

Jodoji Temple

The hillsides of Onomichi are home to several temples and shrines, but none more eclectic than Jodoji Temple. Said to have been founded in 616 by the semi-legendary Prince Shotoku, Jodoji Temple has become a collection of valuable historical buildings.

After the old temple buildings burned down in 1325, Onomichi residents, including a wealthy merchant, helped to rebuild Jodoji Temple. In 1327, carpenters Fujiwara Tomokuni and Fujiwara Kunisada finished the new *hondo*, or main hall, which still stands today, and is designated a National Treasure. The architectural style of the *hondo* is eclectic. Primarily built in the design common in the Heian period (794–1185), it also shows the influence of architectural styles brought from China in the Kamakura period (1185–1333).

Jodoji Temple is home to another National Treasure as well. The *tahoto* (many-jeweled pagoda) was built in 1329 and is considered one of the three best examples of *tahoto* in Japan. Although pagodas are found in temples throughout Asia, two-story *tahoto* are unique to Japan, and were once common in Esoteric Buddhist temples like Jodoji.

Most other buildings in Jodoji Temple's compact compound are designated Important Cultural Properties of Japan, including the impressive *sanmon* (front gate), the Rotekian (a tea house), and the Amidado (Amida Buddha hall). With so many fascinating buildings to see, visitors could be forgiven for forgetting to enjoy the sweeping view over Onomichi from the *sanmon*.