

The Seven-Hall Temple (*Shichidō Garan*)

Eiheiji Temple is famous for the layout of its core temple complex, called the *garan*. In Zen Buddhism, temples are organized around seven fundamental structures that form the main spaces in which the monks live, eat, sleep, and practice Zen. These seven buildings are referred to as the *shichidō garan*, or “seven-hall temple.” The word *garan* itself is derived from a Sanskrit word that referred to a garden where monks gathered to engage in Zen practice.

Conventions about which specific buildings are included in the *shichidō garan* differ depending on a temple’s affiliated school and era of construction. Eiheiji Temple’s *shichidō garan* is modeled after that of Tiantong Temple in China, where Zen Master Dōgen (1200–1253) studied before returning to Japan to spread Sōtō Zen Buddhism. The seven buildings of Eiheiji’s *garan* are the:

Sanmon (Main Gate),

Butsuden (Buddha Hall),

Hattō (Dharma Hall),

Sōdō (Monk’s Hall),

Daikuin (Kitchen and Administrative Building),

Yokushitsu (Bathhouse), and

Tōsu (Toilet).

The buildings of the *shichidō garan* are all interconnected by a network of covered corridors and stairs.