



MAGNIFICENT NIKKO

SACRED AREA WHERE UNTOUCHED NATURE MEETS RELIGIOUS FUSION

Land of the gods.

It was an eruption of Mt. Nantai roughly 20,000 years ago that created wondrous Nikko. Lava dammed the valley giving birth to Lake Chuzenji. The Nikko mountain range surrounds the lake at elevations of around 2000 m and has been revered by people for more than 1200 years as a sacred mountain worship site created by the gods. "Build a small temple in the mountains of Nikko and enshrine me there." Approximately 400 years ago, the shogun who established the Edo shogunate, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542 – 1616), selected Nikko as his final resting place. Ieyasu never visited Nikko while he was alive, but in his mind it was the place where the gods gather and he longed to be there too. Those who worked on building the temples and shrines, such as Toshogu Shrine (World Heritage Site), where Ieyasu is enshrined, stayed in Nikko eventually developing their own unique culture. Numerous temples and shrines remain throughout Nikko, where the mountain-based faith continues even today. Many people visit Nikko now in the hopes of encountering the gods.



Re-Discover Nikko

Transcendental Origins

The mountain faith of Nikko born from robust natural scenery.

The mountains of Nikko have a revered solemnity. The unexplored terrain of Nikko was first pioneered by the monk, Shodo Shonin (735 - 817). At the time when Kannon faith was popular, Shonin saw the summit of Mt. Nantai (2486 m) as the Kannon Pure Land and worshipped the gods residing in the mountain. He then sought the summit in order to master his own faith. Hindered by deep primitive forests, Shonin was finally successful on his third attempt, and he built a small shrine. It is said this was the origin of the present Futarasan Shrine's okumiya (rear shrine).

Mt. Nantai

Rising above the northern shore of Lake Chuzenji, its magnificent image is the most prominent of the Nikko mountain range. The lakes, waterfalls, grasslands, and wetlands spreading at the foot of the mountain were created from Mt. Nantai's eruptions. Every year the Nantaisan Tohai Kosha Festival is held on July 31st and people begin climbing towards the summit at midnight the following day.



Eternal Protector

Shogun in life, god in death.

The founder of the Tokugawa shogunate, Tokugawa Ieyasu, chose Nikko as his final resting place. The beauty of Nikko Toshogu Shrine (World Heritage Site), where the shogun is enshrined, will take your breath away. Buildings that have been designated as National Treasures of Japan and Important Cultural Properties line the grounds. The master craftsmen who were gathered from around the country used lacquer and rich colors in building Toshogu Shrine, which also features numerous sculptures on its pillars. Records from the time indicate a total of 4.54 million people worked on the shrine completing its construction in a year and five months.

Toshogu Shrine

Within the grounds of Toshogu Shrine there are 55 buildings, 8 of which are designated National Treasures and 34 are designated Important Cultural Properties, adorned with sculptures by master craftsmen from around the country. One of the most famous sculptures in all of Japan displayed here, "Three Wise Monkeys" is said to depict "see no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil."



Ieyasu's Tomb

If you draw a straight line through Toshogu Shrine's Yomeimon Gate, Karamon Gate, and Honden Main Hall, the North Star lies to the north and Edo (Tokyo) to the south. Even in death the shogun watches over and protects Edo.

Shinto Heritage

The forms born from Nikko's beliefs.

The faith born from the mountains embodied itself in various forms at Nikko. The strong faith instilled in people during the Nara period (710 - 794) remained with them throughout the years as they made clearings in the mountains to build temples, shrines, and Buddhist statues. Many of the craftsmen settled here to build temples and shrines and continue caring for them. The monuments surrounding the area's Nisha Ichiji (literally 'two shrines and one temple' made up of Futarasan Shrine, Toshogu Shrine, and Rinno-ji Temple) and their architecture were collectively registered as a World Heritage Site in 1999 as the "Shrines and Temples of Nikko." We can learn about the forms born from the flow of time from the past to the present through the "Shrines and Temples of Nikko."

Nikkosan Rinno-ji Temple

Nikkosan Rinno-ji Temple is the collective name for the halls, pagodas and 15 sub temples that comprise the temple. Its origin goes back more than 1200 years when Shodo Shonin built Shihonryu-ji Temple. The Sanbutsudo Hall is the largest-scale wooden structure at Nikko and enshrines the Buddhist manifestations of the "kami," or gods, of Nikko's three mountains embodied in the three statues of Buddhist deities housed here.



Nikko Futarasan Shrine

The ancient Futarasan Shrine is where the Nikko mountain faith began. It has been long-worshipped as the enshrinement of the Futara-san (another name for Mt. Nantai) god. The beautiful vermilion lacquered wooden Sacred Bridge (shinkyo) adorning the entrance to the mountains of Nikko might also be called the gateway to the World Heritage Site "Shrines and Temples of Nikko."



Iemitsu's Taiyuin Mausoleum

This mausoleum dedicated to Iemitsu, the third shogun, stands at Nikkosan Rinno-ji Temple. Taiyuin is the name given to Iemitsu posthumously. It was built by the fourth shogun, Ietsuna in accordance with Iemitsu's will so that he could serve his grandfather Ieyasu, whom he had a deep respect for, even in death. The mausoleum was built so that it looks upon Toshogu Shrine, a testament to Iemitsu's reverence for Ieyasu.



Chuzen-ji Temple, Tachiki Kannon

A branch of Nikkosan Rinno-ji Temple built by Shodo Shonin, the monk who pioneered Nikko. The principal object of worship at the temple is the Juichimen-senju Kannon Bosatsu (Kannon with eleven faces and one thousand arms), which is an Important Cultural Property. It is said Shodo Shonin saw the Senju Kannon appear over Lake Chuzenji and carved its image in a standing Judas tree.

Picturesque Scenery

Wondrous water.

Nikko features many beautiful waterscapes. One of the sites tourists visiting the area set out to see in particular is Kegon Falls, one of Japan's three most beautiful waterfalls created by lava flow from Mt. Nantai with a 97 m drop from Lake Chuzenji. The area surrounding the waterfall's basin is enveloped in a fine mist giving it an air of mystery. In addition to Lake Chuzenji, the wondrous waters of Nikko can also be found at Kirikomi Lake, Saino Lake, and Yunoko Lake.



Ryuzu Falls

There are so many waterfalls in the Nikko area, it is said there are 48 in total. The rocks near the basin of this waterfall split its flow giving it the appearance of a dragon's head. From the end of September the beautiful autumn leaves provide an additional element to enjoy.



Hatcho Dejima Peninsula

The area surrounding Lake Chuzenji is known as one of the best spots in Japan to view autumnal leaves. The changing leaves of the protruding Hatcho Dejima peninsula is one of the most popular landscapes. In autumn, the area throngs with people taking in the views from observation decks and boats.



Kegon Falls

The hard rock was hallowed in 1930 for the construction of an elevator that will carry you to an observation deck at the basin of the waterfall in a mere 90 seconds. Standing on the observation deck allows you to experience the magnificence of Kegon Falls up close.



Little Known Treasures

Where the gems of Nikko are hidden.

Yunoko Lake lies in upper Nikko, formed as a result of an eruption of Mt. Mit-sudake. From Yunoko Lake, the Yukawa River flows into Lake Chuzenji. There are also the marshlands of Senjogahara formed when Mt. Nantai erupted and caused the river to dam, and Odashirogahara field, which provides a transition from marshland into grassland. In 2005, the 260.42 hectares of land that include these four locations was registered under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands as “Oku-Nikko-shitsugen (the marsh in Oku-Nikko).” These marshlands that serve as a natural habitat for living creatures are one of Nikko’s treasures that will be preserved for generations to come.

Senjogahara Marshland

The gods of yore battled over the beautiful Lake Chuzenji. This is where the marshland’s name, “Senjogahara” or battlefield, originates. The land here transformed into a wetland from what was once a lake. A maintained path for natural research wraps around the entire marsh and a 2-hour hiking course is also well maintained.



Sustainable Paradise

Preserved for creatures of the wetlands.

Wetlands are a paradise for living creatures. In particular, more than 350 kinds of native plants grow in the Senjogahara marshland, which is also famous as an observation site among bird watchers. It is not only wild birds that make this land their home. The well-maintained, superior natural environment is also inhabited by animals such as the Japanese serow, Japanese dormouse, Asian black bear, and Japanese macaque. Sockeye salmon, rainbow trout and brown trout are found in the lakes, where many people enjoy fishing.





Indulgence

**Unwind in hot springs
that have provided
refreshment for over
1200 years.**

Hot springs, known as onsen, have the power to relax not only your body, but your mind as well. It is perhaps for this reason onsens play such an important role in the lives of busy Japanese people. Nikko also has a famous onsen. The hot spring town of Yumoto Onsen lies to the north of Yunoko Lake, the source of the Yukawa River, deep within Senjogahara. It has a long history starting with its discovery by Shodo Shonin more than 1200 years ago. As you immerse yourself in this onsen that has maintained its popularity for more than 1200 years, spend a moment to reflect on its eternal history.

Revitalization

What else is waiting for you in Nikko?

Nikko is full of places where you can enjoy nature to your heart's content. There are plenty of places where you can enjoy activities such as stream climbing, rafting, fly fishing, snowshoeing, skiing, and airboarding. Today, both the quiet Nikko represented by its temples and shrines and a dynamic Nikko are faithful representations of the area.



Culture

Refined
over generations.

When Toshogu Shrine was rebuilt in the Edo period, the sculptors who had come from far and wide began to settle in the area. Their skills can still be witnessed in the wooden geta sandals and Nikkobori carvings of today. These craftsmen seemed to have had an interest in food as well. They brought a rich food culture of sake, soba, and yuba (bean curd skin) with them from their corners of Japan and those authentic flavors have been passed down unchanged through the generations. The years have been linked together by nature, refining the culture of Nikko along the way.

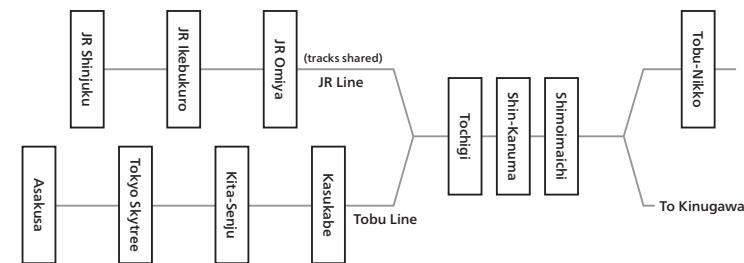


Real Nikko

The Nikko of old is waiting for you today.

When Japan began modernizing 100 years ago, diplomats who came to Japan spent the summers in the Lake Chuzenji area. Though Nikko is part of the Kanto region, its high altitude gives it the coolness of the Tohoku region or Hokkaido. Nikko is as well known today among people as it was among those who stayed on the shores of the lake back then, and the reasons are probably the same; the majestic natural environment and its proximity to Tokyo (though the visitors from the past would probably envy the convenience of a 2-hour trip from Asakusa on Tobu Railway).

A variety of time continuums exist in Nikko. The 20,000 years since volcanic eruptions created the lakes and waterfalls, the 1200 years since the discovery of its hot springs, the 400 years since a temple was dedicated to Tokugawa Ieyasu, the 100 years since travellers began visiting the area, and now. When you visit Nikko, which Nikko will you discover? However, time does not stand still. Nikko is changing. In 2020, The Ritz-Carlton Nikko will appear on the shores of Lake Chuzenji. You can find both the old and the new at ever-changing Nikko whenever you visit.





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