

Introduction to the Niigata Saitou Villa

The Niigata Saitou Villa was constructed in four years from 1917 to 1920 by Kijuro Saito IV, a wealthy merchant from Niigata that prospered as a port city. He made his fortune operating the kitamaebune cargo ships that sailed the Japan Sea.

Utilizing the natural sand dunes in the design of the garden, the 4,500 m² of land includes the two-story, wooden frame main house, a storehouse, and a teahouse.

Large, overhanging, old pine trees form the backdrop for the maple trees that have been planted along the slope of the hill. Between the trees a large waterfall and a rocky stream can be seen flowing into the garden pond below. Stones native to the area are used to decorate the landscape, draw in your gaze, and, along with the fresh moss, create a most tranquil atmosphere.

The greens of young leaves, the reds and yellows of fall, the white of snow- you can enjoy this garden through all four seasons.

Used as a place to welcome honored guests in Niigata, public figures -including business/political leaders and celebrities- have been often invited here. In recent years, since becoming a public establishment through a preservation campaign by citizens, it has become a valued cultural resource used and loved by many.

About Kijuro Saito's Residence

Kijuro Saito resided in the 7th block of Higashibori Street and his family was known as one of Niigata's top three zaibatsu- business conglomerate- families. The family originally came from Mikuni-minato in Echizen Province (now Fukui Prefecture), and their business name was "Mikuni-ya."

During the end of the Edo Period (early 1860s) the Saito family developed their Japanese sake wholesale business and got involved in the kitamaebune shipping business after the start of the Meiji Period (1868~1912). With the profits earned by the shipping business, they accumulated lands and invested in stocks and bonds which contributed to the modernization of the region's economy.

The family also formed ties through marriage with other powerful landowners and merchants, such as the Ito family from Somi (eastern Niigata City), and arranged their relatives as owners of affiliated companies.

The Saito family was also called “Yamasan” from their trademark, and for generations they upheld a tradition of the head of the family inheriting the name “Kijuro.”

The house and the garden as parts of a whole

The building was constructed with the concept of “unity between garden and home” in mind. This means that the boundaries between “inside” and “outside” are blurred, there is harmony, and they feel as one.

The sliding glass doors facing the garden can be opened wide and create the feeling of unity. Additionally, the building was constructed facing north so that it is naturally cool as the interior gets minimal direct sunlight. The hallways are half covered in tatami mats. Because of this, when you sit down and look over the garden from inside, you feel as if the rooms, hallways and garden are all level with one another. The unique styling of the handrails is just one of the beautiful details that can be found here.

About the Garden

When walking through the garden, stay on the stepping stone paths- which are yet another part of the garden’s landscape. Near the entrance, there are flagstones placed to create an air of formality while in garden, along with the pond and waterfall, the fieldstones give off a softer impression. The stepping stones were placed so that the path splits and gently curves to either side to give visitors various angles from which to enjoy the garden.

There are around 1000 trees and shrubs of 80 different varieties in addition to the pine and maple trees in the garden. Starting with the bamboo and ume (Japanese plum) trees, there are also mokkoku, azalea, and common camellia, among others, each with their own individual leaves and flowers that are appreciated in Japanese culture.

The grounds are covered in moss and grass that make for a lush and calming atmosphere- the greens feel particularly vibrant after it rains. The moss is extremely delicate so please be careful to not step on it.

Admission

Individuals: Adults- 300 yen; Elementary/junior high school students- 100 yen

Group of 20+: Adults- 240 yen; Elementary/junior high school students- 80 yen
Preschool children- Free

Hours of Operation

April 1st to September 30th

Tues.-Sun.: 9:30 a.m.~6:00 p.m.

October 1st to March 31st

Tues.-Sun.: 9:30 a.m.~5:00 p.m.

Days Closed

*Mondays (When a holiday is on Monday, we will be open but closed on Tuesday instead.)

*Days after a holiday (When a holiday is either Saturday or Sunday, it is closed both Monday and Tuesday.)

*New Year Holidays from Dec. 28th to Jan. 3rd.

Bus

From the Niigata Station Bandai Exit Bus Terminal,

-Get on the “Niigata City Loop Bus” (or “Niigatashi Kanko Junkan” bus) that picks up in stall #2, get off at “Hoppo Bunka Hakubutsukan Niigata Bunkan-mae (Iriguchi)” and walk 2 minutes.

-Get on the C20, C21, or C22 “Hamaura-cho” line bus that picks up in stall #7, get off at “Nishi Ohata” and walk 6 minutes.

By Taxi

Tell your taxi driver that you want to go to “Kyu Saitouke Bettei.” If the driver doesn’t know where it is, tell the driver to go to “Ikinariya (an authentic Japanese restaurant)” in Nishi Ohata-cho.

Parking

There is no parking at the Saitou Villa.

Please use a paid parking lot nearby as well as free parking at the Niigata City Art Museum’s 2nd parking lot (5 minutes away by foot).