

Architecture in Toyota

Toyota may be most famous for its automobile manufacturing, but the city is also noted for its many buildings and attractions designed by prominent architects. The Toyota Municipal Museum of Art opened in 1995 and was designed by Taniguchi Yoshio (b. 1937), who went on to lead the redesign of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Taniguchi says that he created the Toyota Municipal Museum of Art building to take visitors on “a journey into the magic of art.”

The modernist building is a work of art in its own right. It stands on a hill with sweeping views of the city and is connected by an outdoor terrace with a reflecting pool and a sculpture garden designed by American landscape architect Peter Walker (b. 1932). The surrounding trees hide the museum from view so that it only gradually reveals itself to approaching visitors. The interior has been designed to present visitors with a series of shifting light environments; the ground floor is dark while the upper floors are brighter and more spacious.

The Dojien Teahouse at the museum was designed by Taniguchi to highlight the similarities between traditional Japanese and modern architecture, such as minimalism, clean lines, and a flexible use of space. The Takahashi Setsuro Gallery, also designed by Taniguchi, is housed in a separate wing of the museum dedicated to the works of pioneering lacquer artist Takahashi Setsuro (1914–2007).

The provisionally named Toyota City Museum is scheduled to open nearby in 2024. The new museum is designed by Ban Shigeru (b. 1957)—the architect behind the Centre Pompidou-Metz in France and the Oita Prefectural Art Museum—and will be dedicated to the city’s history, culture, and natural environment. It will have its own landscape garden designed by Peter Walker and an outdoor plaza.

Kurokawa Kisho (1934–2007), founder of the Metabolist movement in Japanese architecture and the designer of Tokyo’s Nakagin Capsule Tower, Kuala Lumpur International Airport, and other landmark buildings, designed the Toyota Ohashi Bridge (opened in 1999) to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Toyota City and also Toyota Stadium (opened in 2001). The bridge leads from central Toyota to the stadium, and its arches complement the curve of the stadium’s roof. Toyota’s other bridges over the Yahagi River include the arched Heisei Memorial Bridge, the Kyucho Bridge, and the striking

Yahagigawa Bridge (also known as Toyota Arrows Bridge).

Toyota Kuragaike Commemorative Hall, a museum dedicated to the history of the Toyota Motor Corporation, was built in 1974 from a modernist design by Maki Fumihiko (b. 1928), best known for designing the Spiral building in Tokyo and the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco. Located in Kuragaike Park, the museum celebrates the company's achievements and serves as a guesthouse for visiting VIPs. Next door is the former residence of Toyota founder Toyoda Kiichiro (1894–1952), a three-story 1930s house designed with a mixture of Japanese and Western elements by Suzuki Teiji (1870–1941), who is often called the father of modern architecture in Nagoya.

Five tiny mobile houses in Kuragaike Park are available for luxury accommodation. Designed by Kuma Kengo (b. 1954), the architect behind Tokyo's National Stadium and French cultural center FRAC Marseilles, these "Jyubako" (literally, "living boxes"), as Kuma calls them, are part of the "tiny house" movement worldwide. Kuma created the "Jyubako" design in collaboration with outdoor brand Snow Peak as a way to maximize the space and comfort of a mobile home, while offering the opportunity to engage with nature.

The Toyota City Aizuma Exchange Center, a community hub, was designed by Sejima Kazuyo (b. 1956), whose firm SANAA also conceived the New Museum in New York City and the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa. Sejima is the second woman to win the Pritzker Prize (shared with her partner at SANAA, Nishizawa Ryue). Her design for the curved building is characterized by transparency, with floor-to-ceiling glass windows and walls in its meeting rooms, meaning people both outside and inside can observe what is happening.