

Keirinji Temple

Keirinji belongs to the Soto school of Zen Buddhism and was once a prominent temple for this sect. Keirinji evolved from an earlier temple dedicated to the buddha of medicine and healing, which converted to Zen Buddhism in 1401. Its current name dates to 1451. Visitors pass through a series of three gates when approaching the temple: a main entrance gate (*somon*); the impressive two-storied main gate (*sanmon*), built in 1717; and a two-storied Chinese-style gate (*romon*) that also functions as a bell tower. Keirinji's main hall was built in 1817.

The temple is in possession of two precious cultural properties thanks to the heroic actions of past monks. In 1600, just months before the Battle of Sekigahara, enemy forces laid siege to the castle of local daimyo Hosokawa Fujitaka, also called Hosokawa Yusai (1534–1610). Although Fujitaka's forces were outnumbered 15,000 to 500, a group of monks from Keirinji joined them. After Fujitaka miraculously emerged from battle unscathed, the Hosokawa family rewarded the temple with a bell and a nirvana painting (*butsunehanzu*). These precious items are not normally on display; the bell, however, hangs in the bell tower.

As this temple predates the separation of Buddhism and Shinto, there is also a small shrine devoted to Hachiman, the Shinto god of war, who is the guardian deity of Keirinji. A stone lantern from the Kamakura period (1185–1333) can be seen at the shrine.