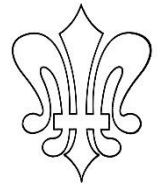




# HAKONE POST



FREE

SPECIAL EDITION 2019

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## Hakone Shrine on Lake Ashi



Hakone Shrine main entrance.

Lake Ashi is visited by many people every year, and Hakone Shrine is definitely one of the most popular spots on its shores. We recently went to the shrine to learn more about its long history. Mr. Atsushi Ozawa, who is a *Negi* (or assistant) to the head priest, was kind enough to answer our questions during our visit.

Hakone Shrine has a history that stretches back more than 1,260 years. People come to the shrine to pray for safe travels, fortuitous success, and the removal of demons. There are several gods that are said to reside at Hakone

shrine, and they are known collectively as the “Hakone Okami”. Many historical figures of Japan have frequented the shrine throughout its history, and it is still visited today by people from all over Japan and the world.

There are also other shrines in the area around the lake. One of the more popular of these is Kuzuryu Shrine, which is believed to be the home of the god of Lake Ashi. Praying at this shrine is said to grant divine favor for money, business, and in finding your perfect love match. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of every month Kuzuryu Shrine holds

the Tsukinami Festival, which is popular among women (as well as many men) hoping for divine assistance in finding their future spouse.

However, Mr. Ozawa suggests visitors not skip calling in at the main Hakone Shrine. He said, “Although it is not a particularly exciting place for tourists, it is where the main gods of Hakone reside. So, the most divine favor can be gained by praying at the main shrine before visiting the others in the area.” If you plan on traveling to Lake Ashi, we definitely recommend taking his

advice. Also, don’t forget to get a red stamp while you are there. Most shrines and temples offer these original red stamps as mementos to those who visit, and collecting them is one of pleasures of sightseeing in Japan.

Hakone Shrine is truly an ancient building surrounded by beautiful scenery and a relaxing atmosphere. Please come and visit it, and the other shrines around Lake Ashi during your stay.

*Written by Ayaka & Aiko.  
Photo by Mihar.*

## Our School in the Mountains

Kanrei Shirayuri Gakuen is our school in Hakone. It is a catholic girl’s school that has an elementary, junior high, and high school on the one campus.

The nearest train station to our school is Gora on the Tozan mountain railway, so you can often see us riding its switchback course up and down the mountain. For most of us, it may be a little far to travel, but we are so happy we can attend a school sitting in the middle of such bountiful nature.

In spring, we get to see cherry blossoms, then hydrangeas in summer, autumn colors in the fall, and thick white snow drifts in winter. Sometimes, even wild boars come out of the forest and visit our school grounds.

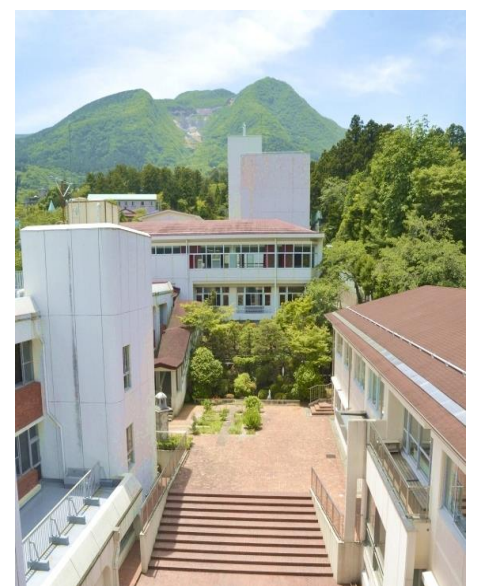
At our school, we are involved in various club activities, for example the chorus club, karate club, manga club, and many others. We also practice classical traditions such as the tea ceremony and Japanese calligraphy. We even have a tatami

style lodge, complete with hot spring baths and a Japanese garden.

Although our school is unique in Japan, we love every part of it. We have a special greeting we use for ‘hello’ and ‘goodbye’. We say *Gokigenyoh*, and this means “I hope you are well”. You might hear us say it if you see us around Hakone. While you are visiting Japan, why don’t you try it? Local people might be surprised, but it might help you make new friends.

**Gokigenyoh!**

*Written by Moka & Umi.  
Photo by Kanrei Shirayuri.*



Kanrei Shirayuri Gakuen



# Saving a Dying Art – Hakone Wood Mosaic



Ornamental Wood Mosaic Boxes.

On July 31<sup>st</sup> we visited the Kanazashi Woodcraft Studio in Hatajuku, where about 40 people joined a workshop to experience Hakone wood mosaic crafting. Hakone wood mosaic is one of Japan's traditional crafts and was established in Hatajuku about two hundred years ago. Wood mosaic crafting uses various rods of naturally colored wood spliced together to form decorative geometrical patterns. The cross-sections of these patterns are then used to create Japanese "secret" boxes and other ornamental items.

During our visit to the studio, we were able to interview Master

Craftsman, Katsuhiro Kanazashi.

Mr. Kanazashi first got into the craft in 1970. At that time, the old masters were worried the art would be lost to history, and so started a training program in Hatajuku for young people. The new students were fascinated by the fun of creating patterns from the beauty of natural colors. Mr. Kanazashi was among them and soon gained a reputation for creating original works with traditional skills. As time went on his love of wood mosaic grew, as did his motivation to revive the art. Finally, he decided to devote his life to this cause, and through his efforts, wood mosaic has not only survived, but has been recognized as one of Japan's official crafts. Furthermore, it has become a well-known symbol of the Hakone region.

Mr. Kanazashi takes particular care to ensure each piece is made by hand, and that only the natural colors and grains of the wood are used. He said that there are three major difficulties when making wood mosaic. The first is shaping the individual elements of pattern so they fit seamlessly. The next is balancing the wood colors just right. Then, the final hurdle is

forming the finish product itself. However, Mr. Kanazashi is dedicated to providing only authentic products for the customers of his workshop and cautions against imitations made by printing similar wood patterns and pasting them to poorly crafted boxes.

This dedication to quality has led to many awards over the years, as well as the honor of crafting the winning trophy for the biggest marathon event in Japan, the annual Tokyo-Hakone Ekiden. Each time Mr. Kanazashi crafts the trophy he takes inspiration from an event or hot topic of that year. This year's trophy was made from the image of Hakone Hachiri, which had been made an official Japanese heritage site. He said it was the 23<sup>rd</sup> trophy crafted by him so far.

For the future, Mr. Kanazashi hopes that Hakone wood mosaic will become a common symbol associated with Japan. He also wants as many people as possible to experience the joy of crafting wood mosaic for themselves.

Written by Shiena & Naru.  
Photos by Kanrei Shirayuri.



(Left) Kanazashi Woodcraft Studio. (Right) Mr. Kanazashi.

## The Historic Fujiya Hotel

Fujiya Hotel, located in Miyanoshita among the mountains of Hakone, was founded in 1878 and is one of the oldest hotels in Japan. It has been officially recognized as an important cultural asset to Japan and has hosted many famous guests including names such as Helen Keller, Charlie Chaplin, John Lennon, as well as an impressive list of royalty from both at home and abroad. We were fortunate enough to visit the Kikka-so Inn section of the hotel, which was originally built as holiday villa for the imperial family over a hundred years ago.

Hotel Deputy Director, Mr. Kei Iida, and Ms. Hiroko Oishi of marketing were kind enough to give us an interview as they showed us around the grounds. Mr. Iida said, "We hope we can help people from many countries experience the classical Japanese culture." He went on to say that since their foundation, the Fujiya Hotel has followed the simple ideals of *Shisei*, which means "sincerity" in English. Consideration for guests is the single most important thing for staff at the hotel.



The Kikka-so Inn, Fujiya Hotels

The Fujiya Hotel in Miyanoshita has stood for 140 years and survived many calamities, such as the Great Kanto Earthquake and the 2nd World War. According to Mr. Iida, their predecessors often had to adapt to great changes, but above all, it was the unwavering support of their guests that saw the hotel through difficult times. Continuing with this tradition the main building of the hotel has been closed since April 2018 for renovations and earthquake reinforcement, but will reopen again in the summer of 2020.

The grand history of Fujiya Hotels will surely continue for many years into the future, guided by the principles of *Shisei*.

Written by Yukino & Sona.  
Photo by Fujiya Hotels.

## Rebuilding the Gyoza Center

Just over a year ago, one of the most beloved restaurants in Hakone, the Gyoza Center in Gora, suffered a complete loss due to fire. Although there was much concern among the local community, the owners did not give up on the small family business and were able to reopen in new building in July.

The menu offers many kinds of gyoza, a Chinese dumpling popular in Japan, including varieties not found anywhere else, such as kimchi, natto, and chicken wing. The most popular type however, is their original "Hakone" gyoza, made from pork, vegetables and seasonings wrapped in a thin pastry

and pan-steamed. In addition, the store provides menus in English and Chinese so that people from abroad can easily enjoy their visit.

When asked about the future, the owner replied, "Now that we have reopened the restaurant, we hope to share the taste of our gyoza with as many people as we can, while giving them a pleasant experience." In addition, she said that although Hakone is an active volcanic area, she hopes that this won't deter visitors from enjoying its various charms of local establishments.

Written by Moka & Umi





## Two Unique Attractions in Hakone

Hakone is a very popular sightseeing destination in Japan, and the area contains many entertainment spots for visitors. In this feature we would like to introduce two unique museums that are among our favorite places in Hakone.

The first is The Little Prince Museum in the Sengokuhara. The Little Prince is a French story written by Saint Exupéry. It has been translated into more than 100 languages, and is loved by many people around the world. This museum is the only one in the world devoted to The Little Prince, and was opened in 1999 to mark the authors' 100th birthday.

A quaint French townscape and European garden have been carefully recreated on the grounds, providing many popular photo spots for visitors, such as the rose garden and Saint Exupéry church. The gardens are also immaculately maintained and guests can see a wide variety of flowers that bloom with changing the seasons.

Inside the exhibition hall, visitors can peruse displays detailing the life of Saint Exupéry and his story "The Little Prince". There is also the Le Petit Prince restaurant,



*The Little Prince Museum*

where patrons can select a delicious meal from a menu inspired by the world of The Little Prince. Then later, drop into the museum shop and grab some cute souvenirs for friends and family back home.

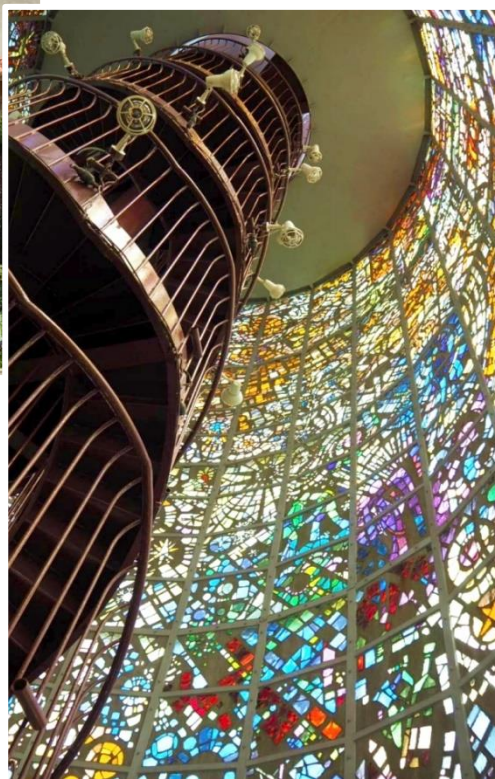
We recommend planning to spend 2-3 hours at The Little Prince Museum. It's the perfect way to fill a morning or afternoon.

The second location we would like to introduce is just two minutes' walk from Chokoku-no-Mori train Station. It's the Hakone Open-Air Museum.

Established in 1969, the museum is the first of its kind in Japan and recently celebrated its 50th anniversary. There are about 120 sculptures and other works of art spread across the grounds of its

outdoor exhibition. In addition, the museum also contains beautiful areas and structures that on their own make the visit worthwhile. One of these is the Symphonic Sculpture. This fantastic tower of stained-glass glows with sunlight which illuminates an internal spiral staircase from all sides. Climbing the stairs of the tower is a surreal and beautiful experience, and at the top you are reward with an excellent view of the entire museum and surrounding mountains.

For younger guests, the museum includes two areas containing exciting jungle-gyms. The first is a psychedelic web-like construction made of hinoki wood and rainbow-colored netting, which children love to climb over and bounce on. The other is 3D maze of transparent panels called the Curved Space Diamond Structure, which can be quite challenging. Children will often spend hours playing on these two attractions alone.



*The Symphonic Sculpture*

*Written by Yumeho & Kana.  
Photos by Kana.*

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# A Century Aboard the Tozan Mountain Line

Written by Nanaho & Ayaha.  
Photos by Kanrei Shirayuri.



A Tozan train arrives at Gora station.



The New Allegra Model.

This year is the Hakone Tozan Railway's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and we visited the Gora station master and the Tozan Railway head office to learn about the line's history and centennial celebrations. Employees of the line have been trying to come up with new ideas to help the railway's popularity both at home and abroad. One project was launched all the way back in 2014, when the Tozan Railway developed and debuted a new train called the "Allegra". The new model has many helpful features, such as step-free access for less mobile passengers, and much larger windows. The scenery in Hakone changes dramatically with

the seasons. Visitors can see cherry blossoms in spring, hydrangea in summer, autumn leaves in fall, and snow in winter. The new wider windows on the Allegra carriages make the natural views breathtaking and many people travel all the way to Hakone just to experience them.

The station manager of Gora said, "We are proud that the Tozan railway has been running in Hakone for 100 years. The steep track has been called *Tenka no Ken*, or the harshest under heaven, due to its steep inclination and winding path. I think our predecessors must have had an incredible difficulty job building such a track, and we

respect them greatly. Thanks to them, our passenger can enjoy the line in safety." Other employees said they are grateful to be here during the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and that many things have happened over those years. There must have been many troubles and triumphs, but the Tozan Railway is still part of our everyday lives, even today.

At the head office, we talked to the railway's manager and deputy manager, Mr. Yanagida and Mr. Oki, who are working hard to create events to celebrate the anniversary. From February to April in 2018 the "Spring Night Park" was held in Gora. There were beautiful night arches decorated with crystal and chandeliers. Many people came to see them and the event was a great

success. Mr. Yanagida told us a preview of further events the railway is planning in the near future. One idea is for a musical themed event that will cooperate with the famous Japanese anime series "Otoppe", which is aimed at teaching children about music. They are also thinking about a creating a new café by repurposing old rail carriages, a place that will surely be popular among Japan's many train enthusiasts.

Thanks to the efforts of the railway staff, Hakone City and the Tozan Line will surely grow together and become even more popular for tourists. We are looking forward to seeing what they have in store for the future.



(Left) Mr. Yanagida, (Right) Mr. Oki



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これからも。  
箱根登山鉄道  
箱根湯本-強羅間  
開業100周年



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