

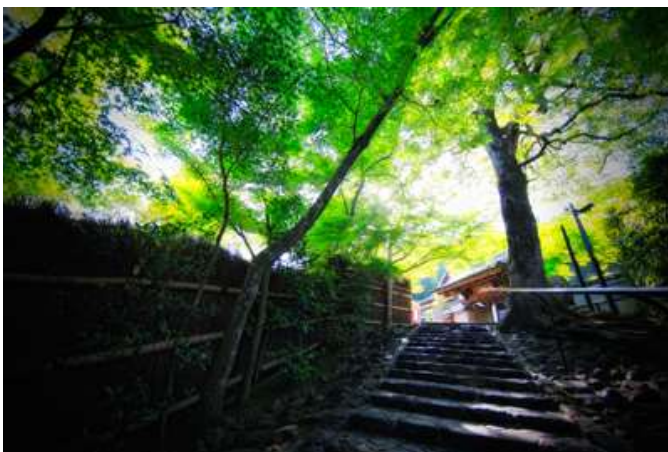
Kegonji Temple

華嚴寺（鈴虫寺）

Kegonji Temple, also known as Suzumushi Temple, belongs to the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism. The word *suzumushi* is the Japanese name for the bell cricket, which is endemic to Japan. Thousands of these crickets are kept in the temple's reception hall, where visitors can listen to a sermon (in Japanese) while enjoying tea and sweets.

Kegonji Temple was founded in 1723 by the monk Hōtan (1659–1738) with the goal of reviving the Kegon sect, a Chinese school of Buddhism that was introduced to Japan during the Nara period (710–794). Teachings from this school have influenced both Esoteric and Zen Buddhist sects. Hōtan began his studies of Zen Buddhism in the Ōbaku sect before serving under the Zen Master Tetsugen (1630–1682). It was Tetsugen who suggested that Hōtan should focus on reviving the Kegon sect, although Hōtan continued to study Tendai and other Esoteric sects throughout the Kyoto-Osaka region before settling in Nara, where he mastered the teachings of the Kegon sect.

Hōtan eventually traveled to Edo in the early 1700s to deliver a lecture on the *Flower Garland Sutra*, a principal text of the Kegon sect, and to debate monks from other sects.



After returning to Kyoto to establish Kegonji Temple, Hōtan continued his debates while producing several written works on the Kegon, Tendai, and Sanron sects. After Hōtan's death, subsequent heads of the temple practiced Zen Buddhism rather than Kegon Buddhism, but Kegonji officially operated under the Kegon sect until 1868, after which it was made a temple of the Rinzai sect.

The Bell Crickets and Kōfuku Jizō of Kegonji Temple



Kegonji Temple is perhaps most famous for its bell crickets, or *suzumushi*, but the tradition of keeping crickets at the temple has a relatively short history. Toward the end of World War II (1945), Kegonji's eighth abbot heard bell crickets as he sat in meditation one autumn evening. The abbot noticed how the sound of the crickets cleared away his wartime anxieties, and he wanted to give every visitor the chance to be soothed by the sound as well. However, bell

crickets chirp only in autumn. In order to develop the necessary conditions to keep them singing throughout the year, the abbot spent 28 years breeding and studying bell crickets.

Near the temple's main gate is a statue of Kōfuku Jizō, the Jizō of happiness. Jizō is one of the most commonly seen bodhisattvas in Japan and is said to take more than 100 different forms. Jizō is typically depicted as a barefoot monk carrying a staff in his right hand and a wish-granting jewel in his left hand. However, Kōfuku Jizō is the only iteration of the bodhisattva who is said to visit people's homes directly to grant their wishes, and the statue wears straw sandals for the sake of making these journeys. Prayers to Kōfuku Jizō are made using a *kōfuku* charm, which are sold by the temple. To ensure that your wish is granted, stand before the statue and hold the *kōfuku* charm in both hands with the character for "happiness" (幸) clearly visible. State your name and address before making your wish, and then keep the charm with you until your wish has been granted.



[Address]

31 Matsumuro Jige-Cho, Nishikyo-Ku, Kyoto

[Entrance Fees]

Adult (Over High School Students) 500 yen,

Children (4 years of age-Junior High School Students) 300 yen

[Open Hours]

9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

(No admission allowed after 4:15 p.m.)

open year round

[Access]

10-minute walk from Matsutaisya Station on the Hankyu Railway

5-minute walk from City Bus Stop Kokedera-michi

3-minute walk from Kyoto Bus Stop Kokedera-Suzumushidera

[Website]

<https://www.suzutera.or.jp/>



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