

Before and During the Heian Period

Kamakura before the Establishment of the Kamakura Shogunate

The name of Kamakura first appeared in the written record in the *Kojiki* (Records of Ancient Matters), which was written at the beginning of the 8th-century. It is known that there were people living in the area even before that time, and that there was a local government office. Kamakura is also mentioned in three poems in the *Manyoshu*, the oldest collection of Japanese poetry, compiled in the second half of the 8th-century.

The Minamoto clan, later to found the Kamakura shogunate, first arrived in Kamakura in the Heian Period (794 to the end the 12th-century). In 1031, Minamoto no Yoriyoshi, and his father, Minamoto no Yorinobu, ancestors of Minamoto no Yoritomo, the first shogun of the Kamakura shogunate, quelled a rebellion led by Taira no Tadatsune in the Boso Peninsula. The Boso Peninsula is in Chiba Prefecture, the other side of Tokyo Bay. This so impressed Taira no Naokata, who himself had failed to put down the rebellion that he arranged for Yoriyoshi to marry his daughter. He gave Yoriyoshi his mansion in Kamakura, and Yoriyoshi was appointed Lord of Mutsu in North Eastern Japan.

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Yoriyoshi's son Yoshiie became the leader of the Minamoto clan and gained the trust of the *samurai* in eastern Japan. Yoshiie's great grandson Yoshitomo, the father of Yoritomo, is said to have had a mansion near Jufukuji Temple. The geography of Kamakura, a coastal land surrounded by low mountains, is clearly unchanged since ancient times, but many of its most ancient sites remain unchanged as well.

734 Sugimotodera Temple

The Thatched Main Hall in the Serene Precinct Recalls Ancient Times

Established approximately 450 years before the founding of the Kamakura shogunate, Sugimotodera Temple is the oldest temple in Kamakura. The main hall has a thatched roof. All three principal images of the Buddha at the temple are eleven-faced Kannon statues. Two of them are designated as important cultural properties by the Japanese government. Visitors are allowed to enter the main hall to view these statues. These three Kannon statues are called "The Kannon under the cedar tree." Legend has it that the three Kannon statues walked to the shelter of a cedar tree when the temple caught fire in the Kamakura Period. This is the first temple of the Bando 33 Kannon Pilgrimage.



The long history of the temple is evident in the worn moss-covered stone steps.

Modern

Present day

736 Hasedera Temple

Superb Panoramic View of Kamakura.

This temple is famous not only for its Buddhist statues but also for its gardens, and you will not want to miss the view over Kamakura city and out towards the ocean from the lookout platform. Hydrangeas in bloom in springtime and the autumn colors are very popular with visitors.

The principal Buddha statue at Hasedera is an eleven-faced Kannon Bodhisattva, which is believed to have been carved from the same camphor tree as the statue at Hasedera Temple in Nara. The statue is over 9 meters tall, making it one of the tallest Buddhist statues in Japan. Other cultural treasures, such as a standing eleven-faced Kannon statue, which was the principal object of worship before the current Great Kannon, are exhibited in the temple's Kannon Museum.



The principal image of the temple is an eleven-faced Kannon statue over 9 m high.



Yasunari Kawabata
(1899-1972)

In the
footsteps of
the Literati

Yasunari Kawabata, a novelist who won the Nobel Prize in Literature, lived in Kamakura for a long time and devoted himself to Kamakura bunko and the Kamakura Pen Club. In his novel, *Yama no Oto* (The Sound of the Mountain), he included a description of Hase, located in a valley in Kamakura. In the valley you can hear the sound of ocean waves at night, but the sound which the main character of the novel, Shingo, heard was the sound of the mountain.

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Goryojinja Shrine

An Ancient *Samurai* is Enshrined Here,
Surrounded by an Ancient Forest.

The *torii* gate of Goryojinja Shrine stands right next to the Enoden Line's railroad crossing. This shrine was originally dedicated to the ancestors of the Kanto Taira clan, but later the spirit of Kamakura Kagemasa, a Heian Period *samurai* known for his prowess, was enshrined here. Kagemasa was the leader of the Kamakura *samurai* and developed the Shonan region (south of Kamakura). At the annual festival held in September, the Menkake parade, people wear ancient masks, and Kamakura Kagura (sacred music and dance) is performed.



Large male and female ginkgo trees stand side by side. Their yellow leaves are stunning in autumn.