

# Jizō Pilgrimage in Kamakura, APRIL 24, 2010

The 24th day of each month is considered Jizō's Ennichi (縁日). This is translated as holy day, a monthly memorial day with special significance to a particular Buddha or Bodhisattva.

Saying prayers to the deity on this day is believed to bring greater merits and results than on regular days. The Heian-era document Konjaku Monogatari (今昔物語) gives Jizō's Ennichi as the 24th day of each month. Even today, the annual Jizō Bon (地蔵盆) ritual (Confession to Jizō Ceremony) is held on August 24 at numerous locations throughout Japan, during which people confess the faults they committed during the year in the hopes of erasing bad karma, and to pray that Jizō will grant them longevity and protect their children.

Competently planned by [Dorothee-Eshin Takatsu](#), we walked the Kinubariyama Hiking Trail, with numerous Edo-period Jizō statues, and viewed five of the 24 Jizōs of the Kamakura 24-site Jizō Pilgrimage. [Mark Schumacher](#) gave a broad introductory lecture on Jizō in Buddhist historical context at the top of hiking course<sup>1</sup>. There we had refreshments against the backdrop of a panoramic view over Kamakura. The trail was very steep on way up. We scaled the well-trodden steps and managed the slippery parts as well. Before descending we had lunch in a therefore established open air space. Those who had not made acquaintance on the trail had opportunity to socialize and exchange information and contact details. On the way down the path wound reasonably gradual, and we reached the Sugimoto Dera Temple (Tendai) see <sup>\*2</sup> below, the #4 & #6 of the Jizō Pilgrimage.

Mark continued explaining various aspects of the Jizo, their history and folk tales.

We visited the Hokaiji Temple (Tendai), the #1 on the Jizō Pilgrimage trail and had close-up views of the statues there. We saw the Raikōji Temple (Ji sect, Pure Land School), the #2 of the Jizō Pilgrimage, with a special permission from the priest whom Mark knows.

The temple has a great cemetery as well, with many Edo-period statues, including modern ones of the Mizuko Jizō.

Taking pictures inside the temples was not allowed, but a slide show of photos taken on the pilgrimage trail can be viewed: [click here](#)

The Museum at Tsurugaoka Hachimangu Shrine with a Jizō statue by famed Kamakura-era sculptor Unkei (#18 of Jizō Pilgrimage) let tour members see great statuary close-up.

Some of the participants choose to end the walk leisurely along Kamakura's main shopping street and buy a souvenir at the Buddha Statue Store late afternoon.





↓ Ref. \*2 above

すぎもと であら

# 杉本寺

Sugimotodera Temple  
杉本寺  
스기모토테라(杉本寺) 절



**本堂と五輪塔**  
Gorinto(Five tier tombstone)  
正殿和五輪塔  
본당과 오륜탑

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This is the oldest temple in Kamakura. It is said that the priest Gyoki established the temple during the Nara Era (8th Century), 500 years before the rise of the Kamakura Shogunate. Gyoki is known for his social works, including his support of the construction of Nara's large Buddha and his care for the poor.

Later, the main building of this temple was built following a donation from the Empress Komyo.

The temple's principle objects of worship are the three statues of the eleven-faced Goddess of Mercy, all of which are designated as Important National Cultural Properties and Kamakura Important Cultural Properties. One of the statues is said to have been made by the priest Gyoki himself.

This temple is the first stop in the pilgrimage of the 33 places sacred to Kannon, in the Bando area. The temple's festival day occurs on August 10th, when it is crowded with worshippers.

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### A brief history of Hokaiji

This temple belongs to the Tendai school of Buddhism and is named Kinryuzan-Shakumanin-Endon-Hokaiji.

Hokaiji was constructed in 1335 by order of Emperor Godaigo (1288-1339), and founded by priest Enkan-Echin Jii (1281-1356), preceptor of five emperors.

This site was where the Komachi residence of the Hojos, for nine generations to Takatoki, had been located until this regent family of Kamakura government fell in May, 1333. Emperor Godaigo ordered Takauji Ashikaga to build this temple for the repose of deceased Hojos.

Jii held a Kaidanin here, a school of the Lotus doctrine, Shingon mysticism, Zen meditation, the Hinayana precept and Vinaya practices. The Kaidanin was well known as one of the four scattered in the county – three others were in Yakushiji of Kaga-Hakusan, Tomyoji of Iyo and Chinkoji of Tsukushi. Yuiken, who succeeded Jii, enshrined a Kankitenson – Buddhist image of harmony. He also developed learning methods at the Kaidanin and prayed exclusively for peace of the country.

In 1538, all the edifices burnt down. Tenkai, founder of Kaneiji, requested Shogun Ieyasu Tokugawa in the beginning of the Edo era that Hokaiji being an important temple of the Tendai School in the Eastern part of the country should be officially supported and maintained.