

## Shinshoji Temple: Overview

A visitor walking through the ancient-looking buildings and extensive gardens of Shinshoji Temple would be tempted to think the temple had been there for hundreds of years. In fact, Shinshoji Temple is a more recent addition to the Fukuyama mountainside. It was founded in 1965 by Kambara Hideo (1916–1977), the owner of a local shipbuilding business, as a burial place for the victims of maritime accidents.

Today, Shinshoji Temple serves a dual purpose. Firstly, as a functioning temple of the Rinzai school of Buddhism, and secondly as the Shinshoji Zen Museum and Gardens. The museum's goal is for visitors to learn about Zen Buddhism first-hand, through optional activities like meditation, copying sutras, taking part in a tea ceremony, and tasting food made for monks.

Visitors who want to enjoy the architecture are welcome, too, and there is no shortage of fascinating buildings to see. Despite its relatively short history, the Shinshoji Temple complex contains a mix of historical and modern buildings.

The main gate, made from Japanese zelkova wood, dates back to the Edo period (1600–1868) and previously served as the entrance to the Kaya no Miya residence on the Imperial Palace grounds in Kyoto. Kambara had the gate moved when Shinshoji Temple was built.

Beyond the gate is the Shinshoji Temple garden. Designed by noted Japanese garden landscaping firm Nakane and Associates, the garden has a central pond and spring with a path surrounding it, making this a *chisen kaiyu*, or 'stroll garden around a pond'.

Dotted throughout the complex are other buildings, both historic and modern, including the Shodo (Pine Hall, the temple office designed by Fujimori Terunobu) the Shuroken (tea house), bathhouse, Zen dojo, and the ship-like Kohteï pavilion, which houses an art installation by Nawa Kohei.