



O'AHU
Red Temple, Golden Jubilee

Tucked at the base of soaring green cliffs in the back of Valley of the Temples Memorial Park in Windward O'ahu lies one of the island's most distinctive landmarks, the stately Byodo-In Temple. Surrounded by lush gardens and a koi pond, the temple turns fifty this year, and, in honor of its golden anniversary, the US Postal Service has issued a new priority mail stamp featuring a vivid drawing of Byodo-In.

A winding, palm-lined road leads through the sprawling cemetery to a parking lot, where you pay a small fee and cross a red bridge to get to the replica of a famous 950-year-old temple in Japan. The site inspires reverence and reflection, but it's not exactly a religious place: Although Buddhist in appearance, it's actually nondenominational. "People from all over the world come

to visit the temple, and we welcome all faiths to enjoy the beautiful and restful atmosphere found here," says Sara Quitt, event coordinator for the facility, which is a popular venue for weddings and other functions. In fact, you can rest in peace here permanently if you wish: Burial plots are available nearby, and you can even buy a glass cremation niche in a locked room off the main temple hall starting at about \$5,000.

At eleven thousand square feet, the Hawai'i temple is about half the size of the original, and the structure is made of concrete instead of wood. But every other detail has been meticulously reproduced, including the majestic Phoenix Hall, a gilded structure that houses an eighteen-foot, gold-painted Amida Buddha made out of Japanese cypress wood; the meditation pavilion nestled on a small hill; and the three-ton bronze *bon-sho* (sacred peace bell) originally cast in Osaka.

The replica was the idea of American developer Paul Trousdale, builder of the original International Market Place in Waikiki. Trousdale was reportedly inspired by hardworking Japanese immigrants and wanted to commemorate the 1868 centennial of their arrival in Hawai'i. He consulted drawings from the Consulate General of Japan and imported special materials like roof tiles, the two bronze phoenix roof statues and the temple bell. For the temple's fiftieth birthday, a new coat of paint has given it an auspicious red sheen. In addition to the stamp, Quitt says the memorial park will honor the anniversary with cultural events throughout the year, culminating in a massive *obon* (ancestor festival) dance this summer.

—Maria Kanai / Photo by Elyse Butler

byodo-in.com