

Tour of JINDAIJI Temple

Historical Background: Jindaiji 深大寺 was first established about 1300 years ago during the Tempyo period. Its founder was the Buddhist priest Mankhoo Shonin 満功上人 of the Hosso sect 法相宗 studied in China. About 100 years later, in the 9th century in the time of Emperor Seiwa, Eryo 惠亮, a priest of the Tendai sect 天台宗, was appointed from Enryakuji Temple 延暦寺 on Mount Hiei 比叡山, north-east of Kyoto. Eryo dedicated his life to raising the standing of the temple, establishing Jindaiji as one of Tendai's principal temples. The name of Jindaiji is originated in the God of Water called Jinja Daioh (Jp:) 深沙大王. A divinity said to have appeared in a dream to the renowned Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Hsuan-tsan 玄奘 (Jp:Genjou; 600-664), encouraged him when he had become lost in the desert in Central Asia on his way to India.

Jinja Daioh as a Match-making God: According to legend, Fukuman 福満, the father of the priest Mankhoo, fell in love with a daughter of the village chief but the daughter was sequestered on an islet by her parents. Because Fukuman then offered fervent prayer to Jinja Daioh, a sacred turtle appeared to take him to the islet. At his auspicious omen, the village chief and his wife approved of their daughter's marriage to Fukuman. Later on, the founder Mankhoo 満功 was born. He eventually established the temple by enshrining an image of Jainja Daioh as wished for by his father.

After Sensoji 浅草寺 in Asakusa, Jindaiji is considered to be the 2nd oldest temple in Tokyo. The original temple and the main building in its precincts were burnt down in 1865 but reconstructed soon afterwards. The temple precincts presently cover some 66,000sqm (or 16a) which include a number of soba restaurants congregated around the temple.

Highlight of the points to note are as follows,

1. **San-mon 山門:** This gateway, the temple's oldest building, survived the fire of 1865. Its unique design was given the name of Yakuimon 薬医門 which was built in 1695. The beautiful thatched roof as Kayabuki 茅葺き was renovated in 2003.
2. **Hon-do 本堂:** The Main Hall was reconstructed in 1925. Its statue of "Seated Crowned Amida Nyora" 宝冠阿弥陀如来座像 was made in the Kamakura period (the 13th century) and is of a unique design for this Buddha. In front of the main hall, there is the Jo-ko-ro 常香楼, the incense shelter which was built in 1833. Scorch marks near its roof are evidence of its narrow escape in the 1865 fire.
3. **Ganzan Daishi-do 元三大師堂:** This hall was constructed in memory with the virtuous priest Ganzan-Jie-Daish 元三慈恵大師, the 18th chief priest of the Tendai sect at Enryakuji Temple. The present temple is an 1867 reconstruction. The highly treasured statue of Ganzan-Jie-Daishi is thought to be of the 14th century. This venerable figure is a symbol of mercy and an incarnation of Nyoirin Kannon Bosatsu 如意輪観音菩薩 (Bodhisattva is a master of Buddhism at a rank below Buddha.) So, many people come here to pray, writing their supplications on small wooden goma-fuda 護摩札 and obtain charms for relief from various worries. This is widely known as Yakuyoke prayer 厄除信仰. This hidden statue is a seated figure with a height of two meters. It is exhibited to the public every 25 years on the anniversary of the priest's death. The 1025th anniversary was commemorated in 2009. The next exhibition will be in the year of 2034.
4. **Shaka-do 釈迦堂 (House of Buddha):** A number of objects 釈 are exhibited here. Two are Important Cultural Assets: one is the old bronze bell of the 14th century which is the 3rd oldest bell in Tokyo, and a statue of "Shaka Nyorai Seated on a Bench" 釈迦如来像. This peaceful Buddha was discovered underneath Ganzan-Daishi-do in 1909. The origin of the statue is unknown, however, based on its appearance and the material used, it is considered to be a work of the 7th century and therefore much older than the temple. How it came to be in the precincts of Jindaiji remains a deep mystery,

Recommended Walking Route: [GATEWAY 山門]→[BELFRY 鐘楼]→[JOKORO 常香楼]→[MAIN HALL 本堂]→[GANZAN-DAISHI-DO 元三大師堂]→[SHAKA-DO 釈迦堂]→[KAISAN-DO 開山堂]→[ENMEI-KANNON 延命観音]→[JINJADAIO-DO 深沙大王堂]→[SOBA-KANNON そば守観音]