

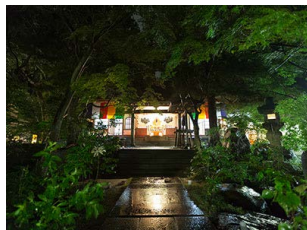
Welcome to Kakuonji Temple - Visit Kakuonji and feel the spirit of KAMAKURA Buddhism

Kakuonji is a classic Kamakura-style temple—a place where you will find the finest medieval Buddhist statuary, structures and natural surroundings that Kamakura has to offer.

At Kakuonji, monks guide visitors around the temple every day on the hour. We sincerely welcome you to come and experience for yourself the style of Buddhism that was born in medieval Kamakura.

The tour focuses on three key structures:

1. Aizen-do



This structure originated as the main hall of nearby Dairakuji Temple.

As time passed by, Dairakuji could no longer survive and the hall was relocated to Kakuonji. The hall contains a statue of Aizen Myo-o, a red Buddha with six arms. As with many gods in Greek mythology, Buddhism involves various forms of Buddha representing different benefits and roles.

Aizen Myo-o is the Buddha of “passion,” who instills “the ability to forget one's fears and worries in order to be happy and move on in life.”

2. Jizo-do

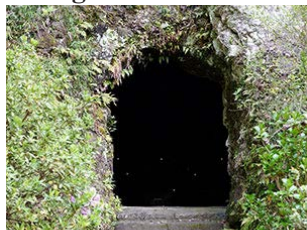


Jizo (Bodhisattva or Bosatsu) represents a being that has reached the level of Buddha but who remains on this earth to help people in the human world.

A beloved Buddha, Jizo is believed to embody the power of the earth and blesses the fields where food is grown. The earth itself is also considered a power that nurtures "life," and so Jizo is worshiped as the deity who raises and protects children. You will often see Jizo statues wearing vermilion hats or aprons, the sacred color used to ward off evil spirits.

Other significant structures, such as shrine torii gates and traditional bridges, are often painted in the same bright red for protection. Jizo often carries a walking stick as he is believed to be a traveling deity and protects travelers. Many Jizo statues can be found along ancient highways where people can stop and pray along their journey.

3. Yagura caves



Kamakura consists mostly of mountainous areas with very little flat land.

When a samurai or high-level person died, diggers were hired to carve a cave, or yagura, along a hillside.

The body would then be cremated and the ashes buried in the cave.

The caves you will see during the tour are mainly used for Buddhist rituals and training.

A total of 177 caves have been discovered on this mountain.

4. Utsumi Family House



Utsumike is the farm home of a wealthy family which was built in Kamakura in 1706.

As you can see, many farmers did not use tatami mats at that time.

The home was dismantled in 1981 and relocated to the grounds of Kakuonji.

With so little sunlight throughout the house, you may wonder how people could live in such darkness every day.

The scenery surrounding the home provides a much brighter atmosphere.

Perhaps this explains why the Japanese have always valued the sun and the splendor of natural scenery in everyday life.

5. Hondo Yakushi-do



Yakushi-do serves as Kakuonji's main hall.

Although the temple was established in 1218, this hall suffered fires and destruction many times. The current Yakushi-do is the most recent version of a hall that was rebuilt in 1354.

The Buddha set in the center is Yakushi Nyorai, who offers nourishment for a healthy mind and body, and gives strength to people who are injured or ill. As the power to stay healthy is needed both day and night, Yakushi Nyora is accompanied by two acolyte helpers.

The figure on the right is Nikko Bosatsu (representing sunlight) and the figure on the left is Gekko Bosatsu (representing moonlight). The surrounding twelve figures protecting this Yakushi Triad provide encouragement for parishioners. These twelve protective deities (Juni Shinsho) also represent the 12 animals in the Chinese calendar.

Look closely and you will notice a zodiac animal on each deity's head.