

## **Kankitei Rest House and Horseback Riding Grounds**

Okayama Korakuen was not only a garden for the daimyo lords to enjoy the scenery; it was also a place for practice and training in the martial arts. The Kankitei Rest House faces the middle of an approximately 180-meter-long stretch known as the baba (riding track) on the north side of the garden. We can imagine the lords, including Ikeda Tsugumasa (1702–1776) and his grandson Ikeda Harumasa (1750–1818), practicing horsemanship and archery here.

Several buildings were constructed for spectators of martial arts including horseback riding and archery; at the Kankitei Rest House the lords would watch equestrian activities performed by their retainers, who would be allowed to see the garden as a reward for their skillful horsemanship. It was a place where retainers could establish a relationship with their lord.

The rest house is one of the few buildings in the garden that was largely undamaged in the World War II air raid. In the spring, the riding track is lined with magnificent cherry blossoms.

This house and others in the garden are open to the public in monthly rotation and can be rented with advance reservations.