

Shinshoji Temple: Shodo

The first building visitors see when they walk into the Shinshoji Temple grounds is the Shodo. It serves as a temple office, visitor information center, and shop, but the Shodo is also an attraction in its own right.

The name Shodo literally means “pine hall,” and the red pine tree is both a symbol of the Setouchi region and the guiding theme of the building. Architect and architectural historian Fujimori Terunobu, known for his unconventional use of plants and organic materials, designed the Shodo to blend in with the surrounding mountains by planting local red pine trees on the building’s roof. The roof supports these living pines and is in turn supported by rough-hewn red pine beams and pillars, made from local trees. The circularity of the design is both charming and inviting.

At first glance, the roof looks like traditional thatched bark, but it is in fact made from copper plates, hand-bent by volunteers. The Shodo’s distinctive conical roof with low eaves reaching almost to the ground recalls the nearby mountains and, combined with the rough plaster walls, creates an inviting entrance for visitors, as well as a convenient outdoor space for exhibitions and temporary stalls.