

Rurikoji Temple Five-Storied Pagoda

Rurikoji Pagoda is famed for its elegant appearance and robust structure. It was completed circa 1442 and has never toppled or been rebuilt. The pagoda was commissioned by Ouchi Morimi (1377–1431), the head of the Ouchi clan, the rulers of modern-day Yamaguchi Prefecture between the mid-fourteenth and mid-sixteenth centuries.

The five-storied pagoda has thatched *hiwadabuki* roofing, which uses multiple layers of cypress bark shingles to accentuate the curvature of its deep eaves. A large central pillar approximately 50 centimeters in diameter at its base forms the axis of the pagoda, providing stability to the structure. From the base to the top, each story is progressively smaller, contributing to the structure's balanced appearance. The pagoda is 31.2 meters high and stands out among the trees on the grounds of Kozan Park. It is a popular symbol of Yamaguchi, often photographed in early spring against a backdrop of plum blossoms, and in autumn surrounded by colorful foliage.

Ouchi Morimi commissioned the pagoda as a memorial to his older brother Yoshihiro (1356–1399), an influential warlord who expanded the clan's landholdings to include territories in present-day Wakayama and Fukuoka Prefectures. Construction took several decades, however, and Morimi died before the pagoda was completed. The building houses a wooden statue from the Heian period (794–1185) of Amida, the Buddha of Infinite Light, and a bronze statue of Ouchi Yoshihiro. While the interior of the pagoda is not open to the public, the statues are visible through the lattice doors.

Rurikoji Pagoda is a National Treasure. It is considered one of Japan's Three Greatest Pagodas alongside the five-storied pagodas of Horyuji Temple in Nara Prefecture and Daigoji Temple in Kyoto.