

Arashiyama Monkey Park Iwatayama

Arashiyama Monkey Park Iwatayama is home to a troop of 120 wild Japanese macaques that gather freely throughout the park, where they can be fed and closely observed from the park's visitor center. The center is located at an elevation of 160 meters, on a mountainside dotted with cherry and Japanese maple trees that has a commanding view of the city of Kyoto. Kyoto University's primatologists began studying the monkeys in 1954, and they helped to open the facility in 1957. It was at this time that the park staff began to assign names to every monkey in the troop. Researchers from the university still regularly visit to study the macaques.

The park has no outer boundaries, so while the troop may congregate during feeding hours, the monkeys are free to spend the daylight hours lounging around the park, and they generally travel up the mountain to sleep in the forest at night. Thanks to the consistent feeding routine and the scarcity of natural predators, such as wolves and wild dogs, monkeys in the park have a life span of about 30 years—equivalent to about 100 years for a human. Other wild animals, such as deer, badgers, and masked palm civets, also inhabit the park.

Visitors are encouraged to interact with the monkeys but to maintain a safe distance. It is against the rules to feed the monkeys directly, but visitors can purchase snacks, such as peanuts and apples, inside the visitors' center and feed them to the monkeys through a wire fence.