

Jindaiji Temple

History of Jindaiji Temple

Jindaiji Temple is a historic Buddhist temple in the suburbs of Tokyo, surrounded by a rich protective grove and blessed with spring water. People can enjoy the beauty of the area throughout the seasons: fresh greenery and cherry blossoms in spring, fireflies in summer, autumn leaves, and the Soba (traditional buckwheat noodles) Festival in winter.

The name “Jindaiji” derives from the name of the god of water “Jinja Daioh” (Great King of Jinja) who is the basis of the character “Sha Wujing” in the classical Chinese novel “Journey to the West”. It is said that the temple was erected by the monk Mankhoo Shonin in 733.

There is a legend about the origin of the temple. A boy named Fukuman fell in love with a girl from a powerful family. The girl’s parents opposed the relationship and sent her away to live on a small island on a lake. At a loss, Fukuman prayed to Jinja Daioh. A mysterious turtle then appeared and took him to the island. Seeing that the boy had divine protection, the parents relented and gave Fukuman their daughter’s hand in marriage. Their child, Mankhoo Shonin, became a monk and founded Jindaiji Temple in order to fulfill his father’s wish to enshrine Jinja Daioh. Thanks to this romantic love story which is recorded in “Jindaiji Engi” (Documents on the History of Jindaiji Temple), Jindaiji Temple is now well-known for its matchmaking powers.

The Main Gate

As most Japanese temples were built in the mountains, the main gate of a Buddhist temple is called the “Sanmon”, literally “mountain gate”. The Main Gate at Jindaiji Temple has stood for over 300 years since it was built in 1695. It is the oldest surviving structure in the temple, as all other buildings burned down in 1865.



The Bell Tower

The main function of a bell tower is to tell people the time. The current bell was cast and installed in 2001 to replace the previous one which had become too old. This previous bell was cast in 1376 in the late Kamakura period. It is the third oldest surviving bell in the Tokyo area and the oldest to have been used continuously since installation. The government has consequently designated it Important Cultural Property. The bell is now stored in the “Shaka Hall” (Hall of the Buddha), located to the left beyond the Main Gate.



The Main Hall

Jindaiji Temple was erected in 733 and is the second oldest temple in Tokyo after Sensoji Temple in Asakusa. Its Main Hall was rebuilt in 1919 after the preceding building was almost completely destroyed by fire in 1646 and 1865. The Hall enshrines the statue of Amida Nyorai (Buddha).



The Ganzandaishi Hall

The statue of “Ganzandaishi” (Grand-master Ganzan), or “Jikeidaishi”, has been enshrined in the Ganzandaishi Hall since 991, and is very rarely on display. Ganzandaishi was a monk in the Heian period (794-1185) and is famous for becoming the 18th Tendaizasu (the top rank of Tendai Buddhism). His real name was Ryogen, but as he passed away on January 3rd he became known as Gan (January) -Zan (three) -Daishi (Grand-master).

Ganzandaishi is said to be the incarnation of Nyoirinkannon Buddha and since the Kamakura-Muromachi period (1192-1573) worshippers have accredited him with the divine power to dispel bad luck. He is also said to have created “Omikujii” (fortune-telling slips) which are now often seen at temples and shrines all over Japan.



The Statue of Hakuho Buddha

The Hakuho Buddha is a Shaka Nyorai Izo (seated Buddha) from the Hakuho period in the late Asuka period (592-710). It was discovered in 1909 under the stage in Ganzandaishi Hall. The government designated the statue a National Treasure but how it came to Jindaiji Temple is unknown. It is a large, gilded bronze statue with a height of 83.9cm and a seated height of 59.3cm, the oldest of its kind in eastern Japan. Although its golden surface has peeled off almost completely due to fire, the characteristic artistic influence of continental realism typical of the Hakuho period is evident in the childlike face, the line joining the eyebrows and the nose, the parallel pleats of the clothing and the plump body. The statue is enshrined in the Shaka Hall.



Jindaiji Temple and Soba (buckwheat noodles)

The quality of water and buckwheat flour are said to determine the taste of soba, which are a popular food in Japan. The area around Jindaiji Temple was rich in spring water and so suited to growing soba. During the Edo Period, peasants offered soba flour instead of rice to the temple. The temple in turn made soba noodles to entertain guests.

Annual Events at Jindaiji Temple

January 1st-7th: New Year prayers

February 3rd: Setsubun/Mamemaki: Scatter beans for good luck on the last day of winter.

March 3rd-4th: Yakuyoke-Ganzandaishi Taisai: Commemorate the 10th Century monk Yakuyoke-Ganzandaishi and purchase Dharma dolls.

Around April 8th: Kanbutsue (Hanamatsuri): The birthday of Buddha, the founder of Buddhism.

Late April: Nanjamonja Concert: The Tokyo Fire Department Band performs under a blooming White Fringetree.

Late July: Hohzuki Festival: A common summer event with stalls selling Hohzuki (Chinese lantern plants) or wind chimes.

Mid-October: Soba Festival: A ceremony in front of the Main Hall to make soba noodles to dedicate to the temple.

Mid-October: Jindaiji Jusanya: Celebrate the beautiful fall moon. The monks chant hymns in front of the Sanmon.

Mid-October: Jinjadiaohsai/Daihannyatendokue: The monks ceremonially read at high speed 600 volumes of the Sutra of Great Wisdom at the Hall of Jinja Daioh.

December 31st: Joya no Kane: The bell is tolled 108 times on New Year's eve.



purchase Dharma dolls



Nanjamonja Concert

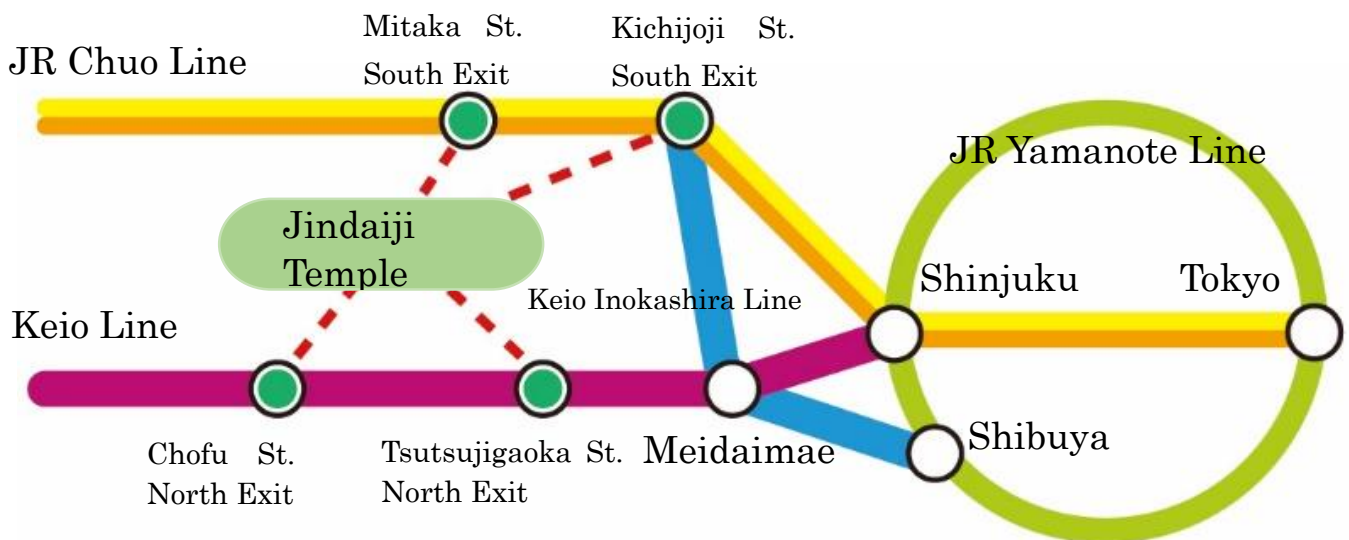
Access

via Keio Line

- From Chofu Station take bus No.34 (showing “調 34”) bound for Jindaiji and alight at Jindaiji bus stop.
- From Tsutsujigaoka Station take bus No.21 (showing “丘 21”) bound for Jindaiji and alight at Jindaiji bus stop.

via JR Chuo/Sobu Line

- From Kichijoji Station take bus No.04 (showing “吉 04”) bound for Jindaiji and alight at Jindaiji bus stop.
- From Mitaka Station take bus No.65 (showing “鷹 65”) bound for Jindaiji and alight at Jindaiji bus stop.



For more information about Jindaiji Temple please visit the following “Guidoor” website created by Mobile Smart Town Promotion Foundation:

<https://www.guidoor.jp/en/place/chofu/jindaiji-temple/>

This brochure was made with the supervision of Lingua House Institute for Education

(<http://lingua-house.jp/>; Tel&Fax:042-369-5590).



Tendai Buddhism Special Headquarters

Fugakusan-Shorakuin Jindaiji Temple

〒182-0017

5-15-1 Jindaijimotomachi, Chofu-City, Tokyo, Japan

Tel: 042-486-5511, Fax: 042-483-6969