

### Poetry Stones #1–3

The street leading to Eihei Temple is dotted with nine stone monuments inscribed with poems composed by Zen Master Dōgen (1200–1253), the founder of the Sōtō school of Zen Buddhism in Japan. The poems encourage visitors to reflect on the spirit of Zen and incorporate the teachings of Buddhism into their daily lives. Each poem consists of 31 syllables divided into five lines of 5, 7, 5, 7, and 7 syllables.

#### #1

The first monument is located in a corner of Eihei Temple's Chōei Dai-1 parking lot:

*mizudori no*

*yuku mo kaeru mo*

*ato taete*

*saredomo michi wa*

*wasure zari keri*

The waterfowl

whether coming or going

do not leave ripples,

but even as they paddle

they do not forget the way

#### Explanation:

Gliding through the water without leaving any trace, ducks and geese seem carefree. However, beneath the water they are constantly paddling, and they never lose sight of

which direction they are going.

## #2

The second monument is located just outside the entrance to Eihei-ji Temple, next to a square plinth bearing a tall, stone stele on which the temple's name is carved.

*nigori naki*

*kokoro no mizu ni*

*sumu tsuki wa*

*nami mo kudakete*

*hikari to zo naru*

Even the waves break

and turn to shimmering light

upon the pale moon

dwelling in the waters of

a pure and unclouded mind

### **Explanation:**

When engaging in seated Zen practice, the mind should be calm and free of distractions, like a still pond that reflects the light of the moon.

## #3

The third monument is tucked away in a garden in front of Gallery Neiha, a tile-roofed store that sells traditional crafts of the Echizen region (Fukui Prefecture):

*fuyukusa mo*

*mienu yukino no*

*shirasagi wa*

*ono ga sugata ni*

*mi o kakushi keri*

To a white heron

standing in a snowy field

it is not soon clear

where the white heron's shape ends

and the withered grass begins

**Explanation:**

Standing alone in a field, the white heron can hardly be distinguished from the snowy landscape. Likewise, followers of the dharma should wholeheartedly engage in Buddhist practice until they realize their own Buddha-nature.