

Omido Kannonji Temple

Omido Kannonji Temple is believed to have been established over 1,300 years ago by an imperial edict. At its height, it was highly prosperous with thirty-three grand temple structures. Today, Omido Kannonji Temple is a fraction of its past size and has only a main hall. It is known for its principal deity, an Eleven-Headed Kannon Bodhisattva that is one of only seven recognized as National Treasures in Japan. Flanked on all sides by nature, Kannonji Temple's surroundings are considered particularly beautiful, with a line of cherry blossom trees and yellow flowers that bloom in the spring, and stunning fall foliage.

History

In the eighth century, Omido Kannonji Temple was highly prosperous, having expanded to thirty-three structures. In 744, the statue of the Eleven-Faced Kannon was enshrined here as the principal deity. Over the centuries, the temple suffered fire damage on multiple occasions, but was always rebuilt by members of the Fujiwara clan, a powerful family that dominated the politics during the Nara (710–794) and Heian (794–1185) periods. A fire in 1437, however, razed all thirteen halls and twenty priest quarters, and only the Main Hall was later rebuilt. Today, all that remains from the original Omido Kannonji Temple's is a cornerstone, thought to be the remnant of a five-storied pagoda. The temple never regained its former size. The current main hall was last rebuilt in 1953.

Treasures and Artifacts

The deity venerated at Omido Kannonji Temple is Kannon Bodhisattva. Its representation, the Eleven-Headed Kannon statue, is believed to be the original Kannon enshrined here at the temple's beginnings and is one of only seven of its kind recognized as a National Treasure. Its features are serene, exuding a gentle femininity. In the main hall there is also a picture version of the Heart Sutra, which is called *eshingyo*. In the Edo period (1603–1867) it became customary to write the text of the Heart Sutra with pictographs for those who could not read.