

Dining Hall

On the north side of the Yakushiji temple complex stands a striking, 41-meter-long red and white building, which is a reconstruction of the temple's Dining Hall, or Jikido. The original is thought to have been built in 730 for monks to partake of their meals, and was also a place where they could gather and talk freely. According to excavations of the site, the hall would have been of a significant scale, big enough to seat at least 300 people. An entry in the temple's historical records tends to support this view, saying the Dining Hall was second only to Nara's Todaiji and Daianji temples in terms of scale. In its heyday Yakushiji accommodated and trained somewhere between 300 and 350 monks.

The original dining hall was destroyed by fire in 973 and rebuilt three decades later. The history of the building thereafter is unknown until the present building was completed in 2017. While the new building's exterior harks back to the Nara period (710–794), its spacious interior has a modernist feel and was designed by renowned architect Toyo Ito. Circular outlines on the floor indicate the place where excavations found remnants of pillars that would have supported the original building's sizable roof.

Today the hall serves as a multipurpose facility, hosting a wide range of events from religious ceremonies to symposiums. Its excellent acoustics make it ideal for concerts, and a variety of art and other exhibitions are also held here.