

Joruriji Temple: Three-Storied Pagoda

The Three-Storied Pagoda of Joruriji Temple is a National Treasure of Japan. It was moved to its current location on the eastern shore of the temple's central pond in 1178 from Kyoto and is the only remaining Kyoto structure from the Heian period (794–1185). The other structures were all burned down or destroyed during periods of war. It is presumed to have been moved shortly after construction. Paintings of Buddhist divinities along the walls of the first floor presumably date from the late Kamakura period (1185–1333) when restoration work was performed on the pagoda.

The pagoda enshrines a wooden statue of Yakushi Nyorai, the Buddha of Healing. Yakushi Nyorai is believed to save all sentient beings from worldly suffering. The statue was made in the twelfth century using the *ichiboku* technique, which involves the piece being carved from a single tree trunk, and is now an Important Cultural Property of Japan. It is still seated on its original lotus pedestal. While this statue is not usually open to the public, it can be viewed on the eighth day of every month provided the weather is clear. It is also viewable on the day of the spring and autumn equinox, which are particularly special for the temple. On the day of the equinox, the sun rises in the east from directly behind the pagoda and traces an arc overhead to set right behind the Main Hall to the west. The temple's design takes this equinoctial trajectory in mind, and it is believed that one can feel the presence of Pure Land Paradise most intensely on these days.