

Fukōji

Fukōji is the oldest Buddhist temple in Ōmuta and part of the Tendai school of esoteric Buddhism. It was founded under the auspices of the Miike clan in 820 by the priest Ennin (794–864), known posthumously as Jikaku Daishi. Over time, the temple developed into a large complex with three subtemples and seven residences. It was destroyed by landslides in the late Heian period (794–1185). Only a handful of the temple buildings were ever rebuilt.

The current Main Hall dates to the Edo period (1603–1867). The temple's main objects of veneration are wooden statues of Yakushi Nyorai, the Buddha of Healing, made in the late twelfth century, and of the temple's founder Jikaku Daishi, which was carved in 1429 in Kyoto. Both have been designated as prefectural Cultural Properties. On the temple grounds also stand a pagoda, stone Buddhist statues, tutelary shrines, and gravestones.

The temple is known today for the enormous, double-flowering pink plum tree along the approach to the Main Hall. Called the “reclining dragon plum” (Garyūbai), the tree is more than 350 years old, and although it stands only 3 meters tall, it stretches for more than 25 meters down the hill. Its branches took root where they touched the ground, extending the tree’s reach farther away from the original trunk.

The temple has planted a variety of other plum trees and is a popular spot to view plum blossoms between mid-February and late March. Admission fees are charged while the trees are in bloom.