

# National Park / Historical and picturesque site

# Mitokusan Nageire-dō Viewpoint



⑱ Pilgrimage Reception Office  
~ ① National Treasure Nageire-dō

- Altitude difference 200m
- Distance 900m
- Round trip time 2h

- 【国指定文化財】
- ① 国宝 投入堂 (附 愛染堂)
  - ⑤ 納経堂 ⑨ 地藏堂 ⑩ 文殊堂
- 【県指定文化財】
- ② ~ ⑲ 三徳山三佛寺建造物群
  - (② 不動堂 ③ 元結掛堂 ④ 観音堂 ⑧ 鐘樓堂 ⑬ 野際稲荷 ⑲ 三佛寺本堂)
  - ㉔ 正善院庭園

## Japan Heritage sites in Misasa

In 2015, Mount Mitoku and Misasa Onsen were registered as Japan Heritage sites by the Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan. Their designations as “Japan’s most exciting national treasure” and “the world’s pre-eminent radon hot springs” respectively, as well as “the land of the purification of the six roots of perception and the healing of the six senses,” represent the link between ascetic practice (Mount Mitoku) and the hot springs (Misasa Onsen).

Mount Mitoku’s steep terrain is used as a place of asceticism. It also has an unnatural landscape that reveals temples whose peculiar shapes and architecture show the syncretic fusion of Shintoism and Buddhism. This majestic, yet hard to reach, site has been both preserved and feared for over 1300 years.

It is said that Misasa’s hot springs were originally discovered by Ōkubo Samanosuke, a subject of the Minamoto no Yoshitomo clan, who was then on a pilgrimage to Mount Mitoku. As a show of gratitude for not taking the life of a white wolf he had encountered, the Bodhisattva Myōken appeared and told Samanosuke the location of a hot spring. This is called the Legend of the White Wolf. For nearly 900 years, Misasa’s hot springs have been a place where pilgrims can purify and heal their body and mind after their ascent on Mount Mitoku. The deep connection between the beliefs of Mount Mitoku and the hot springs can be best understood during the Fire Festival in October and the Hanayu Festival in May.

Mount Mitoku is its own unique world which embodies its pilgrims’ ability to purify their six roots of perception, or rokkon (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and spirit) by praying along a precipitous cliff. At the same time, they can purify their six senses, or rokkan (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and spirit), by bathing in the hot springs.

## National Treasures: Nageire-dō and Aizen-dō

The Sanbutsu-ji temple states that Nageire-dō was founded on Mount Mioku in 706 by En no Gyōja according to the Legend of the Lotus Petals. This national treasure, which is the most important temple of the Sanbutsu-ji complex, has Heian era architecture. It has been built on pillars in the kake-zukuri style in a cave named “Kasa-iwa,” which formed from hard andesite and soft tuff breccia rock. It also has a Japanese cypress bark roof, whose nagare-zukuri shape follows the architectural style of Shinto shrines.

A bronze mirror and seven Zao Gongen statues, one of which is the most worshipped named Kongō Zao Gongen dating back to 1168, were enshrined inside Nageire-dō. These important cultural artifacts are currently displayed in the “Treasure Hall.”

In 2001, the Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties confirmed that the building dates back to the second half of the Heian period.

According to the legend, En no Gyōja went to Mount Mitoku, built a temple at the bottom of the mountain, and, thanks to incantations and divine forces, managed to throw it into a cave. This is why the temple is called “Nageire-dō,” or “thrown-in temple.”