



Kamakura period, 14th century
Chion-in Temple, Kyoto
[On view: Oct. 8–20]

Treasures Associated with Hōnen

A massive pictorial biography of Hōnen in 48 volumes!



The essence of Hōnen's teachings can be found in this canonical work!

Special Exhibition HŌNEN AND PURE LAND BUDDHISM

An Assembly of Treasures Associated with Hōnen and Masterpieces of Pure Land Art!

A Kamakura Buddhist masterpiece depicting the scene of Amida Buddha and bodhisattvas hastening to welcome those who await birth in the Pure Land as they recite the *nenbutsu*.



National Treasure *Welcoming Descent of Amida and Twenty-five Bodhisattvas, Known as Haya Raigō (the "Rapid Welcoming Descent")*
Kamakura period, 14th century Chion-in Temple, Kyoto
[On view: Nov. 6–Dec. 1]

Important Cultural Property
Passages on the Selection of the Nenbutsu in the Original Vow (Senchaku hongan nenbutsu shū), Rozan-ji Version

Kamakura period, 12th–13th century
Rozan-ji Temple, Kyoto
[On view: Oct. 8–Nov. 4]

The first viewing since its restoration!

Embodying the sentiment of thousands of devotees, this statue was made to commemorate Hōnen's first memorial service.



Important Cultural Property
Standing Amida (Amitābha) Buddha
Kamakura period, dated 1212
Jōdo Shū
[On view: Oct. 8–Nov. 4]

Masterpieces of Pure Land Art

Immerse yourself in the world of Pure Land Buddhism.



A large-scale sculptural scene of the Buddha's passing.



Buddha Entering Nirvana with Sacred Assembly and Animals

Edo period, 17th century
Hōnen-ji Temple, Kagawa

*The reclining Buddha and a portion of the assembly and animals will be on exhibit.

PHOTOS OK!
Visitors may take photos of this group of sculptures.

October 8–December 1, 2024

This exhibition has two installations:
Part I: October 8–November 4, 2024 Part II: November 6–December 1, 2024
Some artworks will be rotated and may not be on exhibit.

Closed on Mondays
Except national holidays 10/14 and 11/4 when the museum will be open & closed on Tuesday 10/15 and 11/5

Special Exhibition Hours
9:00 a.m.–5:30 p.m. (last entry 5:00 p.m.)
Fridays, 9:00 a.m.–8:00 p.m. (last entry 7:30 p.m.)

General admission: 1800 yen

Organized by the Kyoto National Museum; NHK Kyoto Station; NHK Enterprises Osaka Branch Office; and The Yomiuri Shimbus

With the Special Sponsorship of Canon Inc.; Daiwa Securities Group; T&D Insurance Group; and Meiji Holdings Co., Ltd.

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With the Special Support of the Jōdo Shū 850th Anniversary Celebration Committee and the Agency for Cultural Affairs

With the Support of Nissha Co., Ltd.

Special Exhibition Official Website

<https://tsumugu.yomiuri.co.jp/honen2024-25>



THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF HŌNEN THROUGH A MAP OF KYOTO

This year marks 850 years since the Buddhist priest Hōnen (1133–1212) founded the Japanese Pure Land sect, Jōdo Shū. To commemorate this milestone, the special exhibition *Hōnen and Pure Land Buddhism* is being held at the Kyoto National Museum. Hōnen taught that salvation and birth in the Pure Land (J: *gokuraku ojō*) could be achieved by solely reciting the *nenbutsu* (the practice of calling the name of Amida Buddha), drawing widespread support from nobles and commoners alike, thereby revolutionizing Buddhism in Japan. This teaching became the impetus to spread Pure Land Buddhism to the general populace from a belief that was once primarily held by the aristocracy.

Hōnen spent much of his life in Kyoto, home to many temples associated with him. We hope you visit both this exhibition and these temples to fully explore this eminent Buddhist master's life and teachings. In an era marked by wars, natural disasters, and epidemics, Hōnen's efforts to relieve suffering continues to offer invaluable insights for today's fast-changing world.

Exploring Hōnen's Life THROUGH MANGA

Hōnen was born to a samurai family in Mimasaka Province (now Okayama Prefecture) in the late Heian period.

Let's name him "Seishimaru," after Seishi, the bodhisattva of wisdom!



Age 9

His father was killed in a night attack.



His dying wish was for his son to pursue the path of Buddhism, so Seishimaru entered his uncle's temple.

Age 13

Recognizing young Hōnen's extraordinary abilities, his uncle sent him to the monastery Enryaku-ji on Mount Hiei, the highest academic institute of the time. At 15, Seishimaru took the tonsure and became a priest.

He's a genius!



Age 18

Hōnen left the center of Mount Hiei to further his studies in the secluded area of Kurodani, known for its thriving Pure Land faith.

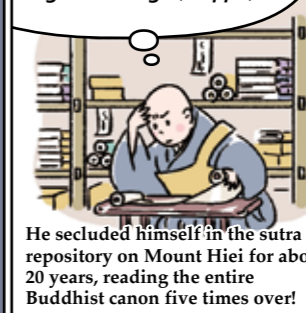


Age 24

Hōnen went to Nara, another major center of Buddhism, to debate with top scholars of the Hossō, Sanron, and Kegon schools.



Still, I cannot find the path to save people in this degenerate age (*mappō*)...



He secluded himself in the sutra repository on Mount Hiei for about 20 years, reading the entire Buddhist canon five times over!

Age 43

Hōnen became inspired by the writings of the great Chinese master Shandao.

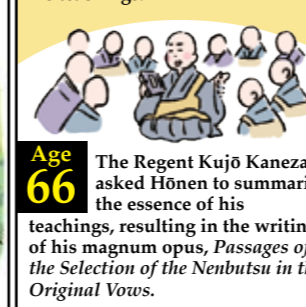


The devoted recitation of Amida Buddha's name (*senju nenbutsu*)
*Hōnen established the Pure Land school in this year.

Thereafter, he left Mount Hiei and moved to Hirodani in the western hills of Kyoto.



Hōnen established a hermitage in Yoshimizu in the eastern hills, where many visited him, seeking his teachings.



Age 66 The Regent Kujō Kanezane asked Hōnen to summarize the essence of his teachings, resulting in the writing of his magnum opus, *Passages of the Selection of the Nenbutsu in the Original Vows*.

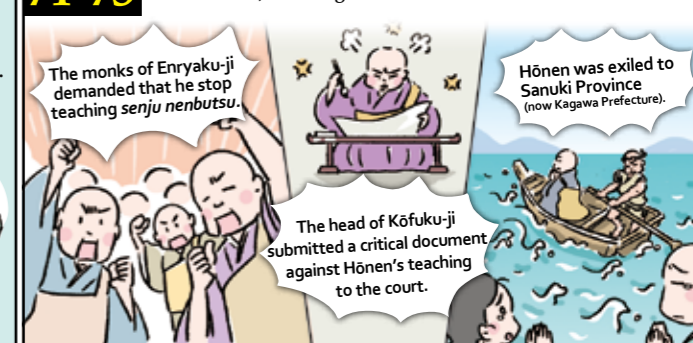
Age 69

Shinran, who later found Jōdo Shinshū (the True Pure Land Sect), became his disciple.



Age 74-75

Hōnen's new teachings faced criticism from various monasteries, resulting in his exile.



The monks of Enryaku-ji demanded that he stop teaching *senju nenbutsu*.

The head of Kōfuku-ji submitted a critical document against Hōnen's teaching to the court.

Hōnen was exiled to Sanuki Province (now Kagawa Prefecture).

Due to the intervention of Kujō Kanezane and others, Hōnen was pardoned in less than a year, but was not allowed to return to the capital right away.



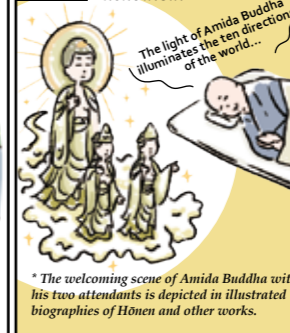
Age 79

He was finally allowed to return to Kyoto after spending a few years in Settsu Province (now Osaka Prefecture).



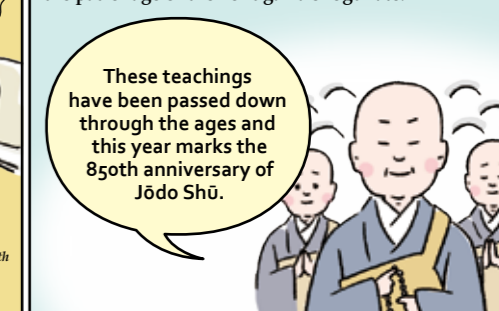
Age 80

Hōnen passed away while reciting the *nenbutsu*.



*The welcoming scene of Amida Buddha with his two attendants is depicted in illustrated biographies of Hōnen and other works.

Thereafter, Hōnen's *nenbutsu* teachings spread throughout Japan through his many disciples. It expanded further in the Edo period (1615–1868), under the patronage of the Tokugawa shogunate.



These teachings have been passed down through the ages and this year marks the 850th anniversary of Jōdo Shū.

Grand Head Temple Chion-in

The site where Hōnen taught the teachings of the Japanese Pure Land school (*Jōdo-shū*) and where he passed away. His disciple Genchi established a temple here in 1234. Later, the shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu designated it as his family temple and constructed a grand monastic complex on this site. The grounds consist of historic structures such as Japan's largest temple gate and a sutra repository built by the second Tokugawa shogun Hidetada as well as the National Treasure Founder's Hall erected by the third shogun Iemitsu.



Hours: 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
(gates close at 4:30 p.m.)
About a 10-minute walk from Keihan Gion-Shijō Station.

Head Temple Konkai Kōmyō-ji

After descending from Mount Hiei around 1175, Hōnen sat on a rock and recited the *nenbutsu*. Purple clouds arose from this site and light shined forth, leading Hōnen to establish a hermitage, which later became a temple, here. The original structures built by his disciples were destroyed during the Ōnin War (1467–77) but the temple later received the support of the warlords Nobunaga and Hideyoshi and was restored under the patronage of the Tokugawa clan in 1633.



Hours: 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Approx. 10-minute walk from Okazaki-michi city bus stop.

Head Temple Hyakumanben Chion-ji

After descending from Mount Hiei, Hōnen spent his days teaching *senju nenbutsu* (the devoted recitation of Amida Buddha's name) at this temple, which was formerly part of Kamo Shrine. Later, his disciple Genchi succeeded this temple and named it Chion-ji, "the Temple Honoring the Teacher." In 1331, Emperor Godaigo granted the temple the title Hyakumanben ("One Million Times"), after a prayer session, in which the *nenbutsu* was chanted a million times over seven days and nights, legendarily quelled an epidemic.



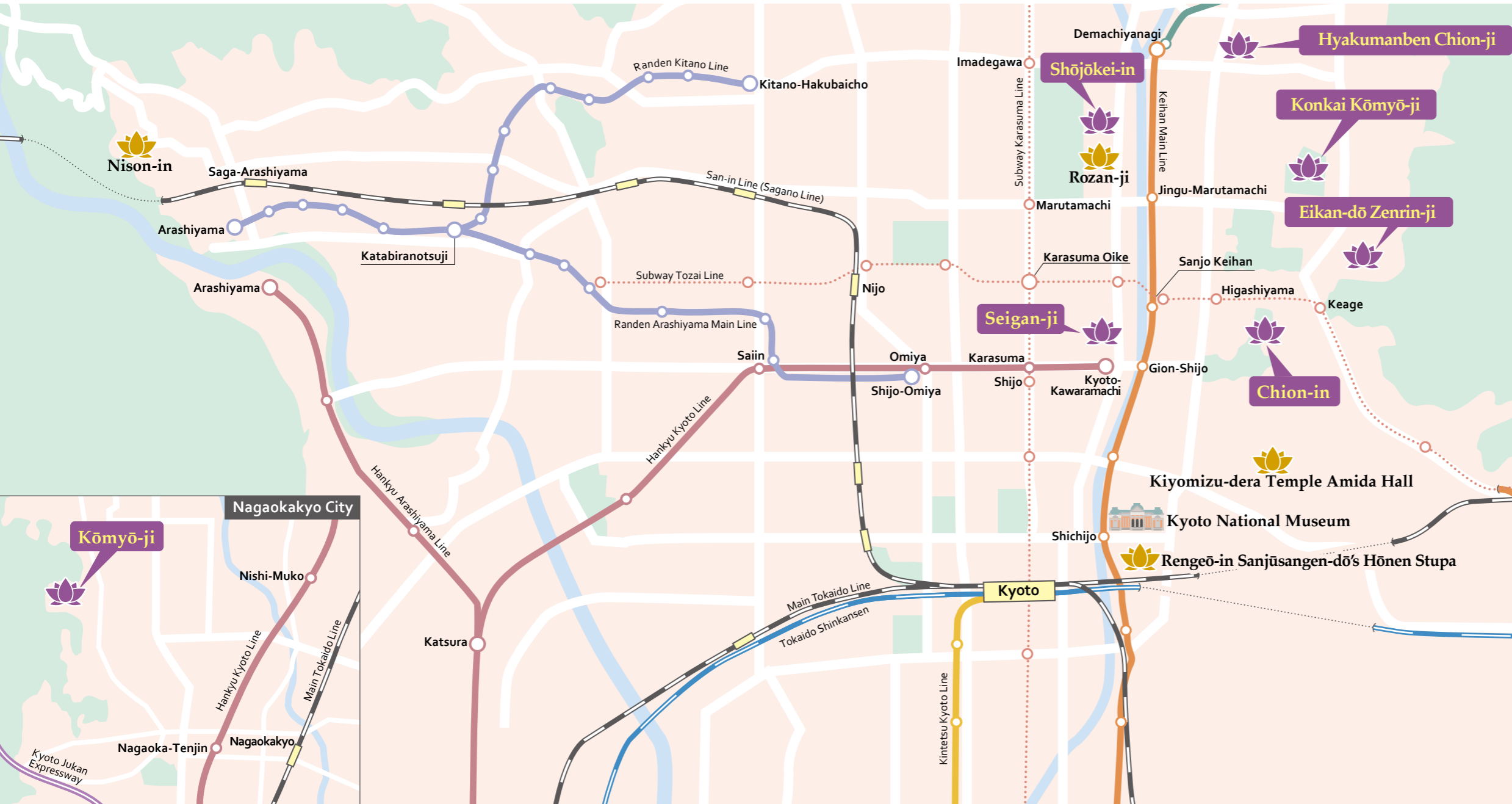
Hours: 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
A short walk from the city bus stop Hyakumanben.

Head Temple Shōjōkei-in

The origin of this temple dates to around the mid-9th century, when the Tendai master Ennin established a training hall within the Imperial Palace at the behest of Emperor Seiwa. In the late 12th century, the retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa, deeply moved by Hōnen's teachings, bestowed the temple upon him, leading to its transformation as a center of Pure Land Buddhism. In the 16th century, it expanded under the patronage of the Imperial family and the shogunate, laying the foundation to the expansion of Jōdo Shū.



Hours: 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
About 10 minutes by foot from Keihan Demachiyana Station.



Tendai Temple Nison-in

Established by Master Jikaku Daishi Ennin in the first half of the 9th century, this temple was used as a *nenbutsu* practice hall by Hōnen. He also taught his disciples here, though some misunderstood his teachings, which resulted in harsh criticism from other Buddhist sects. Hōnen wrote this document, the *Seven Article Pledge*, to admonish the actions of these disciples.



Important Cultural Property
Seven Article Pledge (Shichikajo seikai)
Kamakura period, dated 1204 (Genkyū 1)
Nison-in Temple, Kyoto
[On view: November 6–December 1]
After Hōnen's signature, as many as 190 disciples signed this document.
Hours: 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Approx. 15 minutes by foot from JR Sagano Station.

Tendai Enjō Branch Temple Rozan-ji

Now located on the site of Lady Murasaki's residence, east of the Kyoto Imperial Palace, Rozan-ji Temple was founded by the Buddhist master Jie Daishi Ryōgen in the Kitayama area of Kyoto and moved several times. In 1245, the priest Jūshin-bō Kakuyu revived the temple, making it a place to study Tendai, Esoteric, Precepts, and Pure Land Buddhism. Hōnen's handwritten *Passages on the Selection of the Nenbutsu in the Original Vow* is preserved here.
Hours: 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Approx. 10 minutes by foot from Keihan Demachiyana Station.

Kita Hossō Sect Kiyomizu-dera Temple Amida Hall

This large hall is situated to the east of the National Treasure main hall of Kiyomizu-dera, renowned for its stunning architecture. In 1188, Hōnen held sermons on the precepts for the participating monks to reflect on their transgressions and taught that they could be born in the Pure Land if they recited the *nenbutsu*. As a result, many people began chanting *Namu Amida Butsu*, and this building became Japan's first continuous *nenbutsu* training hall.
Hours: 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (hours may vary by season)
Approx. 10 minutes by foot from Kiyomizu-michi bus stop.

Tendai Temple Rengeo-in Sanjusangen-do's Honen Stupa

On the east side of the main hall, famous for enshrining 1001 Thousand-Armed Kannon statues, stands the "Hōnen Stupa" inscribed with the six characters, *Namu Amida Butsu*. In 1204, Emperor Tsuchimikado invited Hōnen to gather monks skilled in vocal music to perform at the 13th memorial service for Emperor Goshirakawa. Hōnen inscribed the characters *Namu Amida Butsu* to be distributed to the attendees. This monument, engraved with the characters he inscribed, was erected to commemorate this event.
Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
(From 11/16 to 3/31: 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.)
Approx. 7 minutes by foot from the Keihan Shichijō Station.

Grand Head Temple Kōmyō-ji

Hōnen first taught the teaching of *nenbutsu* here, after descending Mount Hiei and before establishing his hermitage in Yoshimizu. Later, his disciple Rensei (famously known as the warrior Kumagai Naozane) built the *Nenbutsu Sanmai-in Hall*, marking the beginning of this temple. In 1227, after the monks of Enryaku-ji Temple destroyed Hōnen's tomb, his remains were moved here and cremated. Since then Kōmyō-ji has been venerated as the sacred site of Hōnen's mausoleum.



Hours: 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
From JR Nagaokakyo or Hankyu Nagaoka Tenjin Stations, take the Hankyu Bus and get off at Ashigaoka stop.

Grand Head Temple Eikan-dō Zenrin-ji

This temple was originally established as a Shingon esoteric Buddhist training hall around the mid-9th century. Later the 7th abbot Yōkan (also read Eikan; 1033–1111) added a *nenbutsu* practice hall to this place, which gradually evolved into a Pure Land temple in the medieval period. This temple is renowned for its unusual statue, the *Mikaeri* ("Looking-back") Amida. Legend recounts once when Yōkan was circumambulating around this image, while chanting, it turned and said, "Eikan, you're late."



Hours: 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
About a 3-min. walk from the Nanzenji Eikandō-michi bus stop.

Grand Head Temple Seigan-ji

Founded in 667 in Nara, this temple became a sacred place for Pure Land Buddhism after the Priest Zōshun of Kōfuku-ji bequeathed it to Hōnen. Under the orders of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, it was relocated to its current site. Renowned for its association with historic figures such as Sei Shōnagon, Izumi Shikibu, and Hideyoshi's consort Matsuno-maru, the temple is also famous as the birthplace of *rakugo* (Japanese comedic storytelling).



Hours: 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
A 5-minute walk from the Kawaramachi Sanjō city bus stop.