

Karamon Gate

This elegant gate has gently curving gables (*karahafu*) and golden metal fittings on the bargeboards and rafters. Phoenixes and dragons are carved across lintels and under the eaves, and the wooden doors have openwork panels decorated with carved peonies. A wooden plaque above the lintel bears Chinese characters reading “Unryuzan,” part of the temple’s formal name, Unryuzan Shokoji Temple. The six-pillar gate is over 10 meters high and 6 meters wide.

Karamon gates were usually reserved for the use of the most distinguished guests, such as imperial envoys and representatives of daimyo lords. They offered access to a temple’s reception hall or similar chambers. At Shokoji, the Karamon Gate was used by all visitors. It is believed to have been constructed in 1769 at Koshoji Temple in Kyoto and was relocated to Shokoji Temple in 1893. It is designated an Important Cultural Property.