

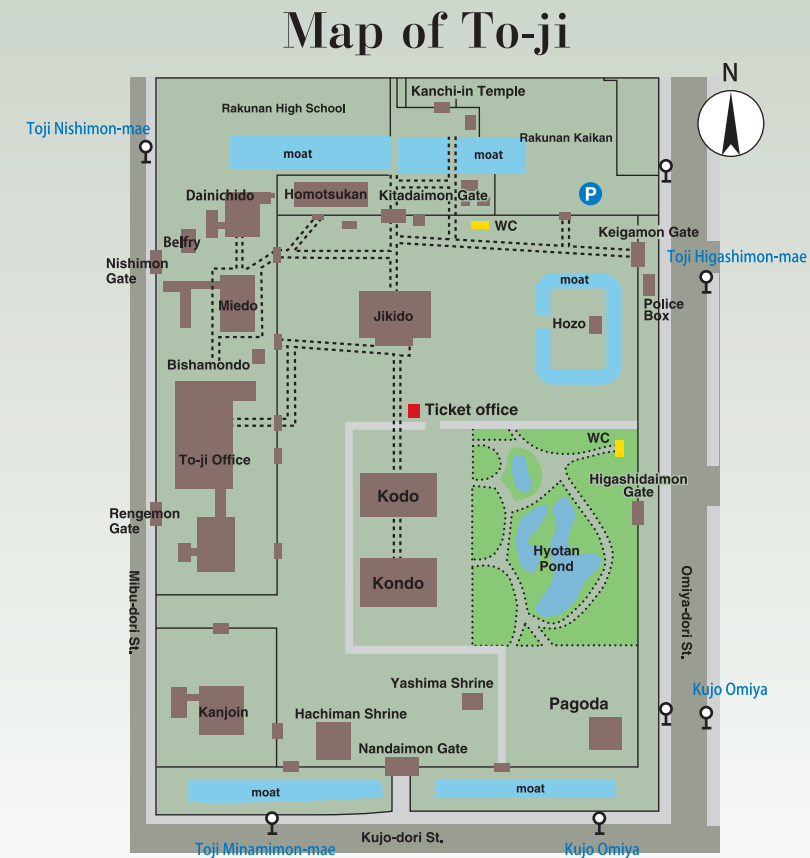


東寺 To-ji Temple

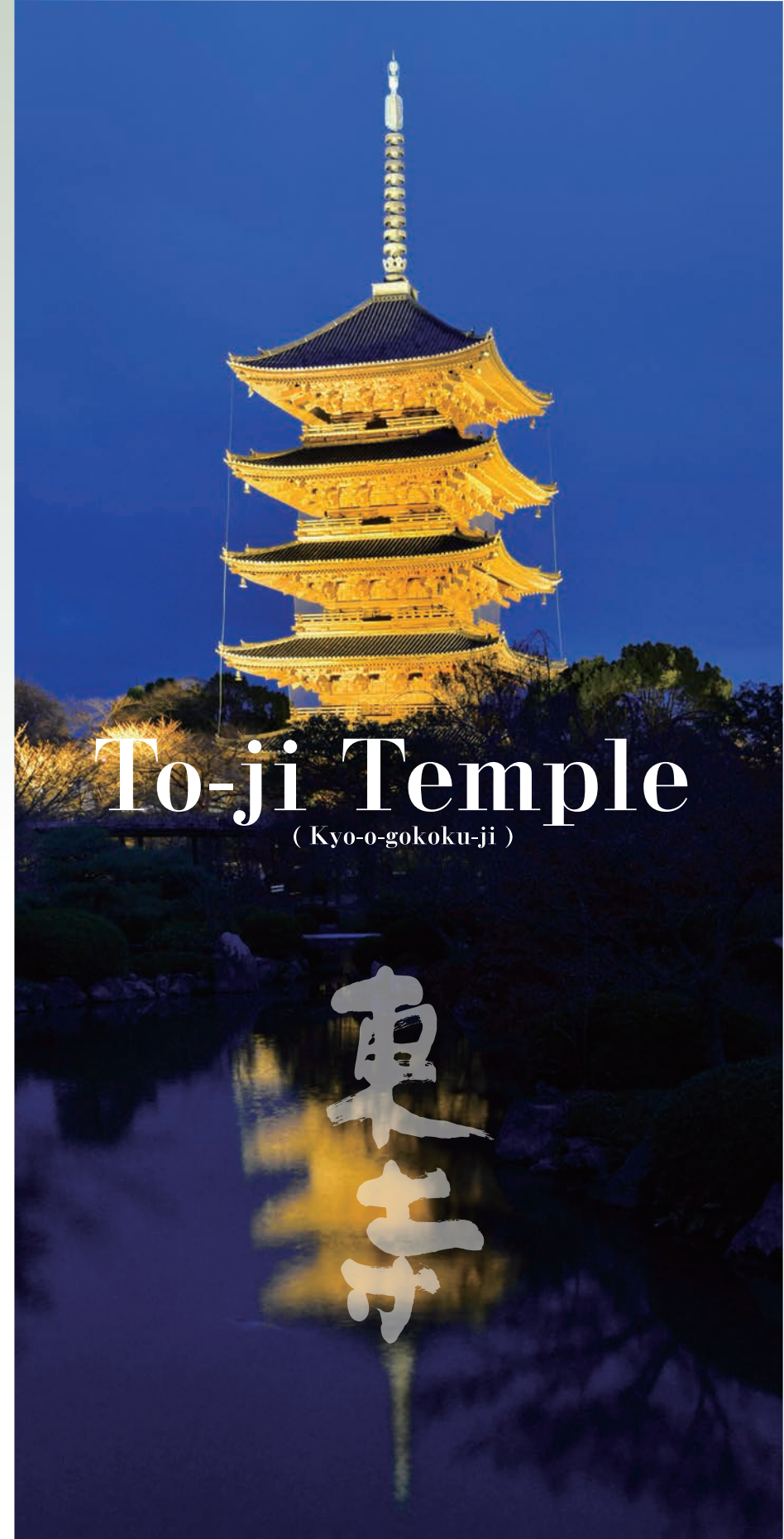
UNESCO World Heritage Site

In 794, when the capital of Japan was transferred to Kyoto from Nara, two huge guardian temples were built on the east and the west sides of the main entrance of the Imperial City of Heiankyo (the former name of the city of Kyoto). Unfortunately, the temple on the west side no longer exists, but To-ji, which literally means “East Temple”, has survived to the present day.

In 823, the Emperor Saga honored the monk Kukai and gave the temple to him. Kukai made To-ji the central seminary of Shingon (or Esoteric) Buddhism and added various buildings such as the pagoda and halls. Since then, To-ji has been the headquarters of the Shingon sect of Japanese Buddhism. The major buildings were damaged by earthquakes and fires but have been rebuilt to retain the original layout and the architectural styles. Many magnificent treasures such as statues, carvings, paintings and artworks are housed in these temple buildings.



- Nearest stations and bus stops:**
- Kintetsu Line Toji Station (a 10-minute walk)
 - JR Kyoto Station Hachijo-Exit (a 15-minute walk)
 - Bus stops: 'Toji Minamimom-mae', 'Toji Higashimom-mae', 'Kujo Omiya' and 'Toji Nishimom-mae' bus stops.



空海 [Monk Kukai] (also known as Kobo-Daishi)



Statue of Monk Kukai (Kobo-Daishi) in Miedo. A national treasure (13th century)

The monk Kukai first boarded a boat to China in AD 804 with members of a Japanese envoy to the Tang Dynasty. He studied not only Esoteric Buddhism but also cultural arts and civil engineering in China.

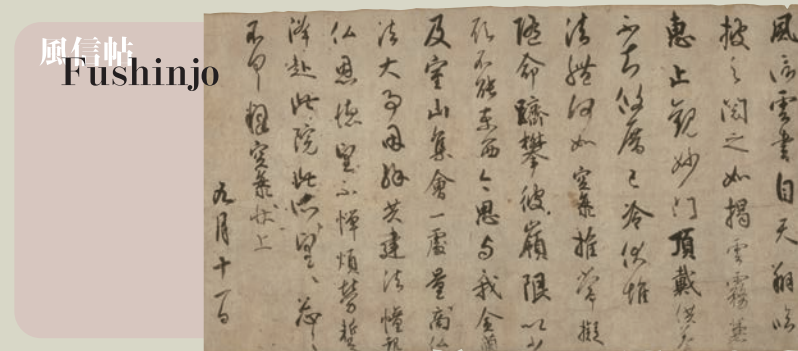
In 816, Kukai established a religious community on Mt. Koya (Koya-san in Japanese) as a place of ascetic practice and later the emperor entrusted the state temple of To-ji to Kukai. He also established the first private school in Japan.

Kukai is one of the most famous religious figures in Japanese history. He is also known as a scholar, a prominent calligrapher and an educator.

真言宗 Shingon Buddhism

Shingon Buddhism is often referred to as Esoteric or Tantric Buddhism.

Shingon teaches that enlightenment is a real possibility within the life of the believer, which can be achieved by properly training and disciplining the body, the speech and the mind. It is based on the notion that the performance of special rituals, syllables, yoga and concentration will allow the practitioner to achieve the spiritual state of the Buddha.



Fushinjo
A collection of letters written by Monk Kukai to Monk Saicho. A national treasure (9th century)
* Not on public display



真言宗總本山 東寺 教王護国寺

To-ji Temple

(Kyo-o-gokoku-ji Temple)

Kujo-cho 1, Minami-ku, Kyoto, JAPAN
<http://www.toji.or.jp>

Mar. 20-Sep. 19 : Open 8:30am to 5pm
Sep. 20-Mar. 19 : Open 8:30am to 4pm

金堂 Kondo (Main Hall)

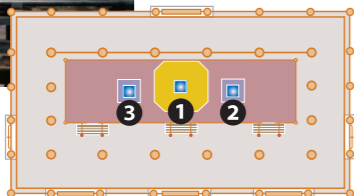
A national treasure from the 17th century

The Kondo is the largest structure in To-ji. The original hall was built in the 8th century but burned down in 1486 and was reconstructed in 1603. It is the finest structure in To-ji. The building combines the Japanese double-roofed *irimoya* style and the Indian *tenjiku* style into one building.

The positioning of the Buddhist statues inside the Kondo is a physical representation of the cosmology of Buddhism.



Important cultural property



- 1 The Yakushi Nyorai, which stands in the center, is known as the Buddha of Medicine who heals with mercy the sickness of the body and soul of all people.
-The seven small Buddhas on the halo are the doubles of Yakushi Nyorai and symbolize the different forms of Yakushi Nyorai that appear to people to save them from this world of suffering.
-The 12 Heavenly Generals placed under the seat of Yakushi Nyorai are protectors of the Buddha. They symbolize the 12 hours of day and night, 12 months of the year, and 12 directions of the Chinese zodiac. This reflects the belief that they are continuously protecting all people.
- 2 The Nikko Bosatsu on the right-hand side is the Bodhisattva of the Sun.
- 3 The Gakko Bosatsu on the left-hand side is the Bodhisattva of the Moon.

Nikko Bosatsu and Gakko Bosatsu are attendants of Yakushi Nyorai. Bodhisattvas are Buddhas who have put off enlightenment in order to continue to practice with all people. The sunlight and moonlight symbolize light shining into the dark world of suffering.

講堂 Kodo (Lecture Hall)

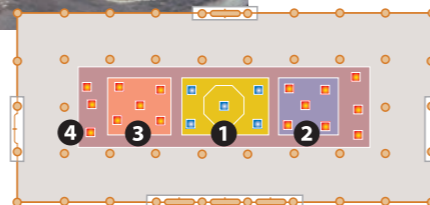
An important cultural property from the 16th century

The Kodo stands in the very center of the precincts of To-ji. The original building was built around 835 according to records. It was damaged by typhoons and earthquakes and had been repaired several times. The present building was built in 1491 and retains its original style of architecture.

Inside the Kodo, the Buddhist statues are placed according to a mandala that is central to Shingon Buddhism. The mandala represents the world of enlightenment, which is reflected in the positions of the Buddhas and attendant figures. Mandalas are normally drawn in two dimensions. The Kodo is said to be a three-dimensional version of the mandala, with the principal Buddha, Dainichi Nyorai, in the center. The 21 statues are classified into four groups.



National treasure
Important cultural property



- 1 The Nyorai, who are the forms of Buddhas who have reached enlightenment.
- 2 The Bodhisattvas, who have put off enlightenment to save people with mercy.
- 3 The Myoo (Wisdom Kings), who lead people with austerity.
- 4 The Ten (Tenbu or guardians), who surround and protect the Nyorai, Bodhisattvas and Myoo.

両界曼荼羅 Mandala

Ryokai (Two Realms) Mandala

A pair of hanging scrolls
A national treasure (9th century)
* Not on public display



五重塔 Five-Storeyed Pagoda

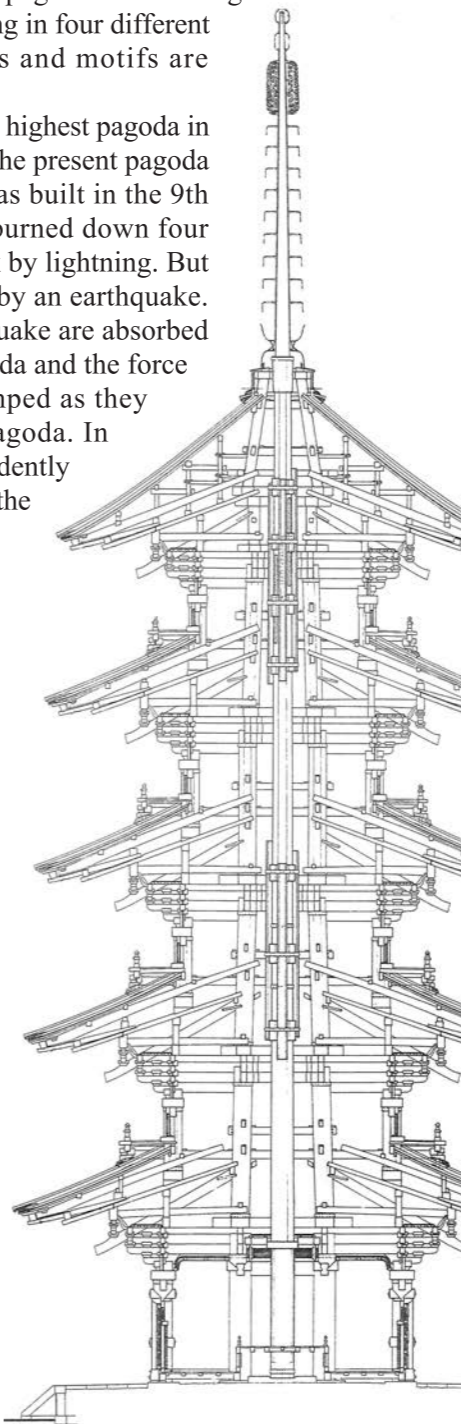
A national treasure from the 17th century

The pagoda is a structure used to house relics of the historical Buddha. The pagoda of To-ji is said to be a form of Dainichi Nyorai himself. The inside of the pagoda is normally closed to the public, except for special openings. Four Buddha statues are located on a platform on the ground level of the pagoda surrounding the main pillar. The statues are facing in four different directions and Buddhist pictures and motifs are painted on the pillars and walls.

To-ji's five-storeyed pagoda is the highest pagoda in Japan, measuring 55m (187 feet). The present pagoda was built in 1644. The first one was built in the 9th century. Since then, the pagodas burned down four times, sometimes after being struck by lightning. But none of them were knocked down by an earthquake. The vibrations caused by an earthquake are absorbed by the interlocked parts of the pagoda and the force of the vibrations is gradually damped as they move to the higher parts of the pagoda. In addition, each level moves independently of the others, in a motion known as the "snake dance." This further absorbs and dampens the energy of an earthquake. Finally, the pillars surrounding the main supports on each level are short, so that the force tending to return the structure to its original position is greater than the deflecting force, which also prevents the pagoda from collapsing.



Buddha statues on the ground level of the pagoda



御影堂 Miedo (Residence of Monk Kukai)

A national treasure from the 14th century

Please see the map of To-ji on the back of this brochure for the entrance to the Miedo.

The Miedo functioned as the residence of Kukai (the founder of Shingon Buddhism). It is an elegant architecture of former aristocrat-residence style, obviously very different from the other structures of To-ji.

The major part of the present building was built a year after the original building burned down in 1379. In 1390, the present form of the building was completed after some additional construction. Every morning at 6am, a meal and tea are served in front of the statue of Kukai to which the hall is dedicated. Then a relic of a Buddha brought back from China by Kukai is placed on top of the head and in the palms of those participation in the ritual. It is a morning service open to anyone.



Homotsukan:

Special opening of the Homotsukan (Treasure Hall)
March 20 – May 25 September 20 – November 25

Mieku (Kobo-ichi market):

On the 21st of every month.

Garakuta-ichi antique market:

On the first Sunday of every month.

Sakura (Cherry) Tree

A sakura (cherry) tree is planted slightly southeast of the ticket office. As the precincts of To-ji are designated as a historical site by the State, the grounds of To-ji cannot be excavated. Thus, the tree was planted by piling up earth. This tree bursts into spectacular blossoms in early April.

