

ELCA study trip to Japan for the cherry blossom season

April 6th to 14th, 2018

Japan has a long and storied tradition in gardening. While Japanese artistry in garden design is a centuries-old tradition, it is still practiced to this day, and for over a thousand years, the work of Japanese garden designers has evolved and been perfected to reflect the changing religious, cultural and political landscape of Japan. The basic idea of a Japanese garden is to conceal the fact that the garden is a work of artificial art and to give the impression that the garden is a work of nature, paying tribute to the natural aesthetic. One of the best known styles of Japanese garden is the Zen garden. The most notable elements of this style are stones, mosses and water with plants being largely dispensed with. Whether it is for meditation or for simply taking a stroll, there are various reasons for the growth and expansion of parks, water gardens and stone gardens in Japan and across the various examples and styles, one can witness the essential elements of a Japanese garden as being stones, gravel and sand. To form the natural component, there is ample use of waterfalls, brooks, ponds, islands connected by bridges and artificial hills. The placement of pavilions, guest houses and tea houses then complete the concept of a Japanese garden.

Hamarikyu garden

The Hamarikyu Garden is a traditional Japanese garden located in Tokyo bay. This means that, rather interestingly, the gardens ponds are dependent on the ebb and flow of the ocean. There is a nice teahouse on an island on one of the ponds. You can take a walk and explore the extensive garden itself, which was developed as a palace garden during the Edo period. Historically, the southern part of the garden was used for duck hunting. The garden has been open to the public since 1946 and besides the beautiful cherry trees there is a 300 year old pine tree and a peony garden which features about 60 different peony species.

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Kyu Furukawa Garden

Despite their differing styles, a Japanese Garden and a Western-style garden can be harmonious, the Kyu Furukawa Garden is a good example of this. This garden is dominated by terraced garden lawns with beech tree hedges surrounding fields of roses. A striking feature of this garden is a heart shaped pond with a ten meters high waterfall. This so-called 'dry' waterfall is a feature of Japanese garden design where rocks are cleverly used to create the visual effect of running water. This is quite realistic at first sight!

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Rikugien Garden

Rikugien Garden, is considered by many to be the most beautiful garden in Tokyo. As you enter through the main gate you will immediately notice the cherry trees in full bloom. This country park features a large central pond that is surrounded by forest and two artificially created hills. Stone lanterns, tea houses and pedestrian bridges are further features of this garden.

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Shinjuku Gyoen Park

Shinjuku Gyoen Park, has over 400 cherry trees. This landscape park spans 58 hectares and is comprised of three different gardens that manage to blend seamlessly together. In the traditional Japanese garden, interlinking ponds, small islands and bridges dominate the scenery. From here, you will find a large lawn surrounded by cherry trees that is characteristic of an English countryside garden, while further on there is a French-style garden dominated by strictly symmetrical shapes. There is a greenhouse with subtropical and tropical plants that is also well worth a visit.

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Metropolitan Building

Look out over Tokyo from the Metropolitan Building. The impressive towers are each 248 meters high. There is an observation deck on the 45th floor, from which your tour guide will show you the most important sights of Tokyo.

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Kamakura - Zuisenji temple garden

Kamakura, about 50 km away, has its historical past evidenced by a variety of temples and Shinto shrines. Zen teaching was spread by the monk Muso Kokushi, who was also a well-known gardener. Behind the Zuisenji Temple there is a stone garden designed by Muso himself. Here, gnarled, moss-covered trees and stone lanterns covered with perennials create a mystic atmosphere.

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Kotoku-in temple complex

In the temple complex of Kotoku-in, you can see a free-standing Great Buddha (Daibutsu) that is 11.3m high and weighs 121 tonnes. This is a beautiful location to take some memorable photos!

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Hase-dera temple

One of Kamakura's largest temples is Hase-dera. It is home to the largest wooden Kannon statue, which is over 9 m tall. The temple complex is nestled in a beautiful garden with ponds.

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Hachimangu garden & Shinto shrine

Kamakura's most famous shrine is the Hachimangu Shinto Shrine. The road to the Shrine is lined with cherry trees. Also worth exploring is the Peony Garden, which was created for the 800th anniversary of the Shrine in 1980.

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Kosugi Zohen's seminar house

In Atami, the conference house of the company Kosugi Zohen is located. Here, seminars on "How to construct Japanese Gardens" and "How to maintain Japanese Gardens" are conducted frequently and are created for participants from all over the world." Two gold medal winners from the World Skills were trained here.

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MOA Museum

The MOA Museum is surrounded by a 236,400 square-meter landscaped garden with an orchard at an altitude of 250 m above sea level near Atami. From here, you will be able to enjoy a lovely view over Sagami Bay.

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Shinkansen express train

From Atami the Shinkansen express train to Kyoto.

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Kyoto botanical gardens tour

The oldest botanical garden in Japan is located to the north of Kyoto. Founded in 1924, it now covers an area of 240 hectares and houses 12,000 different species of plant. We have booked you a guided tour with a member of the garden's staff, who will show you the bonsai exposition, the camellia garden, the European garden and the Japanese garden featuring native plants.

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Tenryu-ji temple & Garden

The Tenryu-ji temple complex is one of the first of five major Zen temples in Kyoto and, in 1994, was designated as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site. In the 13th century, the gardener Muso Soseki built an extensive garden here with a large pond area surrounded by rocks and pine trees. The garden is still in its original condition and has hardly been changed. Walking through the temple complex and garden is like taking a walk through history.

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Ryoanji Temple's rock garden

The Ryoanji Temple's rock garden, is considered to be the best-known rock garden in Japan. In this rectangular-shaped garden there are a total of 15 smaller and larger rocks that are grouped and surrounded by moss. There are different viewpoints from which to admire the garden; however, from any one view, one of the rocks is always hidden meaning you never see all 15 rocks at the same time. Afterwards you will see the gorgeous **Golden Pavilion (Kinkakuji)**, which has two upper planes decorated in gold leaf. The **Kinkakuji temple** is located in a landscaped garden that features a large pond. During your walk, you will experience many different and beautiful views of the temple.

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Daitokuji temple complex & Zen gardens

The Daitokuji temple complex is a miniature world located in the north of Kyoto. The complex consists of almost two dozen Zen temples with well-kept Zen gardens. One of the most important elements of these 'dry' landscape gardens is the gravel, which, when raked in a certain way, is supposed to look like a rough sea. The many different gardens and styles on display can certainly provide inspiration for your own homes.

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Ginkakuji Temple (Silver Pavilion).

The Golden Temple was formerly the residence of Ashikaga Yoshimasa's grandfather and was the model for the creation of the Ginkakuji Temple (Silver Pavilion). Over a total 25.000 square meters there are two terraced gardens which you can explore during a walk. There is an especially interesting dry sand garden.

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Heian Shrine & Maruyama Park

In the garden of the Heian Shrine, which was built in 1895, there are late-flowering varieties which are now likely to be lush. In Kyoto's oldest park, the Maruyama Park, you will see the impressive sight of about 800 cherry trees in bloom. This is considered to be one of Japan's most attractive locations to enjoy the cherry blossom season.

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Kyoto Tofuku-ji Temple

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Kyoto Kinkakjui Temple

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Kyoto Tea Ceremony

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Kyoto

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Tokyo

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Kamakura

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Acceuil Kosugi Tokyo

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