

Nyohodo (Okunoin)

The journey up 1,015 steps to the top of the Yamadera temple complex ends at the Okunoin inner sanctuary. The Okunoin comprises two buildings: the Nyohodo Hall (right) and the Daibutsuden Great Buddha Hall (left).

The Nyohodo is the Hall of Buddha's Teachings. Here, monks-in-training practice a labor-intensive form of sutra copying established by Yamadera's founder, the monk Ennin (794–864). Trainees use mugwort brushes and graphite ink to copy the Lotus Sutra one character at a time. After each character, they prostrate themselves and recite the sutra in its entirety three times. As a result, copying all eight scrolls of the Lotus Sutra can take up to four years. Completed copies are enshrined in the Nokyodo sutra hall as an offering to Ennin during leap years on November 28.

The Nyohodo enshrines statues of Shakyamuni, the historical Buddha, and Taho Nyorai, the Buddha of Abundant Treasures.