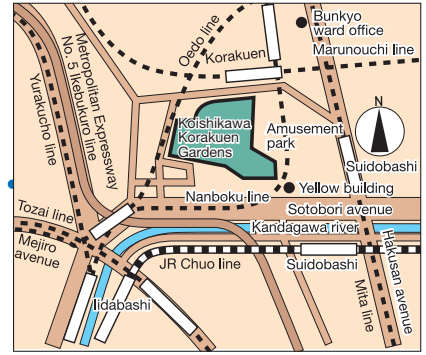






## 5

Deep mountain feel with a Chinese flair

# Koishikawa Korakuen Gardens



|                       |  |   |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| Location ●            | Koraku 1-chome, Bunkyo Ward  |  |
| Contact Information ● | Koishikawa Korakuen Gardens Administration Office tel: 03-3811-3015 (1-6-6 Koraku, Bunkyo-ku 112-0004)   |  |
| Transport ●           | 3-minute walk from C3 exit of Iidabashi (Oedo line). 8-minute walk from east exit of Iidabashi (JR Sobu line, Tozai line, Yurakucho line, Nanboku line). 8-minute walk from Koraku exit of Korakuen (Marunouchi line, Nanboku line). |  |
| Closed ●              | December 29 to January 1   |  |
| Open ●                | 9 am to 4:30 pm (gates close at 5 pm)  |   |
| Admission ●           | General: 300 yen, Seniors 65 and older: 150 yen<br>(Primary school and younger children / Jr. high school students living or studying in Tokyo: Free)  |   |
| Free days ●           | Greenery Day (May 4), Tokyo Citizens Day (October 1)   |   |

Construction on these gardens started in 1629 by Yorifusa, founder of the Mito Tokugawa family, as the gardens for his Edo mansion. They were completed in the lifetime of his successor, Mitsukuni, who named the gardens “Korakuen” based on advice from Ming China Confucian Shu Shunsi.

The gardens are composed of artificial hills and ponds circled by paths. A strong Chinese influence can be seen in the various sceneries named after famous Chinese locations. They artfully create landscapes of lakes, mountains, rivers, and pastoral scenes.

This site is at the end of the Koishikawa terrace, incorporating a branch of the Kanda water supply. And the gardens were constructed based on Mitsukuni's Confucian ideas.

Korakuen was designated a special historical site and special scenic spot in March 1952 under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties. The only Metropolitan parks to receive that double designation are these gardens and Hama-rikyu Gardens (P. 125). Nationwide, only seven sites have been recognized this way. The others are Rokuonji Temple (Golden Pavilion), Jishoji Temple (Silver Pavilion), and Daigoji Sanpojin in Kyoto, the remains of Heijo-kyo Sa-kyo Sanjo Nibo Palace in Nara, and Itsukushima Shrine in Hiroshima.

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Opened      | April 3, 1938   |
| Area        | 70,847.17 m <sup>2</sup>  |
| Trees       | Tall trees: 3,000, Shrubs: 20,600 m <sup>2</sup><br>Grass: 1,300 m <sup>2</sup>   |
| Main plants | Acer palmatum, Japanese apricot, black pine, cherry (weeping cherry, winter cherry), castanopsis, persea, Japanese camellia, satsuki azalea, shibataea kumasaca, lotus, Japanese iris |
| Events      | Rice planting (May), rice harvesting (September), Japanese plum festival (February)   |
| Facilities  | Gathering hall (Kantokutei)   |

**Large pond ●** This pond is the central feature of the gardens' landscape. It has two islands. Horajima and Chikubujima, creating lake scenery modeled after Biwa Lake. It is said that people used to play in boats on the pond.

**Shorozan hill ●** Ruscus bamboo covers the entire round hill and its surroundings. The hill was named Shorozan by Edo era Confucian Razan Hayashi as it resembled Mt. Lushan in China (Rozan is the Japanese pronunciation of Lushan). One can look down on the gardens from the peak.

**Weeping cherry ●** A weeping cherry tree more than a hundred years old once stood here. The current tree was planted to succeed that old tree. It is estimated to be 50 to 60 years old.

**Oigawa ●** This is the best-known river scenery for the gardens. It gains its name from Oigawa that flows from the base of Arashiyama in Kyoto. A waterwheel used to feed the river from the Kanda water supply.



The 50- to 60-year-old weeping cherry in full bloom

**Tokujindo temple** ● Mitsukuni read of Bo Yi and Shu Qi in the Chinese classic “Records of the Historian” when he was 18 years old. Deeply moved, he enshrined wooden statues of them in this temple. The temple name derives from the words Confucius used to describe the two.

**Engetsukyo bridge** ● Ming China Confucian Shu Shunsui is said to have designed this stone bridge. The name Engetsukyo (round moon bridge) is derived from the fact that it resembles a full moon when reflected on the water.

**Rice paddies** ● The landscape takes a dramatic change at the north end of the gardens. A pastoral setting with plum forests, rice paddies, irises, and wisteria trellises is created. This is the only Metropolitan park with rice paddies. They were developed by Mitsukuni to show the labors of farmers to the wife of his son Tsunaeda. Every year since 1975, primary school students from Bunkyo Ward where the park is located plant rice in May and harvest it in September.

**Inner garden** ● This was once the site of the Mito Clan library, once separated from the back garden that held the large pond by a Chinese-style gate. In the Edo era this inner garden was called “Uchi-no-Oniwa,” a Japanese garden centered on a pond. It is said that this garden retains its original form.



Changing leaves in autumn creating a deep forest feel

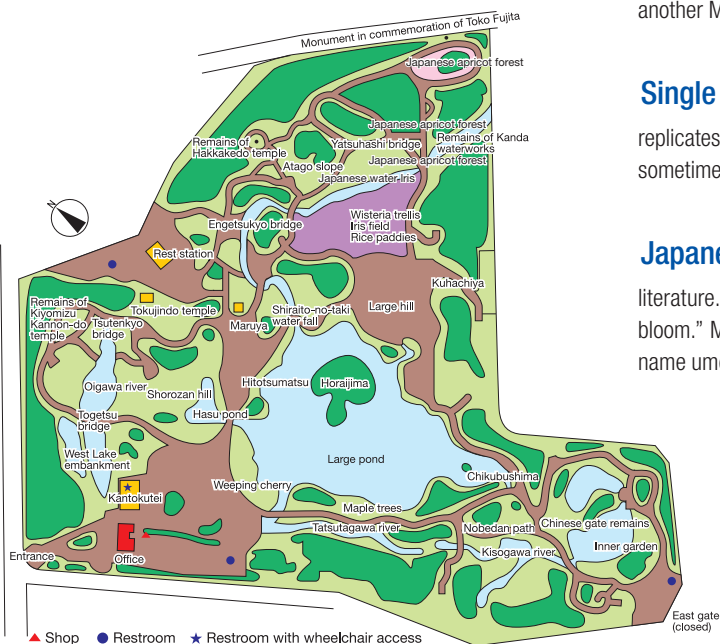
**Nobedan path** ● Nobedan refers to a road paved with various stones. This nobedan in particular is outstanding. Large and small natural stones along with carved stones are laid down. This is a Chinese gardening technique, and is also used for the cobblestones passing the Chinese gate in the inner garden.

**Kuhachiya** ● This thatched-roof building stands at the edge of the pine forest. An Edo era drinking house was introduced as part of the garden landscape. The original burned down in the war, so this is a reconstruction built in 1959. Its name Kuhachiya comes from the Edo era saying that sake is best if the cup is 90% full in the afternoon and 80% full in the evening.

**West Lake embankment** ● This is a recreation of in West Lake (Xi Hu) in Hangzhou (modern-day Zhejiang) China. The rock embankment running straight downstream on Oikawa River is a structure along with Engetsukyo bridge in this park that has a special place in the history of Japanese gardens. This structure can be seen in another Metropolitan garden, Kyu Shiba-rikyu Gardens.

**Single pine tree** ● Corresponding to the large pond that resembles Biwa Lake, this tree replicates the Karasaki pine on that lake. Thus, this tree is also sometimes called the Karasaki pine.

**Japanese apricot forest** ● Japanese plum trees are said to be good for literature. “If one puts efforts into studying, the plum trees will bloom.” Mitsukuni liked plum very much, and he also went by the name ume-sato, meaning home of plums.



## Gardens guide

Volunteers will guide you on the history and highlights of the gardens. Tours are held at 11 am and 2 pm Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. (No charge)