

## Shuon'an: Rock Gardens

The structures of Shuon'an Ikkyuji Temple are surrounded by traditional Japanese Zen rock gardens of stunning beauty. The temple is a prime spot to enjoy the richness of nature during the four seasons, particularly the cherry blossoms in the spring and the changing foliage in the fall. Hojo Garden, which surrounds the *Hojo* (Abbot's Chamber), has been designated a national historic site of scenic beauty.

Each area of the garden has distinctive features. To the north is a traditional rock garden designed to reimagine the sacred Mount Horai. Mount Horai is a mythological mountain that is home to the Immortals. It is also said that the souls of the deceased gather here after death. The 2 m-tall stone found in the northeastern corner of the garden is called the "Kannon Stone." In the eastern garden are stones of various sizes that represent the sixteen defenders of Buddhism. The southern section is designed to recall the sea and consists of a classical Zen garden with lush greenery, including azaleas and large sago palms on its western end. Clockwise from the north, the different segments of the Hojo Garden represent the journey from Mount Horai, the path to the sea, and finally the sea itself.