



Ryoanji Temple

Peninsula, including religions like Buddhism and Daoism. Extant written records recount how Soga no Umako, one of the most powerful figures in Japan in the early 7th century, dug a pond at his residence near Asuka River and erected a small “island” in the middle of it. Chinese-style gardens were the norm back then, but people began redesigning them to reflect Japanese sensibilities. The 8th century saw the emergence of gardens that incorporated elements like irregular-shaped ponds, banks resembling the winding serpentine shapes of shorelines, and arrangements of natural rocks. This transition marked the advent of “Japanese gardens.”

Four representative garden styles developed thereafter. The first were Heian period (794–1192) gardens that portrayed the Buddhist Pure Land. These gardens were particularly popular among the Kyoto nobility, who filled the grounds of their estates with expansive ponds and running water. The ponds would feature islands connected by bridges, with the ponds flanked by small buildings connected by long, thin structures. The nobles would use these buildings for moon viewing, snow viewing, and to enjoy the cool breeze on summer evenings, for example. The garden of Byodoin Temple’s Amida Hall in Kyoto provides a splendid example of how these gardens of yore once looked.

The Muromachi period (1392–1573) then saw the emergence of dry rock gardens. This style was heavily influenced by Zen Buddhism. With Zen, all daily activities are regarded as part of Buddhist training to attain enlightenment. This includes garden building, with gardens constructed within Kyoto’s Zen temples.

Located in small spaces surrounded by temple buildings, these gardens use natural rocks and white river sand to symbolically represent elements such as mountains, waterfalls and vast watery expanses. Ryoanji Temple’s world-famous rock garden is a particularly abstract example of this style.

Amid the growing popularity of the tea ceremony from the late Muromachi period to the Momoyama period (1573–1603), a new style emerged that made effective use of the approaches to teahouses. The design of these approaches was taken very seriously, and they were adorned with stepping stones, nobedan (paved paths made of stones of varying sizes), and other features. These ceremonial gardens and their teahouses have been preserved by the Omotesenke, the Urasenke, and other schools that have passed down the wabi-cha tea ceremony traditions that first emerged 400 years ago.

A new type of garden then developed during the Edo period (1603–1868). Known as kaiyu-shiki (“strolling-style”), this comprehensive style incorporated all the different styles mentioned above, with examples including the Rikugien Gardens in Tokyo’s Komagome district and Ritsurin Garden in Takamatsu. Centered around large ponds, these expansive gardens are divided into different areas that visitors can stroll around as they admire the changing scenery. With their huge size, diverse functionality, and ability to accommodate large crowds, these gardens have an air of modernity reminiscent of present-day parks.

Of course, there are also many modern gardens that adopt these traditions and arrange them in new ways.




Rikugien Gardens




Ritsurin Garden


So why not add “gardens” to your travel itinerary and find the garden that comforts and inspires you the most?



Wander Japan’s Wonders



source: ColBase (<https://colbase.nich.go.jp/>)



Excerpted from our online articles. Published by: Japan Arts Council

ArtsJP



Vol.4

The Japan Cultural Expo 2.0 website offers articles about Japanese arts and culture, as well as information on museums, theaters, and arts festivals. The ArtsJP is a sub-branch of the Japan Cultural Expo 2.0.



Family Fun through Technology and Innovation in Odaiba



Photo courtesy of Tokyo Cruise Ship Co., Ltd.

Sail with a Manga-Inspired Ship and Marvel at a Life-Sized Gundam

Odaiba City – a hub for futuristic entertainment and a great place to learn about Japan’s technology and innovation. Wander through its premises and you’ll witness an impressive harmony of its cityscape blending seamlessly with the expanse of the sea. It’s a perfect destination for families looking to inspire young minds but at the same time enjoying Japanese culture and its unique landscape.

Our journey starts in Asakusa, a center for cultural exploration and Japanese gourmet. Here lies the starting point: on board the Emeraldas. Designed by the legendary manga artist Leiji Matsumoto, its sleek, futuristic design resembles a spaceship common in his works and is a sure hit for kids and kids at heart. Named after Queen Emeraldas, a brave character from Matsumoto’s universe, the ship embodies a sense of adventure and allure, blending the magic of manga and

anime with real-life exploration.

Inside, you’ll find a spacious minimalist ambience with transparent or neutrally colored chairs. Even the restroom features a modern interior. The walls and ceiling are filled with glass windows, allowing you to take in the sights from every angle. The ship cruises at a steady pace along the Sumida River that you wouldn’t even realize it’s moving, offering views of Tokyo’s urban landscape interspersed with peaceful greenery.



Photo courtesy of Tokyo Cruise Ship Co., Ltd.

As you approach the Tokyo Bay area, head to the ship's observation deck and feel the refreshing sea breeze as you witness the majestic Rainbow Bridge along and Odaiba's skyline slowly coming into view—a picture-perfect scene you don't want to miss.

TOKYO CRUISE
Place(Boarding at Asakusa) 1-1-1 Hanakawado, Taito-ku, Tokyo

Surpassing Fiction:
Witnessing a Real Gundam

An iconic landmark in the heart of Odaiba, the life-size Unicorn Gundam Statue is a full-scale replica of the RX-0 Unicorn Gundam from the anime series, Mobile Suit Gundam Unicorn, an adaptation of the novel by Harutoshi Fukui, created by Sunrise in 2010. As I gaze at its enormity, its pure white façade adds allure to its overwhelming size, drawing focus to its intricate details.

Located in front of the Diver City Tokyo Plaza, its ts

statuesque presence will impress even those who are not fans of the series. As if its gigantic size wasn't enough to wow spectators, it also transforms at certain times of the day and illuminates at nighttime with different performances accompanied by music and narration, ensuring each visit is unique. Check the performance times on the official website and marvel at the impeccable craftsmanship and technology that made this masterpiece a reality.

Unicorn Gundam Statue
Venue 2F Festival Square, DiverCity Tokyo Plaza, 1-1-10 Aomi, Koto-ku, Tokyo

Read more on the website

Family Fun through Technology and Innovation in Odaiba

- Part 2 Miraikan: Connecting you to the Future
- Part 3 Robots and Rainbows: Exploring Kawasaki Robostage and the Majestic Rainbow Bridge



Earth Celebration on Sado Island : Music Without Borders

From Dynamic Dance Collaborations to Cultural Fusion

Following Shiroyama Park's performance, Amber went to the Triangle Park Fringe Stage in the Yellow Area. There, she witnessed an extraordinary collaboration between Niigata's acclaimed contemporary dance troupe Noism2 and the Kodo taiko group. This powerful performance brought together Kodo's thundering taiko rhythms with Noism2's elegant choreography, creating an unforgettable spectacle of sound and movement. The



synergy between the traditional Japanese drumming and the modern, expressive dance moves of Noism2 was mesmerizing, with an electric energy that rippled through the audience.

There are also market stalls that sell food, local trinkets, and local products in the Yellow Area, where you can indulge in delicious food or shop for souvenirs.

After being energized by the lively performance, Amber made her way to the Blue Area and explored the Harbour Market at Ogi Port, where the main events of the Earth Celebration take place. The market's location at the port provides

stunning panoramic views of the calm sea and distant mountains. The cool sea breeze offers a refreshing respite from the summer heat as you enjoy the lively atmosphere.



Amber watching the Noism2 (front) and Kodo group (behind) perform



This is the perfect spot to indulge in local Sado delicacies and festival foods, ranging from staples like yakisoba to other mouthwatering options like juicy roasted chicken and shawarma. Pair it all with a refreshing drink made from fresh fruits, and you have the ideal combo to beat the summer heat. Amber was also particularly impressed by the market's commitment to sustainability. Many stalls featured handmade or upcycled jewelry, promoting eco-friendly practices and conscious consumerism, perfectly aligning with the festival's values.

After indulging in the festival's delicious offerings, Amber made her way into the day's main event at the Ogi Port Park Event Stage. Over the years, as Kodo's taiko music drew more people to Sado Island, the festival evolved into a global stage where not only Kodo but also international musicians could share their talents. Led by Kodo, who travels the world to showcase the powerful rhythms of taiko, the group forms connections with equally impressive performers during their journeys. These connections often lead to invitations for other artists to join the festival. This year's guest performers were the Nakibembe Embaire Group from Uganda, whose collaboration with Kodo produced an unforgettable fusion of Japanese and Ugandan musical traditions. "It's all about creating connections between cultures, people, and nature," one of the organizers emphasized.

As the stage lights flickered on and the sun dipped along the horizon, a sense of anticipation filled the air. The audience eagerly awaited the performers to emerge on stage, but to everyone's surprise, the beat



of the drums began from behind. Slowly, the performers came into view, flanked by dancers, flutists, and drummers, who danced their way onto the stage. The crowd erupted in cheers of delight. The dancer waving colorful ribbons brought a vibrant energy to the performance. At the same time, the flute's upbeat yet mellow melody harmonized beautifully with the powerful rhythms of the taiko drums, igniting everyone's spirits.

After the lively introduction, massive taiko drums were lined up across the stage, and that's when the performance truly took on a serious tone. The powerful beats from the taiko were awe-inspiring—the vibrations of each strike could be felt even from the farthest seats.

When the Nakibembe Embaire Group from Uganda entered the stage, the cheers grew even louder. As they began playing, you could see people in the audience start to sway to the infectious rhythm.



The Nakibembe Embaire Group

When the Kodo drummers joined the stage for the collaboration, it became nearly impossible for anyone to just watch. The energy was palpable as the audience clapped, raised their hands, shouted, and moved their bodies to the beat.



The sound of the drums resonated deeply as if reverberating through the very souls of those in attendance. Amber couldn't resist the pull of the rhythm and soon found herself standing up and joining the crowd in the dance area, grooving to the beat with others. "Witnessing the fusion of Japanese and Ugandan cultures through music was a truly unforgettable experience," she shared enthusiastically.

"I couldn't help but dance to the music and become completely immersed." The night continued with several more captivating musical collaborations, including performances of traditional Japanese folk dancing, all while Kodo's powerful drumming carried on into the night.

By the end of the performance, smiles were on everyone's faces, leaving the crowd wanting more. The energetic collaboration between Kodo and Nakibembe Embaire set the tone for another round of festivities.

Ogi Okesa Dance Circle



Amber found herself at the Ogi Okesa Dance Circle on Ogi Shopping Street, one of the free events held at the festival, where everyone is invited to join in and dance to the rhythmic music of Ogi Okesa. The lively, joyful atmosphere under the moonlit sky was irresistible, and Amber eagerly joined the circle, dancing alongside the locals. Dancing with them to live Japanese folk music deeply resonated with her. "It offered a unique opportunity to engage with the local community and immerse myself further in Sado's culture," she reflected.

It was a perfect end to a night of festivities and a remarkable experience that left Amber more passionate than ever about promoting lesser-known regions of Japan. "Sado" , in particular, reminded me that there are still so many culturally rich and artistic corners of Japan waiting to be explored," she noted.

How to Get to Sado Island
From Niigata Port* → Arrives at Ryotsu Port
From Naoetsu Port → Arrives at Ogi Port
Take a ferry from either port to reach Sado Island.
*The Jetfoil ferry from Niigata Port is the fastest option.

Read more on the website

Earth Celebration on Sado Island : Music Without Borders

- Part1: 37 Years of Music, Culture, and Sustainability
- Part3: Hands-on with Tradition: Amber's Onidaiko Experience



Exploring the four representative types of Japanese garden



Words by Mari Hashimoto

From olden times down to the present, people all around the world have cultivated a rich array of gardens. The origins of all these gardens trace back to attempts to recreate in this world the otherworldly paradises expounded by the religions of each era and region.

Japan also has a rich history when it comes to gardens. Visitors to Japan will come across gardens in a variety of places, from regular houses to temples, parks, restaurants, hotels, ryokans, and even within commercial buildings. These gardens come in all shapes and sizes, but they seem to share some commonalities and points of attraction.

Gardening in Japan is said to trace back to the arrival of a numerous cultures from China and the Korean

