

## Onsenji Temple

No visit to Kinosaki Onsen is complete without a stop at the historic Onsenji Temple, known as the guardian temple of the hot springs. Located half-way up Mt. Daishi, the main temple hall can be reached either by taking the Kinosaki Onsen Ropeway or by climbing around 500 stone steps. A visit to the temple used to be a necessary ritual before entering the sacred waters: visitors would receive a special ladle to use for bathing during their visit to the temple. This ladle was also their entry ticket to the hot springs. After bathing, the ladle was then be returned to the temple.

Onsenji Temple was founded in 738 CE by Buddhist priest Dochi Shonin and houses many important artifacts. One of these, the statue of the Buddhist deity known as Juichimen Kannon Bosatsu (“Eleven-Faced Kannon”), is a designated Important Cultural Property. This bodhisattva of compassion and mercy is on display for only three years at a time. When it is not shown, the sacred wooden statue is housed inside a box for 30 years and only the top half is shown for two days a year when the Onsen Festival takes place.