

Jinnoji Temple

Jinnoji Temple is located on the northeastern side of Mt. Otokoyama, across a valley from Iwashimizu Hachimangu Shrine. The temple grounds are covered with fringed irises that bloom in springtime, and the many maple trees attract visitors both in the spring, when the leaves are fresh and green, and in the fall, when they turn brilliant shades of red and yellow.

It is said that Jinnoji was founded by the monk Gyokyo in 860, shortly after he established Iwashimizu Hachimangu. The temple was originally built to house a memorial tablet honoring the spirit of Emperor Ojin, the legendary fifteenth emperor of Japan, who is also worshipped as the deity Hachiman at Iwashimizu Hachimangu. Jinnoji changed Buddhist school affiliations several times throughout history and has been a Soto Zen temple since the Muromachi period (1336–1573). Under the 12th chief abbot, Jinnoji was recognized and revered by powerful figures such as Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598) and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616). Other Tokugawa shoguns after Ieyasu also upheld this recognition.

The main hall houses the temple's principal object of worship, a statue of Yakushi, the Buddha of medicine and healing. It also contains a statue of Toyotomi Hideyoshi in court regalia that is thought to have been an offering from his son Hideyori (1593–1615), and a seated statue of the founding monk Gyokyo dating from the early Heian period (794–1185). The Gyokyo statue was originally enshrined at Iwashimizu Hachimangu, which was historically a shrine-temple complex that practiced a syncretic fusion of Shinto and Buddhism. After the government ordered the separation of the two religions in 1868, the statue was transferred to Jinnoji. It is now a nationally designated Important Cultural Property.

The area in the valley below the temple is called Okunoin and contains several halls. One is dedicated to Fudo Myo-o, a Buddhist Wisdom King, another houses a statue of the Eleven-Headed Kannon, the bodhisattva of compassion, and yet another enshrines the bodhisattva Jizo, the savior of all sentient beings. Some worshippers also visit Okunoin to engage in ascetic waterfall mediation at the Hikime waterfall.

The upper grounds of Jinnoji and the valley area are accessible to the public, but a tour of the main buildings requires a reservation. Please note that inquiries are accepted only in Japanese.