

## The Looking-back Amida and Eikan

In the early hours of February 15, 1082, in the freezing cold of the morning, the then chief priest of Eikando, the Abbot Eikan(1033-1111), while intoning the Nembutsu, was walking around a statue of Amida.

He suddenly came to as the dawn was breaking, Amida came down from his pedestal, and began walking away, beckoning to Eikan. Eikan could do nothing but stare, speechless and unmoving. Then Amida looked back at Eikan and called to him in a soft voice. "Eikan! Come with me!"

Eikan decided to pass on to others the merciful heart he had received from Amida and prayed, "Please, keep that form forever!" After that, a statue in this form was made.

This, the Turning-back Amida, the main icon of present day Eikando.

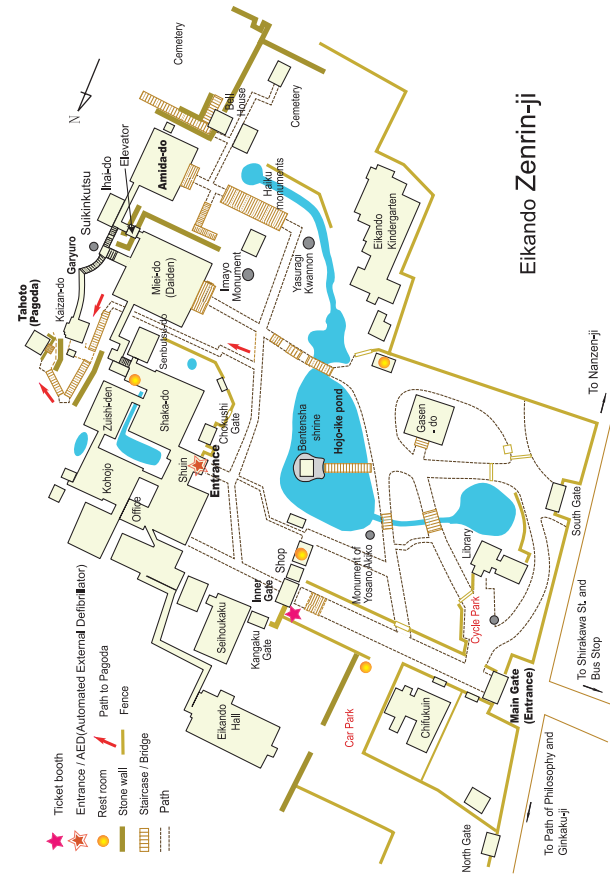
In Buddhism, it is thought that untold Buddhas exist in the limitless universe. For example, in the far west there is the world of the Pure Land Paradise. There it is said that the Buddha Amida preaches the teachings. Amida is the Buddha who saves us all. In the very distant past, in order

to attain the highest enlightenment, Amida established 48 vows. Among them, the most important for our sect is the 18th. This vow is that, if anyone says the name of Amida from the heart, he will be reborn in the Pure Land Paradise and become a buddha.

### What is Amida ?

The Headquarters of the Jodo Sect Seizan Zenrin-ji branch  
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## guide to the precincts



### Getting there

- Take a #5 bus from JR Kyoto Station. A 3-min walk from Nanzan-ji Eikando-michi bus stop.
- Take a #100 bus from JR Kyoto Station. A 5-min walk from Higashi-Tenno-cho bus stop.
- A 15-min walk from Keage Station on the Kyoto Tozai Subway line.
- Take a #5 bus from Keihan Sanjo Station. A 3-min walk from Nanzan-ji Eikando-michi bus stop.
- Take a #204 or #93 bus from Keihan Maruta-machi Station. An 8-min walk from Higashi-Tenno-cho bus stop.

## Visitors' Guide



The Headquarters of the Jodo Sect Seizan Zenrin-ji Branch

# EIKANDO ZENRIN-JI TEMPLE

# The History of Eikando Zenrin-ji

In the early Heian period (853 AD), the priest Shinjo, a disciple of Kobo Daishi Kukai, built a training hall for the practice of Shingon Buddhism on the site of present-day Zenrin-ji. Ten years later, Shinjo received permission to establish a temple there from Emperor Seiwa and the temple got the name Zenrin-ji.

In the latter part of the Heian period, the Abbot Yokan, commonly known as "Eikan", became the chief priest, and Zenrin-ji expanded greatly. Eikan intoned the Nembutsu as many as 60,000 times a day, and made great efforts to save poor people. Eikan received the respect of many people and, at some time Zenrin-ji came to be called Eikando.

Later, the priest Johen became the Abbot in the Kamakura period. He was a follower of the Shingon Sect. However, he read the main work of priest Honen (1133-1212), the founder of the Jodo Sect and became deeply convinced in the teaching that merely the recitation of the Nembutsu was enough to gain salvation. Then, he invited the highest disciple of Honen, Shoku (1177-1242), to become the next chief priest.

Shoku, while devoting himself to the strict practice of the Nembutsu in the same way as Eikan, explained the importance of reciting the Nembutsu placing all your trust in Amida with a pure heart. Giving this practice the name "Shiraki-no Nembutsu" he recommended it to everyone.

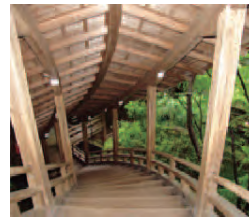
In the Muromachi period, the Onin-no-ran occurred and Kyoto became a burning field. Zenrin-ji was no exception. Many years were spent in reconstruction. Then again, in the Meiji period, there was the Haibutu Kishaku, an anti-Buddhism movement, and a further great blow was suffered. At present, Zenrin-ji has completely recovered from this damage, and the name is known throughout Japan as the home temple of the Jodo Seizan Zenrin-ji sect with Shoku as founder of the sect.

Eikando Zenrin-ji, since the distant Heian period, has passed on the merciful heart of Amida as the main temple of the reciting the Nembutsu.



## 【Taho-to】

A two-story pagoda with the upper part circular, and the lower square. Inside, Shaka Nyorai and Taho Nyorai are enshrined. The layout of Kyoto can be seen from the Taho-to.



## 【Garyuro】

A corridor made by joining the wood together and running along the contours of the mountain slope. Because it resembles the form of a sleeping dragon (*garyu*), it was given this name.



## 【Amida-do】

Hall where the Looking-back Amida is enshrined. Moved here from Osaka in 1607. The Looking-back Amida may be prayed to from either side. On the ceilings, hundreds of flowers are depicted.

## 【Hiyoke-no-Amida】

Priest Shinjo, who opened Zenrin-ji, enshrined five statues of the Buddha. Four of them were destroyed by fire during the Onin-no-ran. However, this one statue was miraculously saved and has come to be called the Fire Protector Amida.



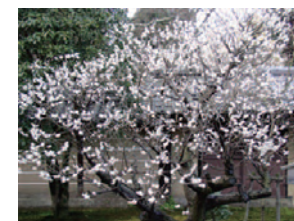
## 【Shaka-do】

Ten Feet Square/Chief priest's quarters. Built in the Muromachi period, this building is known as a true example of Shoin-zukuri (study-style) architecture. There are six rooms, each decorated with gorgeous *fusuma* such as the Matsutori-zu and the Gunsen-zu.



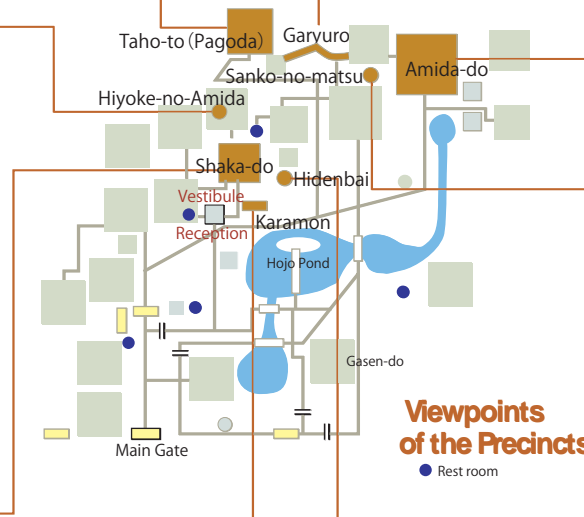
## 【Karamon】

Gate used by messengers of the emperor when they go in and out. The upper part of the Karamon is decorated with openwork carving in a floral pattern.



## 【Hidenbai】

Priest Eikan, when the plum trees of the precincts gave fruit, took it and gave it to the sick. Those trees at some point came to be called Hidenbai by the people. The *Hi* of Hiden means mercy.



## 【Sanko-no-matsu】

An old pine tree remarkable for its needles which are split into three. *Sanko* expresses knowledge, mercy, and sincerity. If you have this needle, it is said that you will receive the three blessings.



## Noteworthy points of Eikando

The scenery of the Higashiyama district and the old architecture of the buildings are in harmony with the gardens blessed with water and greenery. You can stroll at your leisure in the broad gardens.

The beauty of the autumn colors is famous all over Japan. You can enjoy the colors of the precincts of course, but also the brilliant colors

of the foliage of the rock cliffs.

Other than the Looking-back Amida, you can see many other statues like the Fire Protector Amida and Binzuru.

At the Shaka-do, you can see masterpieces of mural and *fusuma* art from the Momoyama period done by Hasegawa Tohaku and his disciples who were known for their



Bamboo Tiger

original designs and colorings.

You can enjoy the seven wonders of Eikando such as the Sanko-no-matsu and the Hidenbai.

### 【NOTICE】

Because this is a religious facility, we ask that you wear suitable clothing. Taking pictures or videos of the statues and paintings is forbidden.