

The Kyoto Basin Protected by Directional Deities

In Feng Shui, there is a notion that there are certain favorable landscapes and geographic features to build a city. An ideal location would have mountains in the north, rivers in the east, lakes or swamps in the south, and a main road on the west. Indeed, Kyoto is surrounded by the Funaokayama mountain (north), Kamogawa river (east), Oguraike pond (south), and the San'indo road (west), and each side is protected by mythical creatures called Black Tortoise (north), Azure Dragon (east), Vermillion Bird (south), and White Tiger (west). Based on these beliefs, some people visit the five protective shrines (the four shrines from each direction plus the Heian Shrine in the center) known as Gosha Meguri. The order of visit may be random. Get your shikishi (fancy cardboard) at the first location you visit to collect all five stamps, or shuin.



A mythological creature and guardian of the West in terms of direction. It represents the color white and presides over the autumn season.



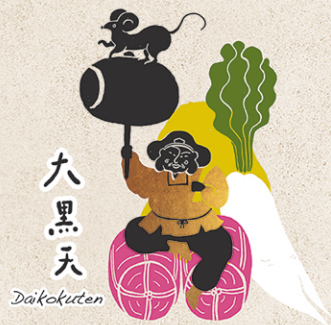
A mythological creature and guardian of the North in terms of direction. It represents the color black and presides over the winter season.



A mythological creature and guardian of the South in terms of direction. It represents the color red (vermillion) and presides over the summer season.



A mythological creature and guardian of the East in terms of direction. It represents the color blue (or green) and presides over the spring season.



The syncretic Japanese deity stemmed from a god in India who was then worshipped as the guardian of Buddhism in China. In Japan, people worship him as the god of fortune and wealth.



Representing happiness, wealth, and longevity, this member of the Seven Lucky Gods originated from the god of longevity worshipped in China, who is also believed to be an incarnation of Canopus.



The only goddess of the Seven Lucky Gods is believed to have originated from a Hindu goddess of water, but today in Japan, she is also a patron deity of language and music.



Jurōjin originated from a Chinese Taoist god and is known to be accompanied by a deer which symbolizes longevity. Worshipping this member of the Seven Lucky Gods is believed to grant long life and recovery from illnesses.



This member of the Seven Lucky Gods was originally worshipped in India as the protector of divine treasures. In Buddhism, he is also known as the guardian of the northern direction.

The pilgrimage is so popular that tours are held in January. Each location offers different shikishi boards so which temple should you visit first?



Also known as Budai, he is an ancient Chinese monk who is believed to have been an incarnation of Bodhisattva Miroku (Maîtreya in Sanskrit). He is worshipped as the god of matrimonial happiness and fertility.



Ebisu is worshipped as the patron deity of the seas, fishery, and business prosperity. He is the only member of the Seven Lucky Gods who originated in ancient Japan.



Takarabune ("Treasure Ship") is believed to represent the beginning of a new journey or the celebration of a new chapter in life. People believe that tucking this image under your pillow on the night of January 1st and sleeping with it will bring you good luck. January 1st will bring you good luck.

The Evolution of the Shichifukujin Tour in Kyoto Symbolize People's Wishes and Faith

The Seven Lucky Gods are gods of good fortune that gradually took form as they were spread among commoners over the course of history. Among the seven, Ebisu is the only deity who originated in ancient Japan. Daikokuten, Bishamon ten, and Benzaiten are deities from India, and Fukurokuju, Jurōjin, and Hotei are deities from China. Legend has it that tucking an image of the Seven Lucky Gods riding on their Treasure Ship under your pillow and sleeping with it on the evening of January 1st will bring you good luck. Locals have also been actively going on short pilgrimage tours to visit the seven shrines and temples that worship the Seven Lucky Gods, known as Miyako Shichifukujin Meguri. The order of visit may be random. Get your shikishi (fancy cardboard) at the first location you visit to collect all seven stamps, or shuin.