

Daitsūji Temple

Daitsūji is a 450-year-old Buddhist temple and repository of traditional art and architecture. Its impressive two-story gate and peaceful inner courtyard offer a quiet respite from the bustling shops along Ōtemon-dōri. But the highlight of the site is the art collection in the temple's annex.

Daitsūji was founded in 1602 as a branch of Higashi Honganji Temple in Kyoto, and its main buildings date to the mid-seventeenth century. The main sanctuary was formerly a part of the palatial residence of the lord of Fushimi Castle, in what is now Kyoto. The section was relocated to the temple between 1652 and 1654 along with its expansive annex (*ōhiroma*), in which the castle lord had lived. The relocation was sponsored by Ii Naotaka (1590–1659), the daimyo of Hikone Castle and a close advisor to the shogun Tokugawa Hidetada (1579–1632). The Ii family maintained close ties to Daitsūji for centuries afterward.

Walking through the annex is like touring a private museum. The annex's gilded sliding partitions bear paintings by celebrated seventeenth- and eighteenth-century artists. These include works by Kanō Sanraku (1559–1635) and Kanō Sansetsu (1589–1651), both of the famed Kanō school of painters, which later became the official school of the shogunate. One small room displays a standing screen with a stunning illustration of a tiger; another contains a palanquin used by Princess Sachiyo, a daughter of the last lord of the Ii family, Ii Naosuke (1815–1860).