

## **Zenporitsuji Temple**

Zenporitsuji is a Ritsu school Buddhist temple located at the foot of Mt. Otokoyama. Approximately one hundred maple trees growing on the grounds give the temple its other name, Momijidera (“the maple tree temple”). They are particularly beautiful in the fall when the leaves turn colors, as well as in the spring when the vibrant new foliage emerges.

Zenporitsuji was founded in the mid-thirteenth century as a *bodaiji* (family memorial temple) by Zenpoji Kyusei (also known as Miyakiyo), head of one of the families that served as top administrative officials of the nearby Iwashimizu Hachimangu back when it was a shrine-temple complex fusing Shinto and Buddhist religious practice. His great-granddaughter Ki no Yoshiko (1336–1413), who became the consort of the second Ashikaga shogun and the mother of the third, was a very influential patron of Zenporitsuji, and generations of Ashikaga shoguns honored the tradition of supporting the temple after her. It is said that the famous maple trees began with her donations.

The main hall and main gate of Zenporitsuji, designated Cultural Properties of Kyoto Prefecture, date back to the seventeenth and the eighteenth century, respectively. It is said that the main hall was constructed with materials from a building that used to be part of Iwashimizu Hachimangu. It houses many valuable statues and works of art that are designated Cultural Properties of Yawata City. The most notable is the temple’s principal object of worship, a statue of the deity Hachiman. It is believed that it was originally carved in the Heian period (794–1185) to represent the bodhisattva Jizo, but came to be worshipped as Hachiman in later years. The statue was enshrined in Iwashimizu Hachimangu during the long period of syncretic Shinto and Buddhist worship, but was moved to Zenporitsuji when the two religions were separated by government order in 1868. The large statues of Buddhist Wisdom Kings Fudo Myo-o and Aizen Myo-o in alcoves on either side of Hachiman were carved in the Kamakura period (1185–1333). Behind the main altar is another room with various Buddhist statues, including Amida Buddha in a jeweled crown, which was also transferred from Iwashimizu Hachimangu.

The grounds of Zenporitsuji are open to the public, but visitors who wish to enter the main hall need to make a reservation in advance. Please note that inquiries are accepted only in Japanese.