

Unzen Onsen Town Religious History Trail: Manmyōji Temple

In 701, some 150 years after the introduction of Buddhism to Japan, the itinerant monk Gyōki (668–749) came to Unzen and established a Buddhist temple. Although temples and other religious buildings were destroyed when Shimabara became a Christian domain in the late sixteenth century, Manmyōji claims direct lineage from that first temple.

Inside the temple is a massive 5-meter-tall wooden statue of the Buddha. It was assembled and covered with five layers of gold leaf in 1917. A collection of stones, one of which is believed to be Gyōki's gravestone, stands in front of the temple. In the back is a large statue of Gyōki, as well as 88 unique statues representing a miniature version of the 88-Temple Pilgrimage on the island of Shikoku.