

## Former Chikurinin Temple

Chikurinin Temple in the town of Sakamoto is a former *satobo*, a small temple where older Buddhist monks live and work, performing light duties. Sakamoto is famous for its many *satobo*, where monks who had practiced for years in the temple halls on Mt. Hiei could live out their twilight years in peace further down the slopes. There were once 80 *satobo* in Sakamoto, but today only 54 remain. Chikurinin is one of very few former *satobo* that are open to visitors.

Chikurinin was founded in 1592 and has not housed monks since the Meiji era (1868–1912). It has retained its tranquil surroundings, and the 3,300-square-meter grounds include a main hall, two teahouses, and a lush garden.

The moss-filled garden was designed for quiet contemplation and uses borrowed scenery from Mt. Hachioji and the halls of Hiyoshi Taisha Shrine, all located on the lower reaches of Mt. Hiei. Water drawn from the Omiya River, which runs through Hiyoshi Taisha, flows around the garden, creating babbling streams and small waterfalls. The exceptionally well-preserved garden has a variety of plants that provide color throughout the year. Crape myrtle flowers turn from white to pink over the summer, while maple trees blanket the grounds in red and orange leaves in the autumn.

The scenery can be enjoyed from the two-story main hall, built in 1898 and designated a cultural asset of the city of Otsu. On the second floor, the main room opens out to the garden on two sides and is a popular spot for photographers. A lacquered wooden table is positioned in such a way that a camera placed on it will capture not only the garden, but the reflection of the garden in the tabletop, creating a distinctive symmetrical image.