

## **Somon (Main Gate)**

The Somon is the main entrance to Kenchoji Temple. It is the first of five main structures arranged in a line that lies roughly on the north-south axis, in the typical arrangement for Zen temples. The original layout of the temple was preserved when the temple was rebuilt after a series of fires in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

The current building was constructed in 1783 for Hanju Zanmai-in Temple in Kyoto and was moved to Kenchoji in 1940. The Somon is also called the Kofuku Gate. The calligraphy on the wooden sign at the top of the gate reads “Kofukusan,” the first part of Kenchoji’s full name. The calligraphy is the work of the temple’s tenth abbot, Yishan Yining (1247–1317).

There is a paved avenue flanked by cherry trees leading from the Somon Gate to the Sanmon Gate. In spring, the arching branches form a tunnel of pink blossoms with colorful peonies beneath them. The Somon frames this scene, making it a popular spot for photographers.