

## Ishiyamadera Temple

Ishiyamadera Temple is said to have been founded in 747 by the Buddhist priest Roben (689–773), who also founded Todaiji Temple in Nara. According to legend, Ishiyamadera was built on the site where Roben came to pray in search of gold to decorate Todaiji's giant bronze Buddha statue.

Ishiyamadera is known as the place where noblewoman Murasaki Shikibu began writing *The Tale of Genji*, the world's first novel, in the eleventh century. She is said to have been inspired by the view of the full moon over Lake Biwa from the temple's highest point. Ishiyamadera is also home to the oldest wooden two-story pagoda (*tahoto*) in Japan. It was built in 1194 and is designated a National Treasure, and the sculptures and paintings inside are designated Important Cultural Properties.

The temple grounds are full of lush nature to enjoy throughout the year, from the fiery red autumn leaves of maple trees to the cherry blossoms of spring. The sacred rock formation in front of the main hall is wollastonite from the mountain.