

Hansobo Shrine

Hansobo Shrine is dedicated to Hansobo, the Shinto deity who protects Kenchoji Temple. The deity was brought from the Hokoji Temple in Shizuoka Prefecture in 1890. The shrine is at the northern edge of the temple grounds, at the end of the path that winds behind the Hojo Garden. The uphill walk takes about 15 minutes up 250 steps.

Along the path to the shrine are 12 statues of tough-looking *tengu* in different poses. *Tengu* are legendary goblin-like creatures who live in the mountains. They are typically depicted with either long noses or with beaks and wings. The statues at Hansobo are the latter, and are *karasu* (crow) *tengu*. They are attendants of Hansobo, whose main role is to protect Kenchoji against fire. Hansobo is believed to have this power because his statue escaped harm when Hokoji Temple caught fire.

Beside the shrine is a viewing platform with a sweeping vista over the valley. On a clear day, it is possible to see the beaches of Kamakura as well as Mt. Fuji. On the other side of the shrine is a series of 180 steep steps leading further up the hill to an even higher vantage point.

In autumn, the path to the shrine is blanketed with the brilliant foliage of the maple trees lining the walkway. During the rainy season from early June to mid-July, blue hydrangeas bloom along the path.