

【Kannon for World Peace】

The Kannon for World Peace was built in 1964 and depicts the Buddhist deity of mercy and compassion. Weighing about 22 tons and standing 25 meters high, it is one of the tallest freestanding bronze sculptures in the world. Kannon is depicted here standing on a lotus blossom, a symbol of spiritual purity and enlightenment. The deity's hands are held in a gesture (or *mudra*) representing welcome and protection. The statue itself is dedicated to world peace.

This statue replaces an even larger version that stood here prior to World War II. Both statues were modeled on a smaller bronze figure housed in the main sanctuary of Daihiden Temple, the building to the left. During World War II, both the small figure and the original statue were requisitioned by the military to be melted down and turned into weapons. The larger statue was disassembled and sent away, but due to a series of mishaps it was returned to the temple. Meanwhile, the smaller statue was hidden in the mountains for safekeeping. It went undiscovered until two years after the war ended, when it was returned to Daihiden. Kannon's evident refusal to contribute to the war effort inspired the local people to rebuild the larger statue as a symbol of world peace.

Daihiden Temple also houses a number of other objects. These include a lamp that was lit from the Flame of Peace in Hiroshima, which is to burn until all nuclear weapons on earth are abolished, and recreations of the 33 Kannon statues from the famous Saigoku pilgrimage route in the Kansai region.

