worship hall stands a sacred camphor tree that is more than 850 years old. Underneath the tree is a tunnel called Tainai Kuguri (Passage Through the Womb), and walking through it is thought to bring good luck.