

Introduction to the Niigata Saitou Villa

The Niigata Saitou Villa was constructed over a four - year period from 1917 to 1920 by Kijuro Saitou IV, a wealthy merchant from the port town of Niigata. He made his fortune operating cargo ships (Kitamaebune) that sailed the Japan Sea.

Located on the 4,500 m² of the estate, approximately 4,400 m² of which are gardens. There are an entrance garden, a courtyard and a main garden connected by stepping stone - style paths.

The main garden, in particular, makes skillful use of the area's natural sand hill terrain to create a pleasant pathway to a teahouse named "Shokoan" and the teahouse garden.

The Niigata Saitou Villa is characterized by its unique design that integrates both the garden and building into a single unit. The villa is an open structure with a large garden that utilizes a gentle stream and pond. Visitors are drawn in by the beautiful sights during each and every season.

Large, overhanging , old pine trees form the backdrop for the numerous maple trees (Acer japonicum) that have been planted along the slope of the hill, between which a large waterfall and a rocky stream can be seen flowing into the garden pond below.

Numerous stones native to the area are used to decorate the landscape and lure the eye, creating a tranquil atmosphere along with the vibrant moss.

This location was used as a place to receive honored guests on behalf of Niigata including many famous politicians to businessmen. Today, the site has been converted to public ownership through preservation efforts by local city residents, and it is a beloved local cultural heritage enjoyed by many.

The house and the garden as parts of a whole

This site was constructed with the concept of "Unity of a house and a garden" in mind. This means no boundaries exist and create harmony between the inside and outside. When you are inside, you feel like you are also in the garden.

Soon after you open the sliding glass doors facing the garden widely, you will feel one with the garden. Additionally, the house faces north to prevent of direct sunlight from the garden, so the room stays cool. The stepped down corridor is half covered in tatami mats. Because of this, when you sit inside and look over the garden, you feel as if the room, corridor and garden are all level with one another.

The shape of bracken ferns are designed into the woodwork of the handrails.

About the Garden

When you walk in the garden, you step on a stone path. The stones are also another part of the sceneries of the garden. 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 are 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 1,000 trees and shrubs of 80 different varieties in addition to the pine and maple trees in the garden. The leaves and flowers of the bamboo and ume (Japanese plum) trees, also mokokku, azalea and common camellia, are generally preferred in the Japanese culture.

The grounds are covered in moss and grass that make for a lush and calming atmosphere. The gardens 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 “Kyuu 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).