

Kotokuji Temple

Temple of Shining Virtue

This temple, whose name translates as “Temple of Shining Virtue,” is thought to have been established around 1500. According to historical documents, it was a Zen temple of the Rinzai school by 1599. Notice its two gates: the relatively plain postern gate (*tsuyomon*) was for ordinary people and the much more ornate imperial envoy gate (*sanmon*) was for higher-ranking visitors. Both the main hall (*hondo*) and the temple kitchen and residence (*kuri*) date from the Edo period (1603–1868).

The main hall contains two images: one of Yakushi, the Healing Buddha, and the other of plump Ebisu, one of the Seven Lucky Gods. If one listens carefully, the floor can be heard squeaking underfoot, a deliberate construction known as *uguisubari* (nightingale floor) to warn of intruders. In the *kuri*, there is an unusually large temple crest in the shape of a Chinese bellflower on the far wall. There is also a wheeled palanquin on display. This was invented in the latter part of the nineteenth century by Suio, the temple’s entrepreneurial head monk, who also began cultivating land at the northern end of Tsumago.

The main hall was originally roofed with wood shingles. These were replaced by tiles in 1941; when the tiles proved too heavy, they in turn were replaced by copper in 2014. One of the 120-kilogram ridge-end *oni-gawara* “demon” tiles—intended to ward off evil—from the previous roof is on display in the temple yard.