

Shokado Garden and Art Museum

The Shokado Garden covers over 22,000 square meters, featuring picturesque landscapes, traditional tea houses, other historic structures related to the culture of tea (*chanoyu*), and an art museum. The large garden has more than 40 species of bamboo, about 300 camellia bushes, cherry and maple trees, hydrangeas, and a wide variety of other plants ensuring that there is something to enjoy in any season. Walking the winding paths, visitors can admire several examples of tea house architecture, feed colorful *koi* carp in the garden pond, or just enjoy the quiet atmosphere.

The garden is named after Shokado Shojo (1584–1639), a Buddhist monk, tea master, and artist, who was recognized as one of the top three calligraphers of his time. Shojo lived on Mt. Otokoyama within the Iwashimizu Hachimangu shrine-temple complex, which practiced a syncretic fusion of Shinto and Buddhism and served as the religious and cultural center of the Yawata area. Shojo's thatched-roof hermitage and the guest hall of his retirement temple are now preserved in the inner section of the Shokado Garden, allowing visitors to imagine how Shojo lived in his later years. The lush inner garden incorporates an ancient burial mound (*kofun*) and is a designated National Place of Scenic Beauty.

Yawata City created the Shokado Garden in 1977 to preserve and promote Yawata's cultural heritage. Along with the hermitage and temple guest hall, three re-creations of historic tea houses representing different stages in the evolution of tea house architecture were added to the outer garden. Each of them is named after one of the three auspicious plants often featured together in Japanese art and poetry: pine, bamboo, and plum. The tea houses are regularly used for tea gatherings and other cultural events.

The Shokado Art Museum is located to the right of the main garden entrance. It houses a permanent exhibition focused on the life and art of Shokado Shojo and holds special exhibitions throughout the year, displaying artifacts connected with Mt. Otokoyama and the history and culture of Yawata. Next to the museum is Kyoto Kitcho Shokado, a renowned restaurant specializing in fine Japanese cuisine, which serves "Shokado Bento" meals inspired by Shokado Shojo.