

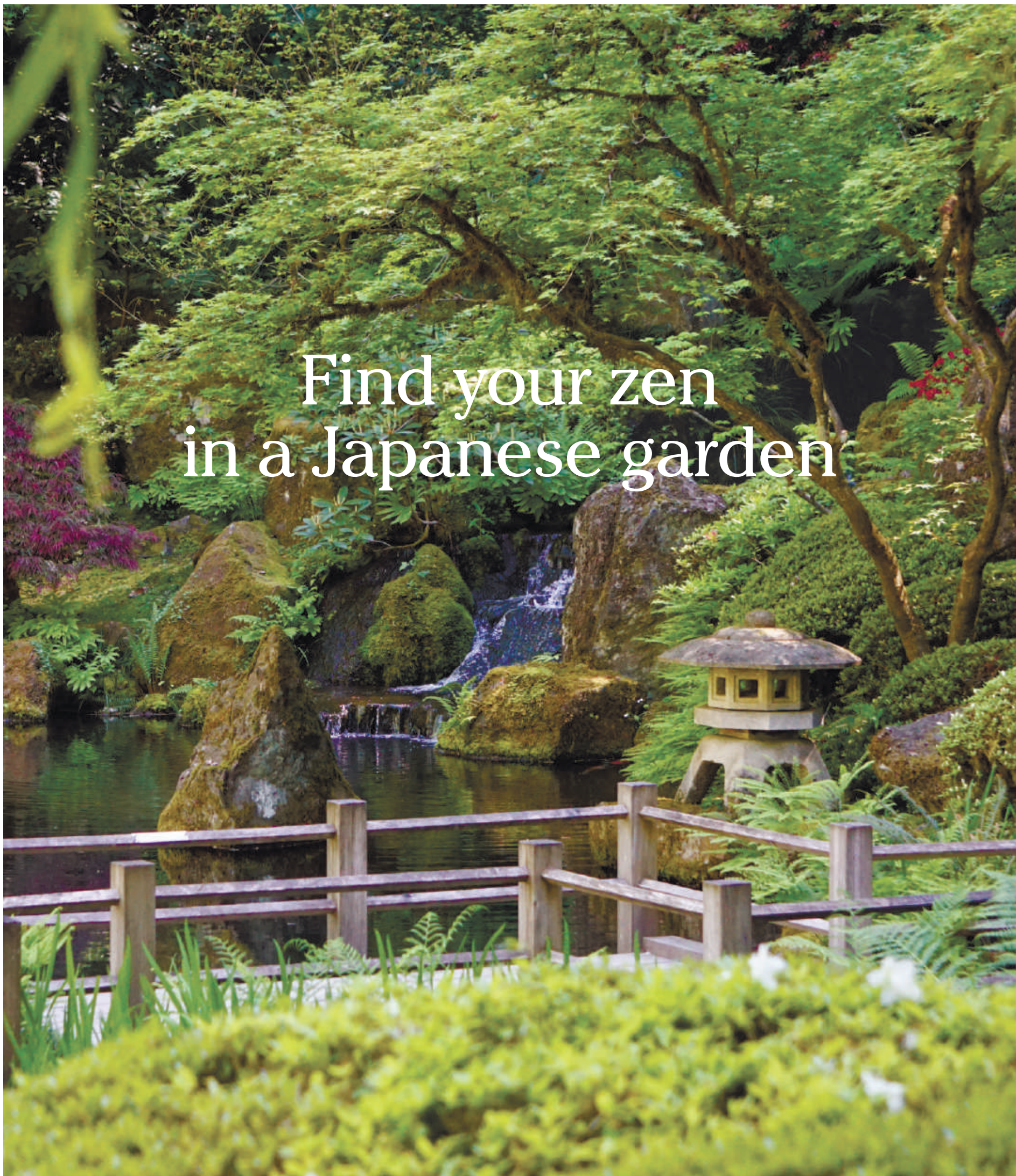
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SUSTAINABLE JAPAN MAGAZINE

Saturday, July 27, 2024



Find your zen
in a Japanese garden

FROM THE EDITOR

By YOSHIKUNI SHIRAI / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Japanese gardens vary in scale and taste. Some are *kaiyūshiki* gardens with a large pond in the center, while others are *karesansui*, which are dry and use stones to represent the flow of water. Either way, at the heart of all Japanese gardens there is a unique sense of respect for nature, or nature worship, that the Japanese have cherished since ancient times. When I view a Japanese gar-

den, I sense the spirituality of a people who have believed since time immemorial that waterfalls, mountains, stones and trees are inhabited by spirits.

Japanese gardens always have some buildings, perhaps a tea house in the traditional *sukiya* architectural style, and when you view the garden from inside one, the interior space feels like it is an extension of the outside, as though you were one with

nature. Unlike gardens in Europe, with their straight lines and geometry and symmetry, Japanese gardens are curved and asymmetrical, as if they were mimicking the natural world.

In today's fast-moving and high-tech world, Japanese gardens provide places of respite where we can feel at one with nature and pause for a moment to reflect on life.

日本庭園と言っても、回遊式庭園や枯山水など種類は様々です。しかしこれら日本の庭の根底には、日本人が昔から心に抱いている特有の感覚「自然を尊重する心(=自然崇拝)」が流れているような気がします。古来から滝や山、石や木々に神々が宿ると信じてきた日本人の精神性を、庭を見ていると私は感じます。

日本庭園には数寄屋など建物が必ず建てていますが、そこから庭を眺めると、室内に外部空間(庭)が取り込

まれ、建物の中にも自然と一体になることができます。また、ヨーロッパの庭園に見られる直線や幾何学で構成された対称性の美とは違い、曲線的で左右非対称で自然界をそのまま再現したかのような造形が特徴です。

また「見立て」という、“実際にはそこに「ない」のに、「ある」かのように設える作業”も特徴のひとつで、「枯山水」や「浄土庭園」がその例です。日本庭園を見て自然との一体感を味わってみるのはいかがでしょうか。



PORTLAND JAPANESE GARDEN

Opened in 1967 in Portland, Oregon, the garden was designed by landscape architect Takuma Tono of the Tokyo University of Agriculture. Located in the West Hills area of Washington Park, which overlooks the city, it includes eight distinct gardens and is one of the most popular cultural attractions on the West Coast, welcoming approximately 500,000 visitors annually, including local residents and tourists.

Address: 611 SW Kingston Avenue, Portland, OR 97205 USA
 Open: Summer hours (March 11-Sept. 30) 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
 (last admission 30 minutes before closing); closed on Tuesdays.
 Admission: \$21.95 <https://japanesegarden.org/>

Feature JAPANESE GARDENS

INTERVIEW

Thinking about Japanese gardens — from Oregon

By MINAMI NAKAWADA



The Cultural Village, designed by architect Kengo Kuma, opened inside the garden in 2017. It includes a library and gallery.

PHOTO: JAMES FLORIO

● Summary

〈ポートランド日本庭園〉から日本庭園の魅力を考える。

オレゴン州ポートランドに、年間約50万人が訪れる本格的な日本庭園がある。それが〈ポートランド日本庭園〉だ。第二次大戦での日米両国間の溝を埋めようと1967年に開園。広大な敷地に8つの異なる庭園がある。

この日本庭園で、文化・芸術・教育担当の上席執行役員を務めるのが中西玲人。彼は日本庭園の奥深さを2つ

指摘する。一つ目は、何百年に渡り培われてきた「エンジニアリングと美の融合」。もうひとつは、日本庭園とは「完成形のないランドアート」だということだ。「作庭家は全ての季節を想定して庭を造っています。一年を通じて庭を見ることで、季節の移ろいを感じやすくなり、日本人のもつ自然感や自然との共生を感じるこ

にもなります。またリチャード・セラやジェームズ・タレル、イサム・ノグチといった芸術家がインスピレーションを求めた先のひとつが日本庭園でした。その話を庭園を訪れた人に説明すると、観覧者はここが単なる植物園や散策する場所ではなく、創造性の源なのだ、という風に庭園への見方が変化します」と語る。



日本語全文はこちらから

PHOTO: JONATHAN LEY



PHOTO: WAYNE WILLIAMS



PHOTO: WAYNE WILLIAMS

The Portland Japanese Garden, which opened in 1967, includes eight distinct garden styles across a 22,000 square meter site. One of the best-known styles of Japanese garden is the “karesansui” style, which seeks to depict mountain and water scenery with just sand and stones, and no water features.

Portland, Oregon, is known as one of the most environmentally friendly and safe cities in the United States. It is also famously walkable. With good public transportation, Portland has a reputation for urban development that prioritizes pedestrians and bicyclists — so much so that urban revitalization experts from Japan have visited to study the city’s development.

Perhaps less well known is that on a hill overlooking the city there is an authentic Japanese garden that attracts some 500,000 visitors each year. The Portland Japanese Garden was designed in 1963 and opened to the public in 1967 by a foundation established to deepen mutual understanding and bridge the chasm that World War II had opened up between Japan and the United States. The garden was originally designed by landscape architect Takuma Tono (1891-1985), who had earned a master’s degree in landscape architecture from Cornell University. The 2.2-hectare site features eight different gardens.

The curator of culture, art and education at this beloved institution is Aki Nakanishi, who previously served as the cultural affairs specialist at the United States Embassy in Tokyo. As a cultural adviser to Caroline Kennedy and other ambassadors to Japan, he was involved in the planning and management of the United States’ cultural strategy in Japan. Nakanishi came to work at the Portland Japanese Garden when the garden’s CEO, Steve Bloom, asked him to curate the garden’s experiences and events both in the United States and overseas. Given that this would require him to quit his job and relocate his family, he mulled the idea for several years.

“In the end, I accepted this mission because I felt that the Portland Japanese Garden had so much potential for Japan as well. Japanese gardens are so profound because they touch on so many disciplines. I realized that the curation would address not just art, but social is-

suues like architecture, landscape design, race, sustainability and more,” Nakanishi said. “Having eight different Japanese gardens on one large site was also unique. You could call it a ‘museum of gardens’ because you can see so many different styles of garden in one place. I think this kind of garden is valuable because it encapsulates the full range of joy that gardens offer, and it has projects that people all over the world can enjoy, learn from and be inspired by.”

When asked further about the deep profundity of Japanese gardens, Nakanishi raised two points. The first was the sublimation of practical engineering and maintenance knowledge, cultivated over centuries, into something aesthetic.

“There is a thing called a ‘rain garden,’ which is essentially the use of a pond in flood prevention. Normally, rainwater and sewage management is considered an engineering problem, and so the only goals are effective and efficient water management. But when the Japanese built their ponds, they made them not just as types of flood prevention infra-



COURTESY: AKI NAKANISHI

structure, but as aesthetic objects to be admired. The Japanese also have a unique approach in terms of maintenance to protect trees. When pruning trees and plants, what at first might seem like over-pruning can five years later contribute to the composition of a beautiful garden. This is possible because they are not randomly cutting, but instead applying the cultivation techniques developed in Japan. Nature is ‘read’ to understand what will look best in several years’ time,” he said.

The second aspect of Japanese gardens that Nakanishi raised is that they are a kind of land art that is never finished. “Land art” refers to the construction of art in natural environments like deserts and plains using natural materials such as rocks, soil and wood.

“The gardener creates the garden with all the seasons in mind. As a result, visitors’ impressions will be formed not through a single visit, but by coming back throughout the year and deciding when their favorite seasonal and landscape composition occurs. It is an intellectual experience that helps people sense the changing of the seasons. This is in keeping with the Japanese sense of coexistence with nature. Visitors’ views of Japanese gardens also change when we explain that they have inspired artists like Richard Serra, James Turrell and Isamu Noguchi. People see that it is not just a botanical garden or a nice place for a walk, but a source of creativity. In this way, I see Japanese gardens as land art that is never finished, living art that is constantly changing,” he said.

Of all the visitors to the Portland Japanese Garden, it is the 25-44 age group that is the largest, representing 47% of the total. It is interesting that so many young and active people visit. Perhaps they come here to heal, rest or take stock in response to the stresses of contemporary society. If so, Portland Japanese Garden will always be there, evolving day by day, ready to inspire them.

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The Sustainable Japan section of The Japan Times highlights the efforts of organizations and communities toward a new way of life. For more information on sustainability, ESG and SDG issues, see <https://sustainable.japantimes.com>



Full articles are available at the Japanese-language site:
<https://sustainable.japantimes.com/jp>

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COVER PHOTO

The Portland Japanese Garden in Oregon USA, is a vast and authentic Japanese garden that includes eight distinct garden styles.

PHOTO: MICHAEL ANDERSON

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-
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-

AKI NAKANISHI

Nakanishi is a cultural leader and expert in public diplomacy with over two decades of international experience in government relations, public communication, and artistic and cultural programming. From 2008 to 2018, he served as a cultural affairs specialist at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo, where he oversaw a wide range of embassy involvement in cultural, creative and educational activities designed to enhance mutual

understanding and provided strategic advice for cultural initiatives by U.S. ambassadors, including John Roos and Caroline Kennedy. Prior to that, he worked in broadcasting and global electronics and as an arts and culture producer, curating exhibitions and producing performing arts programs and art fairs in addition to co-producing literary festivals, and also ran his own nonprofit for regional revitalization across rural Japan.

Feature JAPANESE GARDENS

TRAVEL

Five must-see Japanese gardens

By MINAMI NAKAWADA

We asked Aki Nakanishi, the Arlene Schnitzer Curator of Art, Culture and Education at the Portland Japanese Garden, to name his top five Japanese gardens in Japan. While acknowledging the difficulty of narrowing it down to just five, the first he named was Ritsurin Garden in Takamatsu, Kagawa Prefecture.

"The best-known gardens in Japan are known as the 'Three Great Gardens of Japan': Kairakuen in Mito (Ibaraki Prefecture), Korakuen in Okayama (Okayama Prefecture) and Kenrokuen in Kanazawa (Ishikawa Prefecture). But I tend to think that Ritsurin Garden is just as beautiful and of the same high quality," he said.

He hastened to add that you can't leave out Kyoto, where there are many famous gardens. "There are several extraordinary

gardens in Kyoto that are not open to the public, so I'll leave those out. Many are open to the public, such as Entsuji temple and Sanzenin temple. But if I had to choose one, it would be the Katsura Imperial Villa," he said, referring to the Imperial Household Agency-owned villa in Kyoto's Katsura area that was built by two successive generations of the Hachijo imperial family during the Edo Period (1603-1868).

Other Japanese gardens worth visiting include Fukui's Yokokan Garden, which is beautifully integrated with water features; the Jo-eiji temple's Sesshu Garden, said to have been created by the Zen monk and artist Sesshu; and the guesthouse Washin, created by contemporary artist Hiroshi Sugimoto. Next time you are looking for a travel destination, look no further than these five gardens?



Ritsurin Garden in Kagawa Prefecture. The vast site of approximately 75 hectares includes six ponds and 13 "mountains."
© RITSURIN GARDEN

1 Kagawa Prefecture Ritsurin Garden

Ritsurin Garden is designated as a Place of Scenic Beauty by the national government. It consists of the south garden, created by a feudal lord in the Edo Period, and the north garden, which was developed in the Meiji Era (1868-1912) and later. The vast site of approximately 75 hectares includes six ponds and 13 "mountains," offering a wide range of scenery to enjoy. The garden was formerly the residence of the Takamatsu Matsudaira family, who ruled this area during the Edo Period, and the garden was embellished by successive generations of lords. One addition, the Kikugetsu-tei tearoom, built in the early Edo Period, is not only a magnificent example of *sukiya*-style tearoom architecture, it also affords an exceptional view of the garden. In 1965 the Sanuki Folk Art Museum was opened within the garden. Designed by architect Tadashi Yamamoto, it features traditional local folk crafts and furniture designed by the architect George Nakashima, who once had a workshop in Takamatsu. The museum's front and courtyard gardens were designed by Kinsaku Nakane, known for the garden at the Adachi Museum of Art in Shimane Prefecture.

● 1-20-16 Kuririn-cho, Takamatsu-shi, Kagawa Prefecture. Open: Sunrise to sunset. Admission: ¥410
<https://www.my-kagawa.jp/static/en/ritsurin/>

© FUKUI CITY



● 3-11-36 Houei, Fukui-shi, Fukui Prefecture. Open: 9 a.m.-7 p.m. (5 p.m. from Nov. 6 to the end of February), except Dec. 28-Jan. 4. Last admission is 30 minutes before closing. Admission: ¥220
<http://www.fukuisan.jp/en/yokokan>

3 Fukui Prefecture Yokokan Garden

The most notable feature of this garden is its pond. Located along the outer moat of the five that once surrounded Fukui Castle, the water was incorporated into the garden to create a graceful and ethereal "water garden." The garden was created in the early to mid-Edo Period as a villa of the Matsudaira family, the feudal lords of Fukui. One of its features is that the pond is nearly square and fills most of the site, with no island in the middle. The surface of the water becomes one with the structures along its edge, and when you are inside a building you can see the sky and moon reflected clearly on the water, giving you the illusion of being on a boat. The original building in the *sukiya* style was destroyed in an air raid in 1945 but was reconstructed, offering an unchanged view.



© HIROSHI SUGIMOTO / SUGIMOTO STUDIO

● 2072 Nagasaka-cho, Nakamaru, Hokuto-shi, Yamanashi Prefecture. Open: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. (admission until 4:30 p.m.) except Mondays (or the following day if Monday is a national holiday) and New Year's holidays. Admission: ¥1,500
<https://www.kiyoharu-art.com/>

4 Yamanashi Prefecture Washin

Kiyoharu Art Colony is a cultural facility in Hokuto, Yamanashi Prefecture, overlooking the Southern Alps. The former site of an elementary school was reborn as an art site in 1980 and is home to several famous buildings, including art museums designed by Yoshio Taniguchi and Tadao Ando. The guesthouse of the facility, Washin, was completed in 2019 and was designed by the architectural firm of the New Material Research Laboratory, which includes artist Hiroshi Sugimoto and architect Tomoyuki Sakakida. It is a special facility that is normally closed to the public. The guesthouse's garden was created by Sugimoto. The moment you open the guesthouse door, the architecture becomes one with the garden. The Enoura Observatory, an art site in Kanagawa Prefecture run by a foundation Sugimoto established, has another garden designed by Sugimoto that with its compact, residential scale is also a masterpiece.

● Summary

庭の目利きを選ぶ、日本で見るとべき5つの庭園。

〈ポर्टランド日本庭園〉で文化・教育プログラムを担当する中西玲人上席執行役員に、日本国内で見るとべき日本庭園を5つ挙げてもらった。日本国内には良い庭園が多いので選定するのは難しいとしながらも、彼が最初に名前を挙げたのが香川県高松市にある〈栗林公園〉だ。「大名庭園で有名なのは、水戸にある〈偕楽園〉、岡山の

〈後楽園〉、金沢の〈兼六園〉で「日本三名園」と呼ばれています。しかし私はそれと同等に美しく、クオリティが高いと感じるのが〈栗林公園〉の庭園です」と語る。また名園が数多い京都の庭も外せないという。「京都で公開されている中でも圓通寺や三千院など良い庭園はたくさんありますが、ひとつ選ぶとしたら〈桂離宮〉だ

と思います」と、宮内庁が所轄する、皇族である八条宮が親子二代に渡り、江戸時代につくった別荘を挙げた。その他、水と一体となった福井の〈養浩館庭園〉、禅僧で画家の雪舟が作庭したと言われる〈常楽寺雪舟庭〉、現代美術作家・杉本博司がつくったゲストハウス〈和心〉の庭も、わざわざ足を運ぶ価値があるという。



日本語全文はこちら

2 Kyoto Katsura Imperial Villa

The Katsura Imperial Villa is considered one of the finest gardens in the nation, embodying the aesthetic of Japan's imperial court. Construction of the garden was begun in the early 17th century by Prince Toshihito, the first head of the Hachijo imperial family, and it was completed to its present form through large-scale additions by his son Prince Toshitada. The villa is located in the southwestern part of Kyoto, where many court nobles built residences during the Heian Period (794-1185). On the west side of the approximately 6.9-hectare site, which is surrounded by bamboo forests, is a group of residences arranged in a staggered formation and designed in the *shoin* style (centered around a ceremonial study for greeting visitors). In front of these, around a pond, are tearooms and other structures. The villa's beauty lies in the harmony achieved between the architecture and the garden. For example, opening the sliding doors creates a living space that fuses the interior and the garden, reflecting the traditional Japanese attitude of appreciating the beauty of nature as it changes from season to season. The garden is under the jurisdiction of the Imperial Household Agency, and visitors must apply in advance.

● Katsura Gozen, Nishikyo-ku, Kyoto-shi, Kyoto. Open: Every day except Mondays (or the following day if Monday is a national holiday), Dec. 28 to Jan. 4, and days when events are held. Admission: Inquire through the Imperial Household Agency Kyoto at <https://kyoto-gosho.kunaicho.go.jp/en/katsura-rikyu/visit>
<https://sankan.kunaicho.go.jp/english/index.html>

5 Yamaguchi Prefecture Jo-eiji Temple Sesshu Garden

Sesshu (1420-1506) was a Zen monk of the Muromachi Period (1392-1573) who was also a master of ink-wash painting, with six of his works, including several landscapes, now designated as National Treasures. This garden is said to have been created by Sesshu himself. The villa was built as a holiday house by Ouchi Masahiro, a cultured feudal lord, and it is said that he ordered Sesshu to build the garden. Situated in a valley surrounded by woods on three sides except the south, which faces the temple, the garden is designed with a pathway around the Shinji pond, with a "dry waterfall" suggested by stones in the northeast. The unique use of *tateishi*, stones dug into the ground so they stand upright, is suggestive of a Muromachi Period garden and contributed to the garden's official designations as a Historic Site and a Place of Scenic Beauty. Incidentally, the dry landscape garden Nanmei-tei in front of the main hall was created by Mirei Shigemori, one of the most famous gardeners of the Showa Era (1926-1989). With its white sand and moss-covered rocks designed to resemble the sea and mountains, it is also not to be missed.



© JOEJI SESHUTEI

● 2001-1 Miyanoshta, Yamaguchi-shi, Yamaguchi Prefecture. Open: 8 a.m.-5 p.m. (4:30 p.m. from November to March), all year. Admission: ¥300 <http://sesshu.jp/> (Japanese only)



Ryotei Kamome

📍 4-85 Shirakabe, Higashi-ku, Nagoya-shi, Aichi Pref.

The traditional Japanese restaurant Kamome was once a residence of Kyoto paper wholesaler Nakai Ijirou. Its inner garden is the only garden in Nagoya created by the landscape architect Ogawa Jihei VII, commonly known as "Ueji," who was active mainly in Kyoto.



Nagoya's famous gardens



Tamesaburo Memorial Museum

📍 1-9 Horiwari-cho, Chikusa-ku, Nagoya-shi, Aichi Pref.

The Tamesaburo Memorial Museum was built in 1934 on the Higashiyama hillside, once a popular spot for moon viewing. It consists of a main building in the traditional *sukiya* style, a stunning garden that beautifully displays the changing seasons, and a tea house named after tea master Rikyu's teachings.



TOKAIEN CO., LTD. 3-171 Kamenoi, Meitou-ku, Nagoya-shi, Aichi Pref.



Kumano Kodo (Wakayama Prefecture) is a designated World Heritage site. Walking the old pilgrimage trails through lush ancient forests and visiting sacred sites like Nachi Taisha shrine offers a unique experience. Tourists can take advantage of Nachikatsuura Tourism Organization's costume rental service and enjoy the rare travel experience of walking the Kumano Kodo dressed in the clothing of the Heian Period.

<https://www.japan.travel/en/experiences-in-japan/>
COURTESY: JNTO

JNTO promotes sustainable tourism initiatives

By RIKO SAITO

Interest in sustainable tourism has gained particular global traction as the atmosphere surrounding tourism has changed since the coronavirus pandemic, and the Japan National Tourism Organization is working to make it achievable.

The World Tourist Organization defines sustainable tourism as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.”

Based on this, JNTO is working on a variety of initiatives to promote tourism that is sustainable, protecting and cultivating regional environments, cultures and economies, yet presents growth potential. The organization hopes travelers, tourism-related businesses and host communities can come together to protect local people's ways of life and ensure that an area's natural environment, traditions and culture are handed down to future generations. To achieve this, JNTO sees the provision and distribution of information as vital.

Adding to this, the Japan Sustainability Coordinator Association has been launched by Green Destinations Japan, a representative of the global organization Green Destinations that provides services related to international certification and awards and conducts promotional activities.

JNTO itself established the cross-functional Sustainable Tourism Promotion Headquarters in 2022, a body that has undertaken a raft of initiatives. Its work includes disseminating the “stories” of regions that have international certification for sustainable tourism or are licensed to

use the Japan Sustainable Tourism Standard for Destinations (JSTS-D) logo.

JNTO believes Japan's abundant natural wonders and diverse cultures rooted in nature are unique. Each region has its own traditions, craftsmanship and food nurtured since ancient times. By communicating all this to a global audience and inviting sustainable travel that enables people to authentically experience regions and communities, it aims to contribute to the preservation of local culture.

Let's take as an example Miyoshi, a Tokushima city that was selected in the Green Destinations Top 100 Stories competition in 2023. The Kazurabashi vine bridge in Iya Valley, visited by about 350,000 tourists a year, is a designated Important Tangible Folk Cultural Property, considered one of Japan's three most unusual bridges. It is rebuilt by hand every three years using traditional methods and using natural materials. In recent years, it has become harder to get hold of the perennial vine used for the bridge, *sarunashi* (*Actinidia arguta*, hardy kiwi). So Miyoshi teamed up with the District Forest Office to support forest culture and secure the supply of vines. The tie-up's various sustainability initia-

tives, like tree planting with local children, have been recognized as good practices. This is not only attractive in terms of tourism, it is also important in terms of the way efforts are being made to achieve sustainability, including the future-forward development of human resources.

To make sustainable tourism a reality, it is important to change the mindsets of not only the people living in tourist areas but also of the tourists themselves, JNTO says. The organization operates a website called Be a More Responsible Traveler carrying tips for responsible tourism. Under the banner “Respect, Connect, Enjoy,” JNTO suggests “10 ways to travel responsibly in Japan,” including honoring Japan's rich natural environment, tasting seasonal marine and mountain delicacies, staying in historic buildings, immersing oneself in Japanese culture with traditional festivals and performing arts, and supporting local artisans.

With more tourists now wanting to spend quality time in places that are not popular destinations and enjoy authentic experiences and food that can only be found in a particular area, we should pay attention to that message from JNTO, a key promoter of sustainable tourism in Japan.



The Kazurabashi vine bridge in Iya Valley is rebuilt by hand every three years using natural materials. Given that it is now more difficult to get hold of the vine used for the bridge, the city of Miyoshi, in tandem with the District Forest Office, has been working on sustainable tourism that includes an agreement to safeguard and secure raw materials, as well as tree planting with local children. The Japan Tourism Agency has created the global standards-based Japan Sustainable Tourism Standard for Destinations (JSTS-D) to provide indicators for tourism. JNTO shares information from different regions that have the right to use the JSTS-D logo. <https://www.japan.travel/en/sustainable/>
COURTESY: JNTO

● Summary

JNTOが推進するサステナブル・ツーリズム。

今「サステナブル・ツーリズム」推進に取り組むのが、JNTO（日本政府観光局）だ。

UN Tourism（世界観光機関）は、サステナブル・ツーリズムを「訪問客、産業、環境、受け入れ地域の需要に適合しつつ、現在と未来の環境、社会文化、経済への影響に十分配慮した観光」と定義している。

「JNTOもそれに基づき、地域の《環境》《文化》《経済》を守り育むサステナブルで発展性のある観光を推進するための取り組みをしています。旅行者と観光関係事業者、そして受け入れ地域が一体となり、地域の人々の生活を守りつつ、自然や伝統、文化をしっかりと継承し将来につなげていく。そのための情報発信が

非常に重要だと考えています」とJNTOは解説する。

JNTOは2022年に部署横断の〈サステナブル・ツーリズム推進本部〉を設置。持続可能な観光に関する国際認証受賞地域や、「日本版持続可能な観光ガイドライン（JSTS-D）」のロゴマーク使用承諾地域について、世界中に発信している。



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thejapantimes

Destination Restaurants 2024

AUTHENTIC JAPAN SELECTION

Talk session report: Four years of connections among regional chefs

By TAEKO TERA0

The award ceremony was followed by a discussion among the three judges, with award-winning chefs from past years joining in. Views were exchanged about cooperation among chefs who are creating cuisine rooted in regional areas, as well as about challenges going forward. Judges (from left) Naoyuki Honda, Yoshiki Tsuji and Takefumi Hamada



PHOTOS: TAKAO OTA

The Destination Restaurants 2024 award ceremony, hosted by The Japan Times, was held on May 28 at Hills House Sky Room Cafe & Bar in Tokyo's Azabudai Hills. The criteria for selection are that the restaurants must lie outside major cities and help spark local revitalization. The event brought together the chefs of all 10 establishments selected this year, including Elezo Esprit in Hokkaido, the Destination Restaurant of the Year 2024. The ceremony was followed by a discussion among the three award judges, Yoshiki Tsuji, Naoyuki Honda and Takefumi Hamada, on the topic "Looking back at the four years of Destination Restaurants — connections among chefs and regions."

In its first year, 2021, the number of potential candidates was quite small, but there has been an accelerating trend of chefs awakening to local areas' potential and opening restaurants there. "Looking ahead to next year, the number of candidate restaurants has already surpassed 100," said Tsuji, the facilitator of the discussion. This is a welcome trend that could also help shift the orientation of inbound tourism from big cities toward regional ar-

eas. In fact, award-winning chefs reported that as their restaurants have become better-known, the number of overseas travelers visiting them has increased. It was mentioned frequently that customers from overseas now account for about 30% of their clientele. Honda said, "It's great that they can come into contact with each region's history and way of life through meals at regional restaurants." Travelers to Japan also hope to experience this type of encounter.

So, how do you create a restaurant that shines in a regional area? "Needless to say, you use ingredients from the area," said Hamada. "At more and more restaurants currently gaining attention in regional areas, chefs are personally involved in the production of ingredients as creators, and in many cases they encourage producers to make new ingredients." In this way, chefs have made use of their proximity to producers and pointed up the need for a consciousness of "creating" that starts with raw materials. Among this year's award-winning restaurants, notable examples of those with an especially strong commitment to ingredients include Elezo Esprit, which serves dishes featuring meat

that it produces from wild game and game fowl and ducks raised on the premises, and the restaurant at Enowa Yufuin in Oita Prefecture, which grows nearly all of its vegetables and herbs in its own fields.

In addition to the chefs honored at the award ceremony, attendees included chefs who have distributed meals to victims of the Noto Peninsula earthquake of Jan. 1 despite being impacted by the disaster themselves. Six months have passed, but the recovery of the Noto region has not progressed as hoped, and for most of the area's restaurateurs the path to reopening is unclear. As a representative of the Noto area's chefs, Toshiya Ikehata, the owner-chef of L'Atelier de Noto in Wajima, Ishikawa Prefecture — a Destination Restaurant of 2022 — expressed his thoughts as follows: "I was thanked by many people in the area, and felt very glad that I had become a chef. More emotional support programs will be needed in the area going forward, but I'm sure there are things we can do to help through cuisine." Toru Kawashima, the owner-chef of Ipponsugi Kawashima in the city of Nanao in the Noto region, one of this year's Destination Restaurants, said with tears in his eyes: "With a disaster of one minute, everything was gone — but the work we've done up to the present was not lost. There are many frustrations, but we have precious friends and colleagues, including fellow chefs." His comment was met with many shouts of support from those in the venue. The Japan Times, for its part, donated a portion of the proceeds from its recently published book consisting of three years of Destination Restaurants articles and this year's Destination Restaurants list. Ikehata, the chefs' representative, accepted this donation at the event.



Four chefs impacted by the Noto earthquake participated in the award ceremony, in addition to this year's award-winning chefs and previous honorees from the years 2021 to 2023. Through Destination Restaurants, connections are forming among regional chefs who otherwise have few opportunities to meet.

● Summary

地方のシェフ同志が繋がった4年間。

今年で4回目となるジャパントイムズ主催「Destination Restaurants 2024」の授賞式が5月28日に行われた。選出基準は東京23区と政令都市を除く場所であり、食を通じて街おこしの起点となる店。授賞式後は辻芳樹が司会進行を務める、アワードの審査員3氏と受賞シェフたちによる意見交換がなされた。

今回は令和6年能登半島地震で自ら被災しながら、地元の復興のために力を尽くす石川県のシェフたちも来場し、涙ながらに思いを述べると会場からは多くの声援が上がった。ジャパントイムズからはこれまでの「Destination Restaurants」の記事をまとめ、出版した書籍の売り上げの一部を能登に寄付した。

すでに能登復興支援のため、コラボレーションイベントを行った受賞シェフたちもいるなど、「Destination Restaurants」から、地方のシェフの繋がりが少しずつ形にもなっている。被災地を筆頭に、地方創生の課題は山積しているが、「食」を通じて解決できることはたくさんあるはずだ。



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A great opportunity to enjoy bunraku
**National Theatre, Tokyo presents:
Bunraku Performance for Beginners**

Bunraku is a closely collaborative form that synchronizes narrative recitation, shamisen music and puppetry in performance. It vividly depicts the stories of passionate citizens in the Edo Period (1603-1868). This is a performance for beginners that presents the charm of bunraku in an easy-to-understand way.

Program

Performance

‘Datemusume Koi no Higanoko’

Guidance

‘An introduction to Bunraku in English’

Performance

‘Natsumatsuri Naniwa Kagami’

Venue

New National Theatre, Tokyo [The Pit]
(1-1-1 Hon-machi, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo)

Performance Dates

Sept. 7 (Sat.) – Sept. 22* (Sun.), 2024
*except 9/13 (Fri.)

Curtain Times

11 am / 2:30pm / 6pm



For more information

Additional shows and venues

Traditional Japanese Dance Performance
‘Discover NIHONBUYO with Animals’
Aug. 10 (Sat.) 2pm
Asakusa Public Hall

Traditional Japanese Music Performance
‘Discover HOGAKU: The charm of KOTO’
Aug. 31 (Sat.) 11 am / 3pm
Bunkyo Civic Hall (Small Hall)

Kabuki Performance
‘Natsumatsuri Naniwa Kagami’
Sept. 1 (Sun.) – Sept. 25 (Wed.)
New National Theatre, Tokyo [Playhouse]