



Daigo-ji: Head Temple of the Daigo School of Shingon Buddhism

More than 1,150 years of prayer from the mountain summit to the foothills



Five-storied Pagoda, Daigo-ji

At a Glance

FOUNDED 874

LOCATION Fushimi Ward, Kyoto

PRINCIPAL IMAGE Yakushi Nyorai, the Medicine Buddha

FOUNDER Shōbō, posthumously known as Rigen Daishi

PRECINCTS Approx 600 hectares across Kami-Daigo and Shimo-Daigo

KNOWN FOR Inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 1994 as part of the Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto

Overview & History

Daigo-ji stretches across Mount Daigo in Kyoto's Fushimi Ward. The temple traces its origins to 874, when the monk Shōbō (posthumously known as Rigen Daishi) discovered the sacred spring known as Daigo-sui and built a simple hermitage on the mountain. With imperial support, the temple complex grew from Kami-Daigo near the summit to Shimo-Daigo at the foot of the mountain.

A major center of Shingon Esoteric Buddhism, Daigo-ji also has deep ties to Shugendō mountain asceticism. Prayer services, goma fire rituals, sutra copying, and mountain training continue today. Across its vast precincts are National Treasure and Important Cultural Property buildings, together with an exceptional collection of Buddhist sculpture, paintings, documents, and decorative arts.

Highlights

The temple's sacred traditions, historic architecture, cultural treasures, and mountain landscape reflect more than a thousand years of faith and patronage.

01

The Five-storied Pagoda and Temple Complex

Completed in 951, Daigo-ji's five-storied pagoda is a National Treasure and the oldest surviving wooden building in Kyoto Prefecture. The approximately 38-meter-tall pagoda stands beside the Kondō at the historic heart of Shimo-Daigo.



Five-storied Pagoda, Shimo-Daigo

02

Sanbō-in and Its Garden

Founded in 1115, Sanbō-in served as the residence of Daigo-ji's successive head priests. Its National Treasure Omote Shoin and Karamon embody the splendor of Momoyama culture. The garden, designated both a Special Historic Site and a Special Place of Scenic Beauty, was laid out under Toyotomi Hideyoshi's direction for the celebrated Daigo cherry-blossom viewing of 1598.



Bentendō Hall and Benten Pond, Shimo-Daigo

03

Cherry Blossoms and the Seasons

More than 700 cherry trees are said to have been planted for Hideyoshi's grand celebration, and Daigo-ji remains one of Kyoto's best-known cherry-blossom destinations. Around Bentendō, fresh spring greenery, autumn foliage, and winter snow transform the extensive precincts throughout the year.

04

Kami-Daigo

Kami-Daigo is the mountain sanctuary where Daigo-ji began. Daigo-sui spring, Yakushidō, Godaidō, and Kaisandō are scattered across its forested slopes. The climb from Shimo-Daigo is itself a reminder of the temple's enduring traditions of mountain worship and disciplined practice.

05

Reihōkan Museum and Cultural Heritage

Daigo-ji preserves more than 150,000 cultural properties. The Reihōkan Museum displays selected Buddhist sculptures, paintings, decorative arts, and historical documents, offering insight into Shingon Buddhism, Japanese religious history, and the development of Buddhist art.