

Hatto (Lecture Hall)

The Hatto, or Lecture Hall, is 20 meters tall, making it the largest hall at Kenchoji Temple. It is also the largest wooden structure in the Kanto region.

The Hatto was originally used by the abbot to deliver sermons to the temple's many monks and priests. It was not a worship hall, and the raised dais at the back of the room was not used for a deity or statue. Instead, the abbot would use it to address those assembled.

Today, the Hatto is no longer used for sermons and the dais now serves as an altar, but the building does host public ceremonies and special events including concerts and art shows. The building is open to the public.

The traditional-style ink wash painting (*sumi-e*) of a dragon on the ceiling was completed in 2003 by painter and ceramicist Koizumi Junsaku (1924–2012). He also painted the famous dragon medallion on the ceiling of Kenninji Temple in Kyoto called *Soryu-zu*. The painting at Kenchoji is titled *Unryu-zu* and was commissioned to commemorate the temple's 750th anniversary. It depicts the mythical Unryu, a cloud dragon that brings rain. The wisdom of a sermon is said to fall like rain, washing over the listeners below. The dragon's eyes appear to follow you no matter where you are in the room.

Beneath the dragon on the ceiling, a statue of the Thousand-Armed Kannon sits behind the altar. In front is a detailed sculpture depicting the Buddha while fasting. The statue is the only officially produced replica of an original in Pakistan. The statue was a gift of the Pakistani government and is a rare and precious example of Buddhist art.

The Hatto was rebuilt in 1814 and is designated an Important Cultural Property.