Somon (Main Gate)

The Somon is the main entrance to Kenchoji Temple. The wooden sign at the top of the gate reads “Kofukusan,” the first part of Kenchoji’s full name. The calligraphy is by the temple’s tenth abbot, Yishan Yining (1247–1317). The gate was originally built in 1783 for Hanju Zanmai-in Temple in Kyoto, and was moved to Kenchoji in 1940.

The avenue beyond the Somon Gate leading to the Sanmon Gate is lined with cherry trees. In spring, the arching branches of the trees form a tunnel of pink cherry blossoms with colorful peonies beneath them. The Somon frames this scene of blossoms and architecture.