

Main Shrine (*Honden*)

The Main Shrine is the most sacred area of Tsurugaoka Hachimangu. It enshrines the semi-mythical Emperor Ojin as Hachiman, the guardian deity of both the warrior class and the nation of Japan, together with Ojin's mother Empress Jingu and the goddess Himegami. The sanctuary was rebuilt on **the** mountainside in 1191, after a fire destroyed the previous main shrine at the foot of the mountain. Large sections of the mountain had to be removed to create the site for the shrine. The new location at the top of a stone staircase provides a view over the whole city of Kamakura as well as protection from fires that often spread from the town below. The roof beams of the Main Shrine are decorated with *mitsudomoe*, a swirling pattern made up of three comma-like shapes, suggesting the presence of water. The *mitsudomoe* is an ancient symbol believed to ward off fire.

The structures of the Main Shrine have been rebuilt several times over the centuries. The current building, designated an Important Cultural Property, dates to 1828. The building includes a worship hall (*haiden*), offering hall (*heiden*), and main sanctuary (*honden*) under one roof in a variant of the *gongen-zukuri* style that was popular during the Edo period (1603–1867) and employed at many shrines favored by the ruling warrior class. The Main Shrine area is entered through the Romon Gate, which houses the statues of two guardian deities who protect the sanctuary from evil spirits. **To the left of the main shrine is Takeuchi Shrine, where Emperor Ojin's famously long-lived retainer Takeuchi Sukune is enshrined as a deity of health and long life. Next to this shrine is the Museum of Shrine Treasures, in which are displayed documents, weapons, and other historical artifacts related to Tsurugaoka Hachimangu.**