

The Best Viewpoints: Kikugetsutei Teahouse and Hiraiho Hill

The Kikugetsutei Teahouse and the artificial Hiraiho Hill are two of the most scenic viewpoints in Ritsurin Garden. The former is a thatched-roof structure that dates from the early 1600s and was used by the daimyo lords of the Takamatsu domain, who built the garden during the Edo period (1603–1867). This teahouse stands near the South Pond and is distinguished by its four facades, built so that it could be entered from all directions. From the tatami-mat floor of the Kikugetsu no Ma, the room closest to the pond, the view of the water from a certain angle creates an impression of floating on the surface. In addition to offering carefully devised views in every direction, Kikugetsutei's low ceiling and few walls make the teahouse a pleasantly cool place in summer. Its ground-level perspective contrasts with that of Hiraiho Hill, the highest point in the garden, on the east side of the South Pond. Shaped to resemble Mt. Fuji, it offers views over the pond, the arched Engetsukyo ("crescent moon") Bridge, Kikugetsutei, and beyond, where Mt. Shiun looms up in the background. This vista is occasionally complemented by an old-style pleasure boat gliding across the pond.