

Yako Nenbutsu

Worshippers chant rhythmically, illuminated by the soft glow of stone lanterns as they make their way to the inner sanctuary of Yamadera during the *yako nenbutsu* nighttime pilgrimage. This sacred Buddhist ceremony begins on August 6, when participants gather in prayer in front of Yamadera's main hall, the Konpon Chudo. As the sun sets the procession makes its way up the mountain, stopping at each temple building along the way to recite the *nenbutsu*, a prayer to the Celestial Buddha, Amida Nyorai. Once they reach the Okunoin, Yamadera's inner sanctuary, they pray and stop to rest for the night.

The worshippers wake at 5 a.m. the next morning. The procession continues to the Kaisando, a hall dedicated to Yamadera's founder, Ennin (794–864), and the Godaido, a cliffside hall where Buddhism's Five Wisdom Kings are venerated. From there, they make their way back down the mountain.

The *yako nenbutsu* ceremony is registered Intangible Cultural Heritage. It is closed to the public.