

## **Nishihara Kannondō Hall Temple**

Nishihara Kannondō Hall is a Buddhist temple with a long history in Aridagawa.

The temple honors Kannon, the bodhisattva of compassion. Its principal image is a statue of the Thousand-Armed Kannon, a manifestation of the deity who reaches out to all in need. The statue is displayed only on festival days. One of the support beams inside the structure is decorated with a carving of Kannon traveling in a boat, a particularly rare depiction of the deity.

According to local legend, the Kannon statue has a miraculous origin.

There was once a very large cedar tree in the Nishihara district of Aridagawa. One day, locals noticed a bright light shining at the top of the tree. Upon further investigation, they discovered it to be a statue of Kannon. They brought the statue down and enshrined it at Nishihara

Gokurakuji Temple, where it remained until the temple's main hall burned down. The statue survived the flames; the present Nishihara Kannondō was built in 1723 to enshrine it.

Behind the temple is a collection of religious stonework, including Buddhist images and five-tiered *gorintō* memorials. These artifacts were moved here from other temples when their original sites were marked for modern development. The oldest monument has an inscription from 1432.

The main festival at Nishihara Kannondō is the third day of the third month on the traditional lunisolar calendar, which now generally falls in April. A mochi-throwing event is held, with a crowd of people competing to catch small rice cakes thrown from a platform for good luck.