

Mitakidera Temple: Nature and Surroundings

Beyond its historical buildings, shrines, and peace-related monuments, Mitakidera Temple is also a popular spot for nature walks, flower viewing, and quiet contemplation. Mitaki means “three waterfalls,” and the temple is named for the three soothing cascades on its grounds. These are fed by four mountain streams that run beside, and occasionally on, the winding main path. The sloping grounds are filled with trees, which muffle the sounds of the outside world. The sound of flowing water and the scene of moss-covered rocks and statues make Mitakidera a restful place.

From the entrance, the main path eventually leads to the highest point on the temple grounds: a plateau with an ancient stone altar carved from the hill. In front of the sculpture is a towering tree, which is considered sacred, and beside it a wooden shrine building dating from the Meiji era (1868–1912). From this point, a path goes further up the mountain, and a 10-minute walk leads to a quiet bamboo forest popular with hikers.

To get an alternative view of Hiroshima, look for the wooden shrine with carvings of scary-looking faces above the entrance. This is a shrine to three oni, ogre-like creatures from Japanese folktales. Oni are only worshiped at Mitakidera, Miyajima, and another nearby mountain temple. Beside the shrine is an old stone path that leads up to a lookout spot just three minutes’ walk away that affords sweeping views of Hiroshima.

To see the foliage at its best, visit Mitakidera Temple in autumn, when the leaves turn as red as the temple’s pagoda. Spring, when cherry trees bloom in the vicinity of the temple, is another popular time to visit.