

## **Sone Tenmangu Shrine**

Sugawara no Michizane (845–903) was a scholar, poet, and politician. Today, he is revered as Tenjin, the deity of learning. In 901, Sugawara's ship docked near Sone as he was on his way to Kyushu. He took the opportunity to climb Mount Hikasa, west of Tenmangu Shrine, where he planted a pine seed and prayed that he would prosper in Kyushu. The seed grew into a great pine tree that became famous.

His son, Atsushige, visited Sone some years later and built a shrine to honor his father. Although the shrine's buildings have been damaged or destroyed during periods of unrest and in natural disasters through the ages, it remains in the same place today, and is known as Tenmangu Shrine. It is one of the main shrines dedicated to Tenjin (the deified Sugawara).

In 1870 the main shrine was rebuilt, but some components from 1590 remain. The current worship hall was built in 1765. It is adorned with images of cattle due to their connection with Sugawara. He is said to have been fond of oxen, even making them his transportation of choice. The famous pine tree called Sone no Matsu, which is thought to have died in 1798, has been preserved to attract visitors, along with the pond and garden.

Many poets have visited the shrine and donated poems over the centuries. Today, people visit to pray for academic success and to attend the shrine's annual festival in autumn.