

Shodendo Main Hall

The Shodendo is the main building and the spiritual heart of Menuma Shodenzan Temple. The outside of the main building is adorned with colorful carvings which depict Buddhist teachings and allegories, aspects of classical Chinese culture, and auspicious animals for the edification of lay people. The main hall enshrines the deity Shoden (or Kangiten), the deity of joy, conjugal harmony, and longevity, who is the Buddhist representation of the Hindu god Ganesha. The Shodendo is designated a National Treasure.

The main hall is three halls connected under a single roof: a hall of worship (*haiden*) at the front, an inner sanctuary (*okuden*) at the back, and an intermediate hall (*chuden*) inbetween. This style of architecture distinguished by its ornate carvings is known as *gongen-zukuri*. Nikko Toshogu Shrine in Tochigi Prefecture, built in 1635, is one of the most famous examples of *gongen-zukuri* architecture. The Shodendo is often compared with Nikko Toshogu Shrine because of its lavish carvings and architectural style.

The exterior walls of the inner sanctuary at the back of the hall are covered with detailed carvings of flora and fauna, scenes of children playing, and allegorical scenes. Layers of vibrant color and gilding enhance the striking appearance of the inner hall and its carvings.

The Shodendo was completed between 1735 and 1760 and was funded entirely by donations from the local community. The main hall and its carvings were restored from 2003 to 2010.

For a small fee, visitors can walk around the back of the main hall to view the carvings more closely.