

Zenshoji Temple

Pine and cedar trees surround the halls of Zenshoji, a Buddhist temple believed to have been built in the Heian period (794–1185). The temple has a collection of priceless artifacts, including Buddhist sculptures and works of calligraphy. A famous ink painting called *Happo Nirami no Daruma* by Zen priest and painter Sesshu (1420–1506) is housed in the Daishoin Hall. It is a masterpiece of bold brushstrokes that depicts the legendary monk Bodhidharma (Daruma in Japanese) with a solemn expression on his face.

Behind the main hall, there is a hillside garden designed by tea ceremony master Kanamori Sowa (1584–1656). Sowa was a member of a ruling family in the Hida region and founded the Sowa school of tea, which was popular among the aristocracy. The garden is filled with azalea shrubs, maples, and other plants, and has a small pond in the shape of the kanji character for “heart.” The veranda that runs around the back of the hall provides a good vantage point for viewing the garden. The temple is a popular spot for viewing the fiery-colored leaves of autumn.