Katsuo-ji · One-hour guide

60 minutes · Daruma, the Wisdom Ring & charms

1 / 3 Your visit

A short visit, with time to reflect

Suggested order: entrance and purification bridge / Wisdom Ring / daruma dedication shelves and main hall / amulet counter / exit. Follow local signs; the grounds have slopes and steps. You need not visit every hall.

1. Entrance, gate & bridge · About 10 min

Enjoy the pond and temple gate as you enter. Keep the bridge clear while taking photos.

2. Wisdom Ring · About 15 min

Look for number 8 on the official map, in the garden near the entrance. Walk slowly; see page three for the method. Allow less photo time if it is busy.

3. Daruma shelves & main hall · About 15 min

Notice the different sizes and faces, then pay your respects at the main hall. Leave other visitors’ dedicated daruma where they are.

4. Amulet counter · About 10 min

After visiting the main hall, browse Kachi-Daruma, daruma fortunes and omamori charms. Choose what interests you.

5. Follow signs to the exit · About 10 min

Keep your agreed pickup time and location in mind. Allow time to leave shops and queues.

This suggested 60-minute budget includes walking and short stops. If admission queues, crowds or fortune slips take longer, shorten shopping and photo stops.

Before you leave

Confirm the exact pickup time and place with your driver that day. Do not assume the bus stop or taxi stand is your meeting point.

Official grounds map (online): katsuo-ji-temple.or.jp/seasons/map.php

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What do those red dolls mean?



Photo: Chris Gladis / CC BY 2.0 · archive image, resized and cropped

Where daruma comes from

The figure draws on the seated image of Bodhidharma, the Zen patriarch. In Japan, wish-making daruma became reminders of personal goals and effort.

Why does it stand up again?

A weighted base brings the doll upright when tipped: a symbol of perseverance after setbacks. Takasaki’s papier-mâché daruma tradition goes back more than 200 years.

Winning means overcoming yourself

Katsuo-ji emphasises facing your own weaknesses and making a daily effort. The doll is a personal commitment, rather than something that grants wishes for you.

Filling in a Kachi-Daruma’s eyes

Write your life purpose underneath and a one-year goal on its back. Fill its own right eye first-on your left when facing it. Complete the other eye after achieving your goal and return to give thanks. Daruma fortune slips are a different item, with a different ritual.

Photograph the dolls and gardens without moving dedicated daruma, stepping into planting areas or blocking worshippers.

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How to walk the Wisdom Ring

Find number 8, 智慧の環, on the official map. This is a reflective circular walk, rather than a puzzle maze. Follow the entrance and signs on site.

1. Walk slowly clockwise for seven circuits, reaching the centre.

2. From the centre, reverse direction for seven circuits, returning to the entrance.

The temple associates this walk with renewed energy and wisdom. Take a moment to settle your thoughts; there is no need to hurry towards an answer.

Something meaningful to take home

Omamori, Kachi-Daruma & fortune slips

At the counter in front of the main hall, ask about charms that suit your intention. Designs and fees vary. The 64-hexagram daruma fortune is based on the I Ching: read its guidance, rather than a simple good-or-bad luck ranking.

A special collaboration: Nozomi Daruma

The temple introduced a JR Central collaboration charm called Nozomi Daruma, which you can look inside like a kaleidoscope. It was offered through an EX travel reservation plan; check current availability and booking conditions before visiting. Do not assume it can be bought on arrival.

Industry partners and car service companies are welcome to use ZLY-authored guide content for guest services and commercial purposes. Happy to share and work together towards better guest experiences.

Sources: katsuo-ji-temple.or.jp · daruma.or.jp · takasakidaruma.net

Nozomi Daruma: temple announcement, 18 Jan 2024. Check current availability.