

Daihikaku Senkōji Temple

Daihikaku Senkōji Temple is located on the northeastern side of Mt. Arashiyama, overlooking the Hozu River. To reach the temple, visitors must climb 200 stone steps from the riverbank below. The reception hall by the temple's entrance commands a dramatic view of Kyoto and the surrounding mountains.

Originally a part of Seiryōji Temple, Senkōji was taken apart and rebuilt in its current location at the request of a merchant named Suminokura Ryōi (1554–1614). The Suminokura family had worked as physicians and moneylenders for generations, but Ryōi instead pursued a career in exports, and he made a fortune through trade with Annam and Tonkin (in what is now Vietnam). By 1606, Ryōi had gained tremendous wealth from these ventures, and he used that money to build canals and develop natural waterways like the Hozu River. At the end of his life, Ryōi retired to the newly rebuilt Senkōji Temple, which he dedicated to those who had lost their lives working on his construction projects. Within the temple grounds is the main hall, which enshrines an image of the bodhisattva Kannon next to a statue of Ryōi, who is depicted in a monk's robes surrounded by the tools of his trade.

The temple grounds also feature two stone monuments with engravings of haiku written by Bashō (1644–1694). The first poem, located at the bottom of the stone stairs, reads:

*hana no yama
nichō noboreba
daihikaku*

The flowered mountains
and, arriving at the top
the temple of mercy

The second poem, located halfway up the stone walkway, reads:

*rokugatsu ya
mine ni kumo oku
arashiyama*

At the peak of June
clouds resting on the peak of
Arashiyama