

Entsuji Temple Park

Entsuji Temple Park in the village of Kyokushi, southeast of central Kikuchi, occupies the site of the former Entsuji Temple, once an influential religious institution under the protection of the Kikuchi clan. The temple is thought to have been established in Kyokushi by Kikuchi Noritaka, the founder of the Kikuchi clan, who had Entsuji relocated from Kyoto when he arrived in the Kikuchi region in 1070. In that period, Kyokushi was on the border of the Kikuchi clan's territory, and the temple may have played a role in defending the castle town of Waifu.

Entsuji grew into a major temple during the time of Kikuchi Takefusa (1245–1285), a heroic figure known for his role in repelling the Mongol invasions of Japan in 1274 and 1281. Takefusa granted Entsuji significant lands. The temple prospered until the sixteenth century, when the Kikuchi clan's influence waned, its territory was diminished, and the clan was eventually vanquished by rival warlords.

Local interest in Entsuji and Kikuchi clan history rose again in the 1800s, and the temple was restored between 1830 and 1844. The pond, temple hall, and stone gate in the present-day park were added at that time. The gate was built with red-tinged volcanic rock from Mt. Aso and is distinguished by its decorative roof with eaves that curve elegantly upwards. A rhododendron garden and a hillside trail dotted with statues of Buddhist deities are also part of the park. The deities mark shrines representing a miniature version of the famous 88-temple pilgrimage around the island of Shikoku.