

## Seasons of Yamadera - Winter

Yamagata is one of Japan's snowiest prefectures, and the mountainside temple is a blanket of white in winter. Visitors should be sure to wear proper attire and footwear to handle the cold weather and deep snow. The Godaido Hall near the top of the temple complex commands a sweeping view of snow-covered peaks in the distance, reminiscent of a sumi ink painting.

In early January Yamadera is a popular choice for the first visit to a shrine or temple of the new year (*hatsumode*). January 14 marks the death of Yamadera's founder, Ennin (794–864). On this day, the Kaisando, the hall in the temple's upper reaches dedicated to Ennin, opens its doors, and hosts a memorial ceremony in his honor.