

Nasu Imperial Villa and Nasu Heisei-no-mori Forest

The Nasu Imperial Villa was completed in 1926 at the beginning of the reign of Emperor Shōwa (1901–1989), who had previously visited the area as Crown Prince in 1923. It was the first Imperial Villa built after The Crown Prince's marriage in 1924. He became Emperor in 1926, on the death of Emperor Taishō (1879–1926). Successive emperors and their families have since used Nasu Imperial Villa as a vacation home. The property includes the main villa, annexes, and three wooden pavilions (Ōmeitei, Chōkūtei, and Seishintei).

In 1996, Emperor Akihito (reigned 1989–2019) requested accurate records be kept on the flora and fauna that inhabit the vast forests on the villa grounds. The Tochigi Prefectural Museum conducted a survey between 1997 and 2001, finding that the woods of beech and Japanese oak support a rich and diverse ecology, including a number of rare plant and animal species.

The Emperor wished to share this unique environment with the public, giving them a place to interact with nature while also preserving it for future generations. Accordingly, a tract of about 560 hectares—half of the entire Imperial Villa property—was transferred to the Ministry of the Environment in 2008 to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of Emperor Akihito's ascension to the throne. The area was named Nasu Heisei-no-mori Forest, and today it is preserved and maintained as part of Nikko National Park.