

Sanmon Gate

This gate marks the boundary between the sacred space of the temple and the everyday world. Passing through it is said to purify the mind in preparation to hear and absorb the temple's teachings.

Unlike an ordinary gate, the Sanmon has no doors. This is to indicate that the temple is always open to anyone wishing to learn about Zen. The second story, called the *rojo*, contains statues of the 500 *arhats* (Buddhist saints).

The Sanmon is roughly 20 meters tall, and was built in 1775 after the previous gate was destroyed by fire. A nationwide fundraising campaign was conducted to finance its construction. It is designated an Important Cultural Property.

The Sanmon is also called the Tanuki Gate. According to legend, the monks of Kenchoji fed and cared for a *tanuki* (raccoon dog). The animal repaid its debt by transforming itself into a monk to collect donations to rebuild the gate.