

The Bell Tower

Byodoin Temple's Bell Tower is one of the three main structures that have survived on the temple grounds. Over its long history, many of the temple's treasures, halls, and towers have been lost to fire, leaving only the Phoenix Hall, the Kannon Hall, and Bell Tower.

The bronze temple bell was once hung in the tower by the pond on the south side of Phoenix Hall. In order to preserve this important cultural property from corrosion caused by air pollution, the original was removed in 1967 and in 1972 was replaced with a reproduction. The original is now on exhibit in the Hoshokan Museum.

The bell is one of the three largest preserved from ancient times, alongside those at Onjoji and Todaiji temples. The Byodoin bell is often praised as having the finest decoration of the three, while the other two are renowned for their tone and resonance, respectively. The crown of the Byodoin bell is dragon-shaped, and its surface depicts reliefs of lions, phoenixes, and dancing celestial beings amid a pattern of flowers and plants.

During the New Year's Eve ceremony at Phoenix Hall, the replica bell is rung many times around midnight. This is known as *joya-no kane*, and visitors can join in ringing the bell.