

Miyako Meisho Zue

The *Miyako meisho zue* (Illustrations of Famous Places in the Capital) is a series of books published in 1780 as a travel guide to Kyoto and its surroundings. The series proved very popular and inspired a plethora of similar efforts, including illustrated guides to the Tokaido, the highway between Kyoto and Edo (present-day Tokyo) and to Ise Shrine in present-day Mie Prefecture. The “famous places” in the *Miyako meisho zue* are described using both text and detailed drawings, often from a bird’s-eye viewpoint. This is notable because in most cases, including that of Ninnaji, there was no physical location from which the place to be represented could be overlooked. The artists thus had to rely heavily on their imaginations, and would often draw clouds where they were unsure about proportions or other finer points. This technique is used in the illustration for Ninnaji, which portrays the temple grounds during the cherry blossom season. Groups of people are depicted picnicking underneath the trees—a scene still found in parks around modern-day Japan every spring. And in true guidebook fashion, the drawing appears to somewhat overstate the scope and splendor of the sakura trees at Ninnaji, which were likely confined to a slightly smaller area at the time.