

# Traveller top picks



## THE ASIA EDITION



which brews premium sake using traditional methods and from water extracted from a well in the frontyard of the brewery. Shouroku, with its 370 years of history, has a cellar door, of sorts, next to the main brewery building, where the company's sakes can be tasted and bought. Depending on the time of the year, it may be possible to inspect the brewery and gain a sense of what's required to create a premium drop. [See shoutoku.co.jp/en/](http://see.shoutoku.co.jp/en/)

### 10 DINE SEIWASO

The Japanese have a legendary ability to create beauty and serenity in unexpected and confined spaces. Tucked away in the middle of suburban Fushimi, and overlooked by prosaic apartments, is the 60-year-old Seiwaso, a restaurant serving refined Kyoto cuisine. It's set around a traditional Japanese garden overlooked by a building designed in the sukiya-style that was originally used for teahouses but later also for restaurants. [See seiwasou.com/en/](http://see.seiwasou.com/en/)



### 11 SEE TEMPLE OF FIVE-HUNDRED RAKAN STONE

Kyoto, one of Japan's best-preserved cities, is home to a phenomenal number of temples but few are quirkier than this one which features the work of Ito Jakuchu, an 18th-century Japanese artist who set about creating 500 stone statues, set in a beautiful bamboo grove that recount important stages in the life and death of Buddha. It is said that weathering of the statues from the elements over the years have rendered Buddha's expressions "soft and impressive". [See kyoto.travel/en](http://see.kyoto.travel/en)

### 12 VISIT KYOTO RAILWAY MUSEUM

At this railway museum at Umekoji Park, visitors can inspect shinkansen exhibits and test their driving skills on one of the immensely popular bullet train simulators. While you're waiting your turn, check out the museum's display of more than four dozen railway vehicles, including the first edition of the bullet train, dating to 1964, the year of the first Tokyo Olympics, that made the *Guinness Book of World Records* after reaching speeds of 300km/h. [See kyotorailwaymuseum.jp/en/](http://see.kyotorailwaymuseum.jp/en/)

### 13 RIDE HOZU RIVER CRUISE

Hozugawa-kudari is considered the best river boat ride for tourists in Japan and, touristy as it can be, once you've experienced it, it's hard to disagree. Good-humoured and highly skilled boatmen guide their passengers on a 16-kilometre, two-hour journey from Tanba-Kameoka to Arashiyama in Kyoto. The journey encompasses rapids as the boat makes its way through a ravine with Japan's ubiquitous trains roaring along bridges high above you. [See hozugawakudari.jp/en](http://see.hozugawakudari.jp/en)

### 14 WANDER ARASHIYAMA

Kyoto's riverside playground, designated a national historic site and place of scenic beauty, is at the base of mountains to the west of the city. A fun way to get to and from here is to take the Randen tram through the Kyoto suburbs to Arashiyama

(there are public foot-baths on the tram station platform after a hard-day's sightseeing slog). Don't miss the renowned Arashiyama Bamboo Grove, with its towering green stalks, though do try to visit in the early part of the morning to avoid the selfie-stick hordes. [See kyoto.travel/en](http://see.kyoto.travel/en)

### 15 VISIT MURI-AN GARDEN

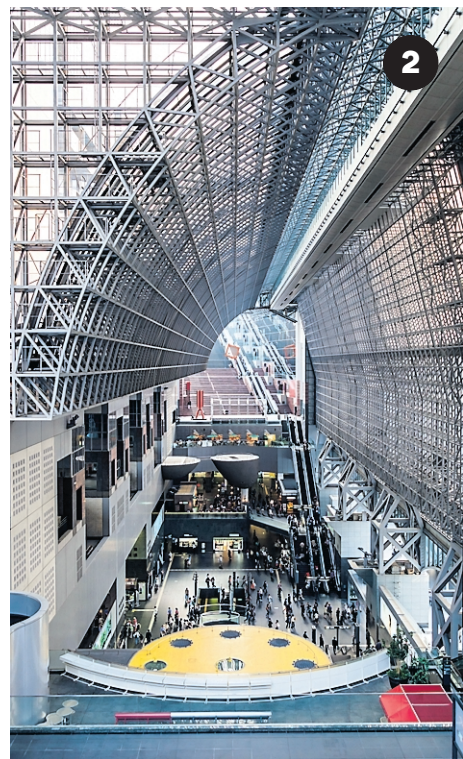
Kyoto has more well-known gardens but few as beautiful, intimate and serene as this Japanese villa and garden complex, tucked away near Kyoto Zoo. Muri-an was built between 1894 to 1896 by Aritomo Yamagata, an adviser to the emperor from the Meiji and Taisho period. In 1941, the Yamagata family donated Murin-an to Kyoto City and in 1951 it was designated as a national place of scenic beauty. Ueyakato Landscape, the nearly 170-year-old company which acts as caretakers of the garden, and others in Kyoto, are able to arrange expert tours of Muri-an. [See murin-an.jp](http://see.murin-an.jp); [ueyakato.jp/en/](http://ueyakato.jp/en/)

### 16 EXPLORE MIYAMA

One of Kyoto's better-kept secrets, Miyama is a rural village 30 kilometres north of the city, famed for its traditional thatched-roof (kayabuki) houses. Despite its relative proximity to the city, the village feels wonderfully bucolic and remote with many of the houses still serving effectively as proper houses or minshuku (bed and breakfasts) with one of the kayabuki acting nowadays as a gallery for the indigo dyeing of textiles. [See miyamanavi.net/english/](http://see.miyamanavi.net/english/)

### 17 STAY KYOTO TRAVELLER'S INN

If you're on a tight budget but don't wish to completely sacrifice comfort, this friendly budget hotel, close to many of Kyoto's main attractions, is a good choice. The small, Western-style rooms have recently been updated with the hotel decorated by a local muralist. There's also a pleasant cafe and terrace, where breakfast is served, just off the lobby. [See k-travelersinn.com/english](http://see.k-travelersinn.com/english)



### 18 SEE KYOTO TOWER

Straight across the road from Kyoto Station, this is the most retro feature on the city's height-restricted skyline where buildings may still not exceed temple spires. Built at the time of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics to mark Japan's post-war emergence as a modern economy, the 132-metre-high Kyoto Tower has recently been refurbished. From its viewing platform there are views of Kyoto and its surrounding mountains and, on a clear day, nearby Osaka, Japan's third biggest city. [See keihanhotels-resorts.co.jp/kyoto-tower/en/](http://see.keihanhotels-resorts.co.jp/kyoto-tower/en/)

### 19 WALK THE PHILOSOPHER'S PATH

One of the most enjoyable, though well trammelled, walks in Kyoto, the Philosopher's Path runs for roughly two kilometres from the 13th-century Nanzenji Temple to Ginkakuji, or Silver Pavilion, in the leafy northeast of the city. It follows the cherry, maple and camellia tree-lined Shishigatani Canal and there are many teahouses and cafes along the route. [See kyoto.travel/en](http://see.kyoto.travel/en)

### 20 STAY YOSHIDA SANSO

Once foreigners were less welcome at ryokans due to language difficulties and etiquette concerns. But as more and more Japanese opt for Western-style accommodation, traditional inns, including those in Kyoto, are turning to overseas guests for clientele. One such inn is the gracious Yoshida Sanso, in a peaceful neighbourhood near Mount Yoshida, the location of a 9th-century shrine. It was originally built to serve as the second residence of Prince Higashi-Fushimi, uncle of the current Japanese emperor, Akihito. [See yoshidasanso.com](http://see.yoshidasanso.com) **T**

Anthony Dennis visited as a guest of Kyoto Tourism ([kyoto.travel/en](http://kyoto.travel/en)), ANA All Nippon Airways ([ana.co.jp](http://ana.co.jp)) and Experience Japan Travel ([experiencejapantravel.com](http://experiencejapantravel.com)).