

## Gokurakuji Temple

Gokurakuji Temple preserves valuable Buddhist statues and other religious objects that date back to the centuries-long era of syncretic Shinto and Buddhist worship at the [Usa Jingu](#) shrine-temple complex. There are no records about the founding or initial location of Gokurakuji, but the temple previously stood on the grounds of Usa Jingu before being moved during the Great Showa Reconstruction (1932–1941) to its current site near [Nakamise Shopping Street](#).

Gokurakuji belongs to the Jodo Shinshu (True Pure Land) school of Buddhism, and the principal object of worship in the Hondo (Main Hall) is a statue of Amida Buddha, the most revered deity in the Pure Land tradition. The statue is 1.2 meters tall and portrays Amida with a distinctive radiant halo standing on a lotus flower. It was carved in the Kamakura period (1185–1333) and originally enshrined in the Dainido Hall at Usa Jingu. The Dainido was demolished after the Meiji government ordered the separation of Shinto and Buddhism in 1868 and Usa Jingu became a purely Shinto institution, but the Amida statue was preserved and later brought to Gokurakuji.

Another important statue that came to Gokurakuji through similar circumstances is the large (2.8 m) seated statue of Miroku that is displayed in the temple's Mirokudo Hall. Miroku is believed to be a bodhisattva who will appear in this world in the distant future to become the next Buddha, and the statue depicts Miroku after attaining Buddhahood. It was carved in the Muromachi period (1336–1573) and retains some of the paint and gold finish applied by restorers in the past, such as a vivid blue hair color. The statue was once worshipped in the Kodo (Lecture Hall) at [Mirokuji](#), the main Buddhist temple in the Usa Jingu complex, which was also destroyed following the government order to separate Shinto and Buddhism.

Between the temple gate and the Hondo of Gokurakuji is a replica of a round plaque from the Dainido Hall bearing mantras to Amida Buddha, Kannon, the bodhisattva of compassion, and Seishi, the bodhisattva of strength. Other treasures are displayed in a small museum in the Hondo, including the original plaque from the Dainido, a rare mandala embroidered with human hair, a small *buss Sharito* stupa from Mirokuji, as well as multiple sutra scrolls and other documents.

The temple grounds and the Mirokudo are open to the public, but advance notice is required for a guided tour and a visit to the museum. Please note that inquiries are accepted only in Japanese.