

## Seisuiji Temple

The approach to this ninth-century Buddhist temple leads up a path of stone steps lined with 500-year-old cedar trees. Its impressive but dilapidated main sanctuary looks out over the 15 buildings of the temple complex and a pair of 24-meter ginkgo trees.

According to an old Sado legend, in 805 Emperor Kanmu (735–806) sent a Buddhist monk to establish a new temple on Sado. As the monk traveled through the wilderness, he spotted something shining in a nearby river. He followed the water to its source, and there he spent a night at the foot of a pine tree. When he awoke the next day, a heavenly child stood before him. The child told him to build a temple where he lay, and that became the origin of Seisuiji. The temple was completed in 808.

The name “Seisuiji” is written with Chinese kanji characters that mean “pure water.” Seemingly by coincidence, it shares these characters with Kiyomizudera Temple in Kyoto. (Although Kiyomizudera is better known by far, Seisuiji was founded first.) The two temples share other connections as well: Seisuiji’s current main hall dates to 1730 and is the oldest building at the temple. It is perched on a hillside overlooking the grounds, and a wooden platform extends from the front of the hall, supported by tall pillars. This design closely resembles the famous stage at Kiyomizudera. The hall’s primary image is a statue of the thousand-armed manifestation of the bodhisattva Kannon, a deity of compassion. This statue is said to be a replica of the statue at Kiyomizudera.