

Cherry Blossoms at Shogetsu-ji Temple: Adorning the Spring of the Historic Kanazawa City

In Kanazawa City, the capital of Ishikawa Prefecture, numerous historical buildings reflect the city's rich heritage, drawing visitors with their stunning views. Among them, the cherry blossoms of Shogetsu-ji Temple are especially beloved as a springtime highlight. (Text: Morohashi Kumiko)

It is said that Shogetsu-ji Temple, located in a corner of the Teramachi ('temple town') area in the heart of Kanazawa City, was established in its current location in 1615. "Inside the temple grounds, there is a cherry blossom tree standing at approximately 15 meters tall and around 400 years old. Some of its branches extend over the main street. This tree has been designated as a National Natural Monument of Japan and has long served as a symbol of Kanazawa," says a person in charge at the Kanazawa City's Cultural Properties Division. Due to its impressive size, this magnificent old cherry blossom tree is sometimes referred to by local residents as the 'Great Cherry Tree'

or the 'Goten Zakura (Cherry Tree from the Castle),' the latter name stemming from its original location on the castle grounds.

"Based on temple records, in 1648, Maeda Toshit-sune¹, the third lord of the Kaga domain, who had retired to Komatsu Castle, gifted this tree, which was originally located within the castle grounds, to the head priest of Shogetsu-ji Temple, Shigan Osho, and it was transplanted to its current location." The beauty of this cherry blossom tree lies primarily in the strength of its large leaves and flowers.

"The variety is known as 'Shogetsuji-zakura,' believed to belong to the family of Yama-zakura cherry

The cherry blossoms of Shogetsu-ji Temple, beloved as a symbol of Kanazawa





Photo: Kanazawa City Hall

The cherry blossoms at Shogetsu-ji Temple have larger leaves and flowers than Somei-yoshino cherry trees.

Photo: Kanazawa City Hall

trees. Compared to Somei-yoshino and others, the distinguishing feature of this variety is its larger leaves and flowers, with the flower diameter ranging from approximately 4.0 to 4.5 centimeters. The sight of its branches stretching out to the main street conveys the depth of its 400-year history.”

The cherry blossoms of Shogetsu-ji Temple, beloved by many cultural figures since ancient times, have inspired literary works throughout history. In the early 18th century, the Confucian scholar Muro Kyuso², renowned for his outstanding achievements, captured the essence of these cherry blossoms in *kan-shi* (traditional poetry form originating from ancient China). Additionally, Izumi Kyoka³, a modern novelist



The cherry blossoms of Shogetsu-ji Temple in bloom, extending over the main street

born in Kanazawa City, featured these cherry blossoms in his novel.

Although the best time to see the cherry blossoms at Shogetsu-ji Temple varies from year to year, it is generally around early to mid-April.

“Even travelers from abroad are fascinated by the strength of Shogetsu-ji Temple’s cherry blossoms and are often seen capturing photos. Fortunately, there was no significant damage caused by the Noto Peninsula Earthquake on January 1, 2024. In front of the temple’s main gate, multilingual signs in English, Chinese, Korean, and other languages are installed to introduce this cherry tree to foreign tourists. We hope to welcome visitors from all over the world to come and enjoy this cherry blossom tree up close.” 📷

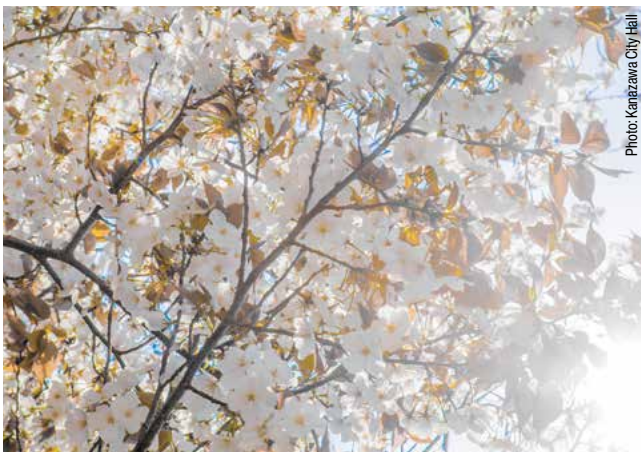


Photo: Kanazawa City Hall

Cherry blossoms in full bloom at Shogetsu-ji Temple

1. A military commander and daimyo, or feudal lord (1594 to 1658). He was the third lord in the lineage following Maeda Toshiie, founder of the Kaga domain.
2. Born in 1658 and died in 1734, he was a Confucian scholar who initially served the Kaga domain and later the Tokugawa shogunate. He left behind a Kanshi poem, *Cherry Blossom Viewing at Shogetsu-ji Temple*, regarding the cherry blossoms of the temple.
3. A Japanese novelist (1873-1939). Known for his fantastical works, he greatly influenced later novelists such as Kawabata Yasunari. The cherry blossoms of Shogetsu-ji Temple served as the inspiration for the sakura of Kougetsu-ji Temple depicted in the novel, *Sakura Shinjuu*.