

## **Daihiden Toshoji Temple**

Daihiden Toshoji is a Soto Zen temple located approximately 300 meters northeast of the main grounds of Sanage Shrine at the base of Mt. Sanage. It was founded in 1932 by a priest with a strong faith in Kannon, the bodhisattva of compassion. He was inspired to establish a new temple next to Yamanaka Kannondo, a historic hall that houses a famous tenth-century statue of Senju Kannon, the thousand-armed incarnation of the bodhisattva.

Senju Kannon is the principal deity of Daihiden Toshoji and is enshrined in the main hall. That building is open to visitors and serves as the venue for zazen meditation classes. Opposite the main hall are 33 smaller stone statues of Kannon that were once placed along a path around the hillside as part of a miniature pilgrimage route.

Daihiden Toshoji is generally a place for quiet contemplation, with the exception of Setsubun (usually February 3), the last day of winter in the traditional Japanese calendar. This is when local residents gather at the temple to ward off evil through the ritual of *mamemaki* (“bean-throwing”). This custom involves the flinging of hard, dried soybeans that are believed to drive harmful spirits away.