

Ankokuji Temple

The Tanto region of Toyooka city and is surrounded by stretches of farmland and natural greenery. This Zen Buddhist temple has a history that dates back to 1345 and is one of 68 Ankokuji temples scattered around Japan. The temple is part of the Daitoku-ji branch of the Rinzai School, one of the three main sects of Zen Buddhism in Japan. Unfortunately, it was destroyed by fire in 1717, but was later rebuilt and moved in 1904 to its current location.

Ankokuji Temple is best known for the gorgeous foliage of the *dodan-tsutsuji* shrubs (*Enkianthus perultas*), which turns into flaming color on the hill behind the temple's main building in autumn. Over 10 of these bushes are clustered together around the main bush, which is around 160 years old. The bushes make a picturesque backdrop to the temple grounds, which welcome roughly 30,000 visitors during the autumn season who come to catch a glimpse of the brilliant scene, especially attractive when lit up in the evenings. Visitors may also visit the former temple location, known today as Ankokuji Park, where many white *natsu tsubaki* (Japanese stewartia) bloom in late June.