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# THE GARDENS OF JAPAN

**G**ardens are an absolutely essential part of the Japanese way of life. As Japan has evolved culturally over the centuries, so have its widely various traditions of landscaping and horticulture, forming intricate mosaics of trees, flowers, stones and water almost everywhere you look.

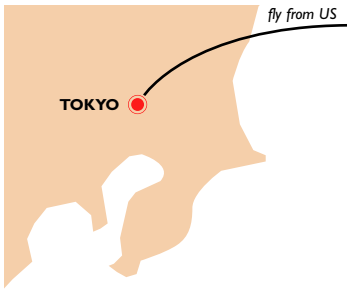


The very first Japanese gardens, circa fifteen hundred years ago, were religious in nature; in fact, the Japanese word for garden, *niwa* derives from the Shinto term *yuniwa*, denoting the sacred inner ground of shrines and palaces. Through the centuries, the gardens of Japan have never completely lost this aura of sanctity and otherworldliness.

Approximately a thousand years ago, during the Heian Period, the Japanese began to borrow extensively from Chinese culture, including China's rich and complex aesthetic of landscape and gardening. The princes and nobles of Japan built themselves great rambling Chinese-style villas and palaces, and surrounded them with outdoor pavilions and private, personalized gardens called *tsubo*, also Chinese in design. A whole culture came with it, of course: gardens as private social sanctums, places of contemplation, and (perhaps inevitably) convenient spots for illicit romance. Some noblewomen even re-named themselves after their favorite gardens: *Wisteria Pot*, or *Autumn-Lover*!

Stylish gardens were often designed around the changing seasons. Those of the Kyoto Imperial Palace, for instance, were ingeniously designed so that red autumn maple leaves and fall rain would complement the ground cover of smooth black stones and green moss. These were places built for genteel worldly enjoyment. Gardens often included fishing ponds, docks to lounge upon and write poetry, sake-drinking pavilions and such. Other gardens of that era, influenced by the Chinese Pure Land Buddhist sect, are literally models of Paradise. Whether they were built as aids to meditation, settings for the tea ceremony, or sites for purely secular pleasures ranging from poetry-writing to amours, Japanese gardens are all touchstones to the original natural beauty of the world outside the garden walls unspoiled and unmarred by man's imperfections.

## Day 1 – TOKYO



**Higashi-Gyoen**, the East Garden, is one of Tokyo's true treasures, yet most tourists give it a miss. Their loss is your gain: it is almost never crowded, despite the fact admission is free. Open from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. except Monday and Friday, occupies what were once the main grounds of Edo Castle. Located an easy 10 minute walk from Tokyo Station, the **Higashi-Gyoen** is truly imperial in scale, a perfect place to begin your journey through Japan's gardens. Enter this walled sanctuary of bridges, moats, ponds and flowers through the **Otemon-mon Gate**, with its rooftop dolphin images (mythological guardians against fire), massive earthquake-proof stone walls and its firing slits for archers.



Imperial Palace

Back in the era when the shoguns ruled Japan from Edo Castle, before the emperors were restored to power in 1868, this was the most heavily guarded fortress in the world. Stop at the Otemon Gift Shop, just inside the gate, and buy one of their 100 yen maps of the garden: Higashi-Goyen sprawls over a 2.2 million square foot expanse, and you'll need the map to find your way around. Particular points of interest: the **Sannomaru Shozokan**, a very special museum that displays a constantly-changing array of the Imperial family's artistic treasures; the **Ninomaru**, a 17th century stroll garden that is particularly lovely in the spring; and the **Honmaru Resthouse**, where you can snack and drink while looking over the fascinating collection of old photographs of the Imperial Palace and its gardens on the walls.

After spending the morning at the East Garden, the **Nanushi-no-Taki Koen** or "Nanushi Waterfalls Garden" makes for a fascinating contrast. Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, it is a 10 minute walk from the North Exit of JR Oji Station on the Keihin Tohoku Line. Where the Higashi-Gyoen is all about emperors and overlords, **Nanushi-no-Taki Koen** was created by local farmers in the mid-19th century, to duplicate the distant waterfall-riven mountain vistas seen from the outskirts of Tokyo. The name of the park, in fact, properly translates as "Waterfall of the Leader of Local Farmers". There are no less than four exquisite man-made waterfalls here, the tallest 26 feet in height, as well as ponds full of goldfish where neighborhood children splash and play during the summer months. Ornamental trees overhang the waters. Nanushi Waterfalls is a living example of how deeply ordinary Japanese cherish gardens, and their innate genius for imagining and then creating great landscapes.

You don't need to abandon your garden-visiting when evening comes. Some of Tokyo's best gardens are maintained by restaurants and hotels. Stroll through them at dusk, or even later, and combine your tour with a fine meal.

**Happo-en Garden**, for instance, surrounds the restaurant of the same name. Open 11:30 a.m. until 8 p.m., it is a 15 minute stroll from Meguro Station on the Yamanote Line; or 2 minutes from the Hiyoshi Sakue stop on bus lines 10, 93 and 98. Built in 1600 by an Edo Period noble, the garden is famous for its year-round beauty: after a winter snowstorm it is said to resemble the finest Japanese **sumi-e** ink painting, while in autumn the maples in reds and gold are reflected in the central lake, redoubling their color. In summer **Happo-en** is famous for its

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azaleas, in spring its cherry blossoms. Weekday visits are best; on weekends you may find *Happo-en* crowded, or closed for special events.

**The Takanawa Prince Hotel Garden** is one of Tokyo's great stroll gardens, built by a cousin of the Showa emperor. It's a 5 minute walk from the Shinagawa Station (Takanawa Exit). In addition to streams, carp pools and a traditional teahouse, Takanawa is famed for its exquisite Kannonda Buddhist temple, brought here from the old capital at Nara. Important: Takanawa is open 24 hours a day, and is particularly enchanting at night, when the Kannondo is lit up like a giant paper lantern.

## Day 2 – Tokyo



Tsukiji Fish Market

Get up at dawn, and pay an early-morning visit to the world-famous **Tsukiji Fish Market**, where 1200 vendors flog tuna, salmon, sea urchin, eels, squid, and anything else that swims. A 2-minute walk from Tsukiji Station, Exit 1. The tuna auctions start around 5:00 a.m. Have a sushi breakfast at one of the great little restaurants alongside the market. And drop by the **Sumiyoshi Jinja**, the shrine built here in the 17th century by fishermen from Osaka when they first populated the area.

Now, on to your garden tour. From Tsukiji, it's about a ten minute walk to the **Hama Rikyu Detached Palace Garden**, which many insiders rank as Tokyo's very best garden. Built 300 years ago as a hunting retreat for feudal lords and shoguns, this quiet, seldom-crowded spot is a rambling park encompasses tidal pools, bridges, pine-trees, teahouses and moon-viewing pavilions – the whole spectrum of Edo Period upper class elegance.

From Hama Rikyu, catch one of the hourly pleasure boats that travel up the Sumida River to Asakusa, Tokyo's Old Town. This 40-minute boat ride shows you the riverine heritage of the city, a dingy but still-thriving realm of barges, bridges, and warehouses. Included in the price of the boat ride is an English-language guide to the dozen-plus bridges you pass under on your way to Asakusa. If you are visiting in the spring, the riverbanks at Asakusa will be brilliant with cheery blossoms. As soon as you land in Asakusa, drop by the nearby Asakusa Information Center, where English-speaking locals are available from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily to direct you to neighboring temples, shops, restaurants and gardens. Asakusa is considered the best area of Tokyo for a walking tour, with its traditional wooden buildings, family-owned shops dating back generations, old kimono-clad women, temples, shrines and gates . . .

. . . And, best of all, **Dembo-in Gardens**. This charmingly quiet spot requires a little work to enter, but is well worth it. Try ringing the doorbell by the main gate. If that doesn't work, go to the two-story building to the left of Hozimon Gate, where the administrative offices of **Dembo-in Temple and Gardens** are housed.

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Sign in on the register and get a free ticket. Find the side door to Dembo-in, enter, present your ticket to the caretaker across the courtyard, and you are in. Dembo-in was built in the 1600s by Zen master gardener Kobori Enshu. A pathway circles a quiet carp pond; strolling around the banks, one is confronted by one perfect vista after another. Connoisseurs recommend visiting Dembo-in in spring, when the wisteria are in full bloom, but like all great Japanese gardens Dembo-in is never out of season. The garden is open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily, but Mondays are particularly special: there is a weekly traditional tea ceremony in the pond side pavilion.

## *Extra Days & Alternatives*

If you have an extra day in or around Tokyo, there are many more gardens worth a visit, including the following: **Koishikawa-Koraku-en**, open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, near Iidabashi and Korakuen stations. Built in 1629, this eclectic wonderland includes Confucian, Shinto and Buddhist shrines and temples, and re-creations of various famous scenes in China and Japan.

**Nezu Institute of Fine Arts Garden** is a large hilly tree-studded garden, chockfull of statues, pagodas, stone lanterns and such; a myriad of bridges cross and re-cross the central pond. In the autumn, the maples and other deciduous trees are spectacular. For an 800 yen fee you can also tour the **Nezu Fine Arts Museum** itself, which houses some of the greatest Japanese paintings in existence. The garden is open 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., except Monday; it's a 5 minute walk from Omotesando Station.



Japanese Iris

**Horikiri Iris Garden** sports 83,000 square feet of flowers, cherry trees and water lillies dating back three centuries. It is open 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. every day in June (the iris-blooming month), and 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday the rest of the year. It's a 10-minute walk from Horikiri Shobuen Station.

Offbeat but delightful is the **Tokyo Metropolitan Medical Plant Garden**, a wierd wonderland which includes a tropical greenhouse, opium poppies, a collection of deadly poisonous plants, and a display of folk medicine ingredients that includes sloth scales, deer antlers, and giant mushrooms. Open 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily. Ask your hotel concierge to call 03/3975-9127 for directions.

**Kyu Yasuda Garden** is a fine example of an Edo Period garden, with ponds and water courses fed by the Sumida River. It's open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, and is a 5 minute walk from JR Ryogoku Station's West Entrance.

**Mejiro Garden** is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. in July and August. It's a 5 minute walk from JR Mejiro Station; on Thursdays the lovely cedar tea pavilion is open, free of charge.

**Otaguro Garden** is part of the estate of Mr. Moto Otaguro, the musician, critic and scholar who introduced Debussy to Japan. It's popular for its 80 year-old ginkgo trees and lovely lake and pavilion. It's open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily; 10 minute walk from Ogikubo Station's South Exit.

**Roka Garden**, another garden built by a famous Japanese intellectual is known for its country-style cottages surrounded by an ornamental forest of bamboo, pine and maple. Mr. Roka Tokutomi was a devout Christian and peace activist, and he and his wife are buried on these tranquil grounds. It's open 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Ask your hotel concierge to call 03/3302-5016 for directions.

**Shin Edogawa Gardens** is a Meiji Era Hosokawa clan garden that includes a large carp pond and dense foliage on a grand scale. It is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, near Edogawabashi Station on the Yurakucho Line.

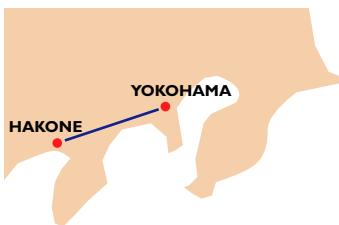
The **Hotel New Otani Garden**, rambles up along a hillside in the middle of Tokyo. It's renown for its size – ten acres and its age – 400 years old. No less than 43 precious antique stone lanterns adorn the garden, so nighttime viewing is spectacular. And, the hotel even provides umbrellas for visitors who want to tour the gardens in the rain. You'll find it just a 3 minute walk from Akasaka-Mitsuke Station; open 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily.

## *An Easy Day Trip from TOKYO*



In Yokohama, the **Sankei-en Gardens**, commissioned in the early 20th century by local tycoon Mr. Hara Tomitayo, contain a spectacular assemblage of historic buildings from all over Japan. The Outer gardens are open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, the Inner Garden 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Take the train from Tokyo to Yokohama (half-hour ride), then a 1000 yen taxi from Negishi Station. The **Shunso tea arbor** is especially notable.

## *Day 3 – HAKONE / FUJI*



Many of the great Japanese gardens are designed around views of outside natural features, usually sacred mountains. Tokyo's **Hama Rikyu**, for instance, was originally built to frame a vista of the distant snow-capped cone of Mt. Fuji though today, tall buildings have rendered Fuji invisible from Hama Rikyu's grounds! With that in mind, make an early morning departure to Hakone, the gateway to the Mt. Fuji. Hakone and its environs are famous for their views of Mt. Fuji, and not surprisingly they also feature some amazing gardens.

Foremost is the **Hakone Open-Air Museum**, a minute's walk from the next-to-last stop on the Hakone Tozan Railroad. This very modern take on Japanese art and



Hakone Art Museum

aesthetics places contemporary masterpieces against meadows, glens and ponds – call it the ultimate 21st century stroll garden. Works, both in indoor pavilions and outside, include sculptures by Henry Moore, Dubuffet and de Kooning, and over 200 Picassos. It's open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily (to 4:30 p.m. in winter); admission is 1,600 yen for adults.

One minute from the Koen-Kami stop on the Gora-Sounzan cable car is the **Hakone Art Museum**, with its exquisite miniature moss garden and very special tea house. Admission to the museum is 900 yen for adults. The museum is open 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Friday through Wednesday (closes a half hour earlier in winter). Several of the local hotels, including the **Naraya** and **Fujiya**, have lovely gardens of their own, open to guests only.

## Day 4 – to KYOTO via NAGOYA



Nagoya Castle

On your way from Hakone to Kyoto, stop off in NAGOYA long enough to visit the **Ninomaru Garden of Nagoya Castle**, one of the few authentic castle gardens in Japan. The castle itself was destroyed during World War II and rebuilt in ferroconcrete in 1959; its high turrets make a dramatic backdrop to the gardens. Drink a cup of tea in the reconstructed tea arbor; it is said that a single cup imbibed here will add five years onto your life. If you're lucky your visit will coincide with the October Chrysanthemum Festival, when flowering mum bushes are pruned to represent human figures and then clothed in fantastical costumes – truly one of the oddest horticultural events in the world. The garden is open daily 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.; admission is 500 yen.

Five days is barely enough to scratch the surface of Kyoto's wondrous gardens. Foreigners who have lived there for five or ten years still regularly stumble on exquisite little plots they have missed, right in their own neighborhoods. Turn down an obscure and narrow street you've passed by dozens of times, and through a half-open gate you'll glimpse a stone shaped like a breaking wave, water burbling from a bamboo pipe, balletic bonsai trees . . . and then the gate swings slowly shut again, perhaps forever.



START WITH **Daitoku-ji Zen Temple** complex, one of the main temples of the Rinzai sect. Accessible by Kyoto City Bus 1, 12, 61, 204, 205 and 206 or by subway to Kitaoji Station. Daitoku-ji, it was originally built in 1324, and four of its sub-temples are open to the public, all with magnificent gardens.

**Daisen-in**, the best known of the sub-temples, has gardens that are considered the quintessential expression of the Zen spirit. Daisen-in is home to the finest miniaturized dry garden in Japan, with white sand, austere vegetation, and some of the most famous ornamental stones in Kyoto. Open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (4:30 p.m. in winter), Daisen-in charges 400 yen admission, 600 yen with tea; the latter is recommended, as tea-drinking is so inextricably part of both the **Rinzai Zen** religion and the gardens themselves.



Ryugen-in

**Ryugen-in** is famous for its five small but intensely powerful rock gardens; open 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. for a 350 yen charge.

**Zuiho-in** is built around a minimalist tea garden with flat stones, water, and black clay walls highlighted by golden flecks of straw. **Zuiho-in** was designed in 1961. It features vigorous "ocean waves" in raked gravel and a calm, mossy "harbor" in the distance. It's open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., with a 300 yen admission fee.

**Koto-in** is a trifle lush and less severe, with its ever-changing maple, moss and bamboo garden and its old teahouse designed by Sen no Rikyu. It's open 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; admission is 300 yen.

For lunch enjoy traditional **Shojin-ryori** (vegetarian temple) cuisine. The Daitokuji temple complex has one fine old vegetarian restaurant within its grounds and another just outside its gates.

If time allows today, continue on in the same part of town to **Kinkaku-ji Temple**, "the Golden Pavilion" which was the "retirement home" of eclectic, eccentric 14th century shogun Yoshimitsu. (His grandson built the **Ginkaku-ji**, or "Silver Pavilion", continuing the family's grandiose traditions.) **Kinkaku-ji** incorporates what many call the finest existing Sung Dynasty-style pond anywhere, as well as an excellent waterfall and tea garden. It's open from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. from October through March. Either bus 59, 204 or 205 will drop you off within easy walking distance.

Within walking distance of **Kinkaku-ji** are two truly special Zen temples, **Ryoan-ji** and **Toji-in**. The **Abbot's Garden at Ryoan-ji** is the dry garden that defines all dry gardens. Its raked gravel, fifteen stones, and funky earthen wall have been photographed thousands of times and have inspired literally hundreds of thousands of words of commentary and analysis. Yet, nobody knows who designed the garden, or exactly when, or what it "means". Open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., but come on a weekday, as early as possible, to miss at least some of the crowds. Ryoan-ji's pond garden is nice, too, by the way.

## Day 5 – KYOTO

Today, explore the Eastern Hills of Kyoto. This easily accessible area (by bus or taxi) is at its best during April, when the cherry blossoms are at their peak, and May and June, when the irises are out. It is advisable to start out early in the morning during these periods, to miss the inevitable crowds. This is delightful pedestrian-touring terrain. Begin at **Ginkaku-ji**, "the Silver Pavilion" (open 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; admission 400 yen). Built 500 years ago by the shogun Yoshimasa, who spent more time in artistic pursuits than political ones, this garden is an intricately-layered retreat from the outside world. Stone, bamboo and planted hedge form an outer wall, enclosing an elaborate sand garden with an immaculate

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sand Mt. Fuji seen across rolling waves of a sand sea. Beyond, is a less formal stroll garden, with banks of moss, maple, a spring and even a miniature waterfall. Beyond Ginkaku-ji rise the forested slopes of sacred **Mt. Daimonji**.

Nearby, is the magical old (1680) temple **Honen-in**, a spot that fairly radiates time and mystery. Only the temple grounds are open, from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.; admission is free. Camellias and maples frame the driveway that leads to the gates, where a worn stone marker warns that drinkers and eaters of meat may not enter these hallowed grounds. Continue south on one of the great footpaths of the world, the **Philosophers Walk**. Established by 20th century philosopher Nishida Kitaro, who was a student of both Zen and modern Western philosophy, this lovely canal-side track leads all the way down from Ginkaku-ji to the great Zen Temple complex, **Nanzen-ji**. Established in 1291, Nanzenji is a place worth several hours of wandering. **Tenju-an** sub-temple, (open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., spring and fall only), has quiet gardens that change with the seasons. **Tosho-gu's** 17th century garden, an astonishing creation credited to the master Kobori Enshu, consists of a raked sand quadrangle with islands of stone and twisted pines, with a backdrop of shrubbery. It's open 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. November – March. Every three years Tosho-gu's abbot re-rakes the sand in new patterns, in effect re-creating the universe.

The abbot's main house, **Hojo**, is surrounded by another sand, stone and tree garden, named the **Leaping Tiger Garden**, this one borrowing from the shapes of adjacent temples and the hills beyond. And the **Nanzen-in** sub-temple (open 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily) has its own classic stroll garden and pond.

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## Day 6 – WESTERN KYOTO “Sagano/Arashiyama”

To get to **Arashiyama**, in the northwestern hills of Kyoto City, catch either the regular JR Sagano Line train from Nijo Station, or the Keifuku or Hankyu lines, from Kyoto Station. The train ride itself is charming. When you arrive in Arashiyama, even though you are in the "suburbs" of Kyoto, there's a really wild feel to the place. Boats with oarsmen ply the Hozu River and troops of monkeys play in the steep forests.

The 14th century Rinzaï Zen temple **Tenryuji** or "Heavenly Dragon", is the main reason to visit **Arashiyama**. On the way back to the temple's Main Hall from the street are smaller auxiliary temples, many with gardens that are open to the public. The garden around the Main Hall, though, is the piece de resistance: maples and jade-green conifers, and a group of seven vertical rocks, mimicking the mountains of **Kweilin** depicted in so many Chinese Sung Dynasty paintings, behind a superb pond.

The Nichiren Buddhist temple **Jojakko-ji**, behind a thatched gate atop steep stone stairs, also has a two-story pagoda, tomb-studded grounds with great views. It's open 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; admission is 200 yen.

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The neighboring **Sagano** area, near the JR Saga Railway Station or the Saga Ekimae Station on the Keifuku Arashiyama line, is like a step back in time, with bamboo forests, thatched-roof houses, and quaint shops. Some visitors rent a bicycle to tour the area, but there is so much to see at such close quarters that walking is better. Temples are everywhere. 18th century **Seiryō-ji**, open only in April, May, October and November, has a museum housing some of the rarest Buddhist art works in Japan, including a thousand-year old Chinese Great Buddha exquisitely carved from wood. Admission to both the Great Hall and the museum is 500 yen.

**Okochi Sanso Garden** lies north of the river near the renowned wooden **Togetsukyo Bridge** (the name means "Moon-Crossing", because the bridge's grace recalls the perfect arc the moon travels across the sky). Part of the estate of a Japanese silent film star from the 1920's, this is a classic "borrowed view" garden, in which views of the mountains beyond the garden are "built into" the garden's design. Many of Japan's "borrowed view" gardens have lost much of their magic due to development, but Okochi Sanso's views are still pristine. Admission to this five-acre paradise is 900 yen, including a complimentary sweet and tea. It's open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. A restaurant on the garden grounds serves traditional meals with names like Snow, Cloud, Moon and Flower. Have your hotel concierge call ahead to confirm, tel. 075/872-2233.

**Nison-in** (open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; 500 yen admission) is another notable temple, with the graves of the temple's original sponsors scattered throughout the gardens. The whole hillside of **Mt. Atago** is a realm of old-fashioned farm houses, shops selling snacks and folk items. Restaurants like **Izusen** and **Bokuseki**, serve local Kyoto specialties made from bean curd in a myriad of variations. The temple **Adashino Nembutsu-ji** (open 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily) is remarkable for its grounds containing more than a thousand stone Buddha. Admission is 500 yen.

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## Day 7 – SOUTHERN KYOTO

Take either the JR Nara or Keihan train to Tofukuji Station, and use that as your starting point. Begin at **Tofuku-ji Zen Monastery**, to take in its gargantuan 15th century structures the **San-Mon Gate** (open in November, during maple-viewing season), and the **Yokahitsu** and **Tosu** Halls. These two architectural treasures have humble origins: the former was the temple bath house, and the latter once housed the temple lavatories! (The Zen spirit does not discriminate – it is everywhere.) There are two dynamic Zen dry gardens designed for intense meditation, and wooden bridges all surrounded by soft and colorful maple trees. The **Abbot's Gardens** (open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily) are modern, but absolutely "Zen" in their simple geometries of moss, stepping stones and hedges. Nearby, **Tsutenkyo**, literally "Bridge to Heaven", crosses a rugged little gorge that is absolutely astonishing in the fall when the maples turn; and at the far end is **Kaisan-do**, with yet another notable garden out front. **Raigo-in**, a sub-temple of nearby **Sennyu-ji Temple**, has a charming little garden where you can drink green tea. Also be sure and sample the temple's sacred spring water.

Open 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; admission is 300 yen. Sennyu-ji is one of the strongholds of Shingon, Japan's Tantric form of Buddhism.

## Day 8 – OHARA – the Hills of North of Kyoto



Ohara

Begin by taking a bus to the Ohara Bus Station: either Bus 13, 14 or 15 from Kita-oji Station, or the Kita-6 from Demachi-Yanagi. Ohara is a charmingly rustic mountain community with a real old-fashioned rural feel. Walk five minutes east of the bus station to **Sanzen-in Temple** (open 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; admission 550 yen), whose great **Amida Hall** is surrounded by cryptomeria groves and beds of moss. This is a garden for four seasons, green in the spring and summer, brilliant with colored leaves in the fall, and absolutely marvelous in the snow. Genshin, the monastic designer of the place, wanted his Amida Hall and its gardens to give viewers a foretaste of the paradise awaiting the Buddhist faithful after death.

**Jakko-in** is a 1000-year old Buddhist nunnery (open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in winter; admission 500 yen), whose garden is described in the literary epic *Tales of the Heike*. It is also associated with the tragic life of the Empress Kenreimon-in, who spent her latter years here mourning the death of her infant son at the battle of Dannoura in 1185. The roots of the now-dead cherry tree she used to sit under are carefully preserved and roped off. This is a somberly lovely place. In fact, all of Ohara has a garden-like air year round. In the fall, the bronze maples set the mood; in the spring pink cherry blossoms abound; in the summer, rain brings out the blue hydrangeas. Tiny shops sell tea, rice cakes, local crafts. There are waterfalls and wild streams in the hills. Ohara is well worth a full day outing.

## Day 9 – OKAYAMA with YASUKI or HIROSHIMA afternoon options

If you have a Japan Rail Pass, take a side trip to Okayama. Only 1 1/2 hours from Kyoto on the **Shinkansen** “bullet train”, this town boasts one of Japan's three greatest gardens, **Korakuen**. It's an easy walk from the Okayama Station; take the Higashiyama streetcar and get off at Shiroshita, then walk east for 5 minutes. Admission is 350 yen, and the gardens are open daily 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. April to September; October to March 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. These are unique gardens, with open expanses of lawn and rice paddies with tea bush arbors worked in amongst a classic 17th century stroll garden. Above the gardens looms a ferroconcrete reconstruction of the Black or “Crow Castle”, built by the same Okayama lord who commissioned the gardens.

### Two Possible Afternoon Options

**Option 1:** The **Adachi Museum and Gardens** can take a little effort to get to, but you won't be disappointed. A private museum and garden,

it was founded by the late Mr. Zenko Adachi, who fulfilled his dream of combining his passions for landscape gardening and Japanese painting. He said “the garden, so to speak, is a picture scroll.” The 51,000 square yards of garden is made up of several garden types: a dry landscape garden, a white gravel and pine garden, a moss garden, and a pond garden. Just as with a Japanese painting, there is no one angle from which to view these gardens. Every vantage point offers a calming, graceful view, just as every season offers its own “living picture” to behold, with azaleas in spring, verdant green in summer, glowing red maples in autumn, and a white snowscape in winter. The museum’s art collection of over 1300 paintings, including the largest collection of Yokohama Taikan’s work, is shown at four annual exhibitions in accordance with the season. Taikan is said to be the founder of modern Japanese painting. The museum’s Ceramic Hall includes the work of two renown Japanese potters Kanjiro Kawai, who was from Yasugi City and Rosanjiin Kitaoji who was also a peerless cook. To get to the Adachi take the JR limited Express Yakumo train to Yanago. You can then change for the train to Yasugi from which the museum is a 15 minute taxi ride or take a 30 minute taxi directly from Yanago. Museum and garden hours are April to September 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., October to March until 5 p.m. Admission is 2,200 yen.



**Option 2:** A second afternoon option is to visit **Hiroshima**, which is only 45 minutes from Okayama on the Shinkansen bullet train. Though famous (or infamous) as the site of one of the two cities destroyed by nuclear weapons in World War II, Hiroshima has a vibrant life of its own today. Within walking distance of the railway station is the 1620 stroll garden **Shukkei-en**, totally restored since the war. Open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. October through March, admission is 250 yen. **Shukkei-en’s** quintessentially Japanese lake (copied from Hangzhou, China’s famous scenery), twisted pines, streams and carp-filled pools are an unspoken gentle rebuke to the grim **Peace Memorial Park** and **A-Bomb Dome** the city is better-known for. The garden’s ancient spirit and timeless grace are all the more remarkable when you realize they are barely 50 years old in their current incarnation, that is everything in the original gardens was annihilated when the bomb fell at 8:15 a.m. on August 6, 1945. Empires and wars may come and go, but gardens are eternal. Lord Asano, Shukkei-en’s architect, would have understood.

## Day 10 – KANAZAWA



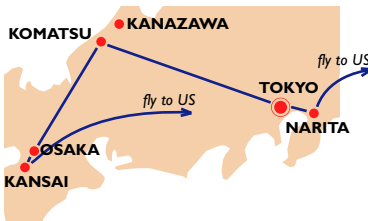
This is a full-day roundtrip from Kyoto (2 1/2 hours one-way on the northbound JR Limited Express train), or better still as an overnight trip. Still, the **Kenrokuen** Garden makes the journey well worth while. It was created in 1676 and evolved and grew over the next 200 years into today’s Garden of the Six Qualities –extensiveness, factitiousness, water, wide vistas, antiquity and quiet, stillness. Be sure and arrive early in the morning, even if that means taking a pre-dawn train from Kyoto.



Ryugen-in

Ironically, the quietude et al of the gardens attracts hordes of Japanese tourists during peak seasons, each with their tour leader bawling out horticultural information on megaphones! Take a taxi from the railway station to get to Kenrokuen; and by all means lunch in the gardens, with a traditional *bento* (box lunch) from the adjacent 100 year-old *Miyoshian restaurant*.

## Day 11 – Fly Home



If you choose to overnight in Kanazawa, you can fly from Komatsu airport in Kanazawa to either Itami (the domestic Osaka Airport) or Haneda (the domestic Tokyo airport). From there you can transfer by limousine bus to either Kansai International Airport or Narita Airport respectively. If you choose to return to Kyoto, you can easily take a limousine bus or JR Limited Express train from Kyoto Station to Kansai International Airport.

## KYOTO GARDENS requiring permission from the Empiral Household Agency

The *Detached Imperial Villa, Katsura Rikyu*, 15 minutes on foot from Hankyu Katsura Station, is another garden requiring special permission. Go to the Imperial Household Agency in the northwest corner of the Kyoto Imperial Palace grounds with your passport. The hours are 8:45 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. The 1 1/2 hour tours of Katsura Rikyu are held daily at 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 2 p.m. and 3 p.m.; the guides speak Japanese only. And, you must be over 20 years old! Again, the visit is well worth the trouble. Built by Prince Toshihito, adopted son of aesthete extraordinaire, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, in 1620, this garden more than matches the imperial villa itself, which is considered a triumph of Japanese architecture. This is a complex stroll garden, planned down to its last twig and pebble; the 1.716 stones in the walkway around the central lake are laid out so as to constantly surprise the ambulatory visitor. The garden's *Shoka-tei*, or *Flower-Viewing Pavilion*, looks down on the garden as a whole, and there are also breathtaking views from the *Shokin-tei tea pavilion*.

The *Shugaku-in Imperial Villa*, accessible by taxi or number 5 bus, is notable for both its villas and temples. It also requires a reservation through the already-mentioned Imperial Household Agency. Tours with a Japanese-speaking guide are offered at 9 a.m., 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 1:30 p.m. and 3 p.m. Monday – Friday, and at 9 a.m., 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. on Saturday. Shugaku-in is a sprawling estate at the foot of sacred *Mt. Hiei*, established by Emperor Go-Mizuno, back in the 17th century when the shoguns held the real power and the emperors were mere figureheads. Its many gardens seem to merge into the thickly-wooded slopes of Hiei above. This island-scaping is on a truly vast scale, with forest, lakes, paddi-fields, hedges, and pavilions.

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**Sento Goshō**, the Retired Emperor's Garden at Kyoto Imperial Palace, is the third Kyoto garden requiring special permission from the Imperial Household Agency. Tours are held daily at 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. in Japanese only. Take the subway to Marutamachi or Imadegawa. This fine stroll garden was built in 1630. Note especially the cobblestone lakeshore, with stones brought from Mt. Fuji.

## *Other KYOTO GARDENS requiring special permission for admission*

**Saiho-ji** (45 minutes by bus 73 from Kyoto Station). You must apply by mail for a reservation: Saiho-ji, 56 Kamigatani, Matsuo, Nishikyo-ku, Kyoto. Make sure your letter arrives from 5 to 30 days before your projected tour date. Enclose a self-addressed reply card to your local Kyoto address. No one under 18 admitted, and all visitors must begin their tour with an hour of either meditation, sutra-chanting, or copying sutras in ink. The admission fee is 3,000 yen. All of this actually helps prepare you for the experience of the garden itself, which visitors have described with such words as "religious", "life-altering", "visionary". On the garden's lower level, a dark glowing pond is surrounded by an unearthly forest of maples, with an intricate carpet of more than a hundred varieties of moss covering the ground below. A tea arbor, the **Shonan-tei**, overlooks one side of the pond. After a rain, the tapestry of mosses seems to become iridescent, aglow. A path up a forested slope leads to the upper level, where a dry garden consisting of a mossy boulder field and a waterless waterfall, are a perfect complement to the lower garden. What is remarkable about Saiho-ji is that in many ways it is an exquisite accident, laid out in 1339 on the remains of an older garden, and then changed significantly since then both by nature and design. Somehow, it all adds up to simple, inevitable beauty.