

## Subari Shrine and Fudō Falls

Subari Shrine, located next to Subari Dam, is a small shrine thought to have existed for over a millennium. It enshrines a statue of the fierce-looking Buddhist deity known as Fudō Myō-ō, who is often found near waterfalls or on remote mountains. The origins of Subari Shrine are unclear, but one tale claims that the Fudō statue was brought here by defeated members of the Abe clan toward the end of the Heian period (794–1185). Another legend says that the fearful deity sometimes bathed in the adjacent Fudō Falls.

The shrine has been rebuilt multiple times: initially in 1692, at least twice in the nineteenth century, and most recently in 1938. It was also repaired following torrential rains in 1972, when floodwaters spilled over Subari Dam. The shrine buildings are in the *gongen-zukuri* architectural style, in which the worship hall (*haiden*) and main sanctuary (*honden*) are connected beneath the same roof in an H-shape. A festival is held each year on July 28, when the enshrined statue of Fudō Myō-ō is made visible to the public.

Prior to 1938, Subari Shrine was located closer to Fudō Falls, but now the waterfall is a few minutes' walk west of the shrine along a path that passes the Subari Dam hydroelectric power station. Fudō is a plunge waterfall approximately 30 meters high. A shower-like column of water pours from the cliff face through empty air until it reaches the pool below, creating a misty spray at the bottom. It is sometimes referred to as Urami no Taki, meaning “the rear-view waterfall,” because one can look out from beneath the falling water at the surrounding verdant cliffs.

While it is possible to walk behind the falling water, visitors should watch their footing. Due to moisture from the falls, many of the rocks are moss-covered and slippery.