

Tennenji Temple

This ancient wooden temple is literally built into the face of a cliff wall. For hundreds of years after its construction in the Heian period (794–1185), it was a center for *shugendo*, arduous training for ascetic Buddhist monks in search of enlightenment. The trails they used in their regimen crisscross the hills and valleys of this peninsula and are a favorite of hikers and pilgrims. The Buddhist Temple Lecture Hall (on the left) shares space with a Shinto shrine (behind the *torii* gate on the right), an example of the coexistence of Buddhism and Shinto that was characteristic of this area. A spirited traditional festival called *Shujo Oni-e*, held at the temple on the seventh day of the old calendar (usually in February), illustrates how the two religions sometimes shared more than space. The exuberant main event features a pair of dancing masked *oni* (the ogres of ancient Japan), wielding torches and flinging sparks over the crowd of attendees. While ferocious in appearance, the *oni* are actually reincarnated Buddhas, welcomed in to chase away evil and bring good luck and prosperity to those fortunate enough to be touched by the sparks.