**Kokutaiji Temple and Atago Pond**

Just outside Shirakami Shrine, on the footpath of Peace Boulevard, is a grove of trees surrounding a small dry pond. This is Atago Pond, which was once part of the garden of the grand Kokutaiji Temple, a Buddhist place of worship neighboring Shirakami Shrine. During the Edo period (1603–1867), when the Asano family ruled Hiroshima, Kokutaiji was the most influential temple in the city. It was responsible for handling the burials of Asano clan members.

Like Shirakami Shrine, Kokutaiji Temple was built near what was then the Hiroshima coastline, and Atago Pond faced a river that emptied into the sea. Even at the time of the atomic bombing, the area around the pond was still lightly forested, although it was no longer on the water. Kokutaiji Temple was completely destroyed in the bombing, but many of the trees around the pond survived the blast. Some still bear the marks of the explosion, while others burned but later sprouted new shoots. In 1978, when the temple was rebuilt to the west, in the Koi district, the remains of Atago Pond were preserved on the original site as a reminder of the city’s resilience.