

Iwasumon and Gansuimon Gates

Iwasumon Gate

The elegant main gate of Urakuen dates to the early seventeenth century. Like the other gates at Urakuen, it was previously owned by the Mitsui family and stood in the garden of their Ōiso villa. It was relocated to Urakuen along with Jo-an.

The gate's roof has a bell-like curve that is most visible from the side. Gates with this type of curved roof are called *karamon*, and this gate is a *hira karamon*, meaning that the roof's central ridgeline runs perpendicular to the direction of entry.

The gate is roofed with cypress bark and has a "boat-bottom ceiling" (*funazoko tenjō*), so called because the wooden planks form a concave curve that resembles an inverted boat.

Gansuimon Gate

Little is known about the age and origin of the Gansuimon Gate, but it was also owned by the Mitsui family. In choosing where to place the gate at Urakuen, Horiguchi Sutemi made use of its clean, geometric lines—like the borders of a hanging picture scroll—to create a framed view of the inner garden. As seen through the gate, a long, straight path of neatly fitted cobblestones leads through a tunnel of trees and lush moss to the western side of the Shoin, which peeks out from the foliage at the far end of the path.