

Hannaara

"Etymology of Hannaara"

One of the origins of the word Hanno is that during the Nara period, immigrants gathered in the Kanto area and named this area "Hannara." "Han" means wide or big. "Nara" represents a city or country. It is said that the word originally meant a plain near a river.



summit of Mt. Hiwada



Kannonji temple approach

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Hannaara Style



The Sequel to Hidden in Hanno

Hanno x Spiritual Training

Ajikan Meditation



▲Head Priest
Yuryo Hattori

Ajikan is a meditation technique in Shingon Esoteric Buddhism practiced while gazing at the Sanskrit character "A" (pronounced "Ah"), which represents the Buddha Dainichi Nyorai. We visited Hannyan Chojin Kanonji Temple for this precious experience, where we were guided by Head Priest Yuryo Hattori and accompanied by Deputy Head Priest Yuen Hattori.

Ajikan meditation progresses through four stages: Susokukan, Asokukan, Gachirinkan, and Ajikan. Before starting the meditation, you bow to the scroll depicting the Sanskrit character "A" (referred to as "Gohonzon-sama") and sit upright. You then form a mudra (hand gesture) and chant a mantra.



▲Ajikan Gohonzon-sama:
The Sanskrit character
"A" is depicted on a
lotus flower against a
full moon.



▲Gachirinkan
Gohonzon-sama

●Susokukan (Breath Counting Meditation)

This stage involves regulating your breathing to relax your mind and body. Focus on deep, conscious breaths, feeling the air flow through your throat, lungs, and deep into your abdomen. Inhale slowly while counting to ten, then exhale slowly, again counting to ten.

●Asokukan (Ah Breath Meditation)

As you continue breathing deeply, chant "Ahh" with each exhale. Visualize the fading sound of "Ahh" traveling to the realm of Gohonzon-sama and then returning to you from the depths of the earth. Consciously breathing slowly and deeply, I felt a sense of my mind's engine slowing down and my concentration gradually increasing.

●Gachirinkan (Full Moon Meditation)

Gaze at the image of the full moon depicted on the other side of the scroll. Close your eyes and visualize a spherical moon in your mind. With each breath, expand the moon, enveloping yourself within its radiance. Continue expanding it until it fills the entire universe. Then, with each exhale, gradually contract the moon until it returns to its original size, offering this moon of your heart back to Gohonzon-sama. I tried to envision a crystal-clear full moon within my chest, but it was challenging. Perhaps it was my ego, making excuses and trying to turn a blind eye, but I felt as if the impurities within my heart were being exposed.

●Ajikan ("A" Character Meditation)

Face the side of the scroll with the Sanskrit character "A," visualize it clearly in your mind, and try to perceive the universe filled with the wisdom and compassion of Dainichi Nyorai. You will receive more detailed instructions on the practice when you experience it firsthand.

Achieving the state of mind that Ajikan meditation aims for is incredibly difficult, and it made me truly appreciate the profoundness of this practice. However, I could definitely feel the changes in my mind through the breathing techniques, and I began to understand why meditation is considered a form of mental training. When your mind is calm, you gain better self-control and are less likely to be driven by ego. Head Priest Hattori shared that encountering Buddha is about encountering the Buddha-nature within ourselves. Meditation begins with regulating your breath. It is a profound practice and grasping its essence may be a long journey. Nevertheless, it can bring a sense of calm amidst the business of daily life. When you're feeling rushed, take a deep breath. When you're feeling stuck, try meditating. My experience with Ajikan meditation was invaluable, highlighting that meditation is a form of mental training and a stretch for the soul. Life has its ups and downs; why not incorporate meditation into your life to boost your mental resilience?

Deputy Head Priest
Yuen Hattori



▲During Ajikan
Meditation



▲Kanonji Temple
Website



▲Kanonji Temple
Instagram

Shojin Ryori (Buddhist Vegetarian Cuisine)

We spoke with Head Priest Ryoko Ono of Iozan Yakujin Hachioji Temple (commonly known as: Takedera - Bamboo Temple) about Shojin Ryori.



▲Head Priest
Ryoko Ono



●Shojin Ryori as a Form of Spiritual Training

"Rather than being a form of training itself, Shojin Ryori is a way of life for Buddhist monks," says Head Priest Ono. Consuming Shojin Ryori, made with natural ingredients such as mountain vegetables and wild plants, purifies the body, and this way of life becomes a form of spiritual practice. "Shojin Kessai" refers to abstaining from alcohol and meat, and being mindful of one's diet to cleanse the body and mind. While it's considered a healthy diet today, in the past, when access to various ingredients was limited, people living in the mountains relied heavily on mountain vegetables and wild plants for sustenance. Shojin Ryori, embraced as a folk remedy, is also said to have connections to the Yamabushi, the ascetic mountain priests of Shugendo.

●Takedera and Shojin Ryori

Takedera, a Tendai Buddhist temple nestled deep in the mountains, was once a center of mountain worship, and it has many ties to the Yamabushi who resided there until the late Meiji period (early 1900s). While the Yamabushi ventured into the mountains for ascetic training, they also sustained themselves by collecting and selling mountain vegetables and medicinal herbs. Moreover, "Io" in "Iozan" (Mount Io) refers to Yakushi Nyorai, the Medicine Buddha, who is often depicted holding a medicine jar, symbolizing healing and good health. It is said that even the temple once sold "Ganyaku" (herbal pills) made from medicinal herbs for their healing benefits. Takedera, surrounded by abundant nature, attracted many literary figures and artists who left behind haiku poems and ema (wooden prayer plaques). It seems that Shojin Ryori was served to those who made the trek up the mountain.

●Highlights of Takedera

True to its name, "Bamboo Temple," Takedera is surrounded by bamboo groves. A walk through these serene forests can soothe tired eyes and refresh the soul. It is also the only temple in eastern Japan that practices Shinbutsu-shugo (the syncretism of Shinto and Buddhism), enshrining both Yakushi-ji Temple and Gozu Tenno (deity of disease prevention). Visitors can thus enjoy aspects of both Buddhism and Shintoism. On the steps leading to the upper shrine, you'll find a "Chinowa" (a large ring made of woven reeds). Passing through this ring is believed to purify the body and mind, bringing good health and warding off misfortune. In addition to Shojin Ryori, the temple is known for its delicious soba noodles, yokan (sweet bean jelly), and other traditional sweets. The "Gozu-sama Dango" (skewered rice dumplings) are particularly popular. Head Priest Ono aims to make Takedera an integral part of the local community, giving back to the region that sustains it. The temple organizes various events, providing opportunities to connect with nature and experience Japanese culture. It's a delightful form of spiritual nourishment.

●How to Enjoy Shojin Ryori

At Takedera, they want visitors to "relax and enjoy the experience of purifying themselves" and encourage them not to worry too much about formalities, simply offering a prayer before the meal. Head Priest Ono further enhances the experience with his insightful commentary on Shojin Ryori and haiku poetry. The dishes are presented on bamboo plates adorned with seasonal flowers, creating a visually stunning presentation that resembles a landscape painting. The addition of seasonal haiku poems adds a touch of elegance, allowing guests to truly "savor the food with their eyes and taste it with their hearts." The bamboo chopsticks provided, though not the easiest to use, are part of the charm. They naturally encourage a slower pace, allowing you to truly appreciate each bite and savor the enjoyable experience. In the midst of our busy lives, we often neglect the present moment, but Shojin Ryori provides an opportunity to cherish this "now." As the meal concluded, I felt both physically and mentally content, with a renewed sense of lightness in my heart.



▲The 10-course Shojin Ryori meal we had.
While there are staple dishes, the menu
changes seasonally based on the available
ingredients, allowing guests to savor the
flavors of each season.



▲Takedera
Website



▲Takedera
Instagram



Hannaara's 100 Romantic Scenes



NiceTown
Hanno
Hidaka

Hannara's 100 Romantic Scenes introduces recommended photography spots in Hanno and Hidaka. Do you recognize these places? People often pass by these familiar sights. But if you stop and take a closer look, you'll surely have an experience that moves your heart and brings you peace. Enjoy these scenes, carefully selected by members of the Hanno Junior Chamber of Commerce.



A stunning spot offering a bird's-eye view of the magnificent nature of Hanno and Hidaka. The ridgeline stretching into the distance and the expansive greenery are a source of local pride, inherited from our ancestors and something we wish to pass on to future generations.



In today's world, with work and personal life, we often find ourselves looking down without even realizing it. When I looked up at the sky, I encountered the grand changes of the seasons and a sense of tranquility.



Speaking of Hanno, it's all about nature! The contrast of the clear stream, blue sky, and mountains is like a masterpiece painted by nature!



Summer in Hanno. After enjoying a BBQ by the river, you look up and see the radiant, seven-colored art created by nature.



Koma Shrine in summer. If you take a detour and enter from the first torii gate, you can enjoy a more picturesque scenery.



The Hachiko Line running above the residential area. The massive structure blending into the landscape reflects the skills and ingenuity of the constructors.



A bridge that connects residential areas and prefectural roads. The moss on the sides shows that it has supported the lives of the residents for a long time.



This road connecting Hanno and Hidaka creates a unique sensation as the curves and uphill slopes seem to be gently absorbed into the forest.



The radio tower standing tall in the heart of the city. When you stop and look up at it, you're reminded of your childhood when you saw it as a symbol of the town.



A small bridge over a mountain stream deep in the mountains. What could that truss structure be on top of the bridge?

The photos featured here were taken by members of the Hanno Junior Chamber of Commerce. We also rediscovered the charm of this region by walking around the town and taking pictures.

Why not try finding your own romantic spot in the familiar landscapes you see every day?

The locations of these photos are marked on the map on the next page! We will be posting photos that couldn't be included in this magazine on Instagram, so please check it out!



JCI.HANNO

This is the final issue of Hannaara for FY2024.

Throughout this year, we have featured attractive spots in the area with "Tourism" as our theme.

On this page, we have compiled the locations introduced in previous issues to create a Hannaara-style guide map for FY2024. Take this magazine with you on your next outing and discover new charms in your local area!

See the March 2024 issue of Hannaara (No. 187) for details! ✨

① Stroll Market



A local event showcasing handmade items that started with the desire to introduce the communal living of new and old residents. Held in May and November.

② Arima Dam



A dam built on the Arima River, a tributary of the Iruma River. The area has long been known for its beautiful starry skies and offers experiences such as fishing and canoeing.

③ Mount Bonoore



Tengu-no-taki & Shiro-kujaku -no-taki along the mountain trail, as well as the awe-inspiring gorge, make you feel as if you've entered the training grounds of a Tengu (mountain goblin).

④ Hanno Riverbed



A scenic spot in Hanno that offers a beautiful view in every season. Let's all be mindful of our manners and keep it clean! 15-minute walk from Hanno Station. No parking available.



Photo spots from the previous "100 Romantic Scenes" feature.



Spots featured in Hannaara.



FY2024

How to Enjoy

Hanno and Hidaka

Hannaara Style

See the July 2024 issue of Hannaara (No. 188) for details! ✨

⑤ Shogakuji Temple



A Soto Zen Buddhist temple located deep in the mountains of Hanno. The perfect place to experience Zen meditation, sutra copying, and Shojin Ryori surrounded by nature - ideal for first-time practitioners.

⑥ Mount Hiwada



Elevation: 305 meters. Choose from the beginner-friendly Onna-zaka or the challenging Otoko-zaka. Enjoy various climbing routes and breathtaking views from the summit.

⑦ Kinchakuda



Located at the foot of Mt. Hiwada, famous for its cluster amaryllis. In autumn, the vast fields are covered in a sea of crimson red spider lilies, creating a vista that resembles a sprawling red carpet.

⑧ Renovated Storehouses



These establishments have been renovated in a way that preserves their traditional charm while adapting to modern needs.



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