

## **Futaiji Temple**

This Buddhist temple was founded in 847 by Ariwara no Narihira (825–880), a member of the imperial court and famous poet of the early Heian period (794–1185). Futaiji is best known for its association with Narihira and for its wooden statue of Kannon, the bodhisattva of compassion, which was allegedly carved by Narihira himself. The temple's three main structures—its pagoda, southern gate, and main hall, which houses the Kannon and other statues—were built in the Kamakura period (1185–1333).

Prior to the founding of Futaiji, this land belonged to Emperor Heizei (773–824), who reigned from 806 until 809, when sudden illness forced him to step down. After a failed attempt to regain the throne in 810, Heizei withdrew to Nara, where he built a private residence, became a Buddhist priest, and retreated from the world of the courts. His residence was passed down to his son, Prince Abo (792–842), and then to his grandson, Ariwara no Narihira. Narihira is one of the most famous historical figures of the

Heian period. He is remembered for his *waka* poetry, which is still quoted today, as well as for his debonair good looks and numerous romantic exploits.

In addition to its history and statuary, the temple is known for its verdant grounds, which are home to some 500 species of flowers and plants.