

## Address

5-37 Sanjo Oji 1-Chome, Nara

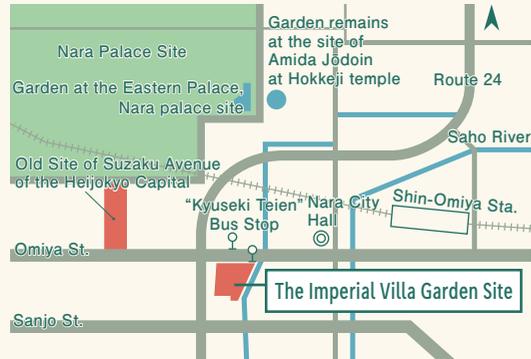
## Hours

9:00-17:00 (last entry by 16:30)

Closed Wednesdays (opens if Wednesday is a national holiday and closed on the following weekday), the day after a national holiday, end & beginning of the year (Dec. 26-Jan. 5)

## Access

Approx. 1 km to the west from Kintetsu Shin-Omiya Station. Or take a Nara Kotsu Bus from Kintetsu Nara Station or Shin-Omiya Station, and get off at the "Kyuseki Teien" stop. Approx. 1 km to the east from the Suzaku-mon Gate of the Heijō Palace or the historical site of Suzaku Oji Street.



## How to use the Imperial Villa Garden Site

The Imperial Villa Garden Site is open as a photo and video shooting spot and an event venue. For details, contact the Cultural Property Division, Nara Municipal Board of Education.

**Cultural Property Division,  
Nara Municipal Board of Education**  
1-1 Nijo Oji Minami 1-Chome, Nara 630-8580  
TEL: 0742-34-5369



QR Translator



Panoramic view of the garden (upwards signifies north)



Layout of the Imperial Villa Garden



Special Historic Site &  
Special Place of Scenic Beauty  
**The Imperial Villa  
Garden Site of  
the Ancient Nara Capital**

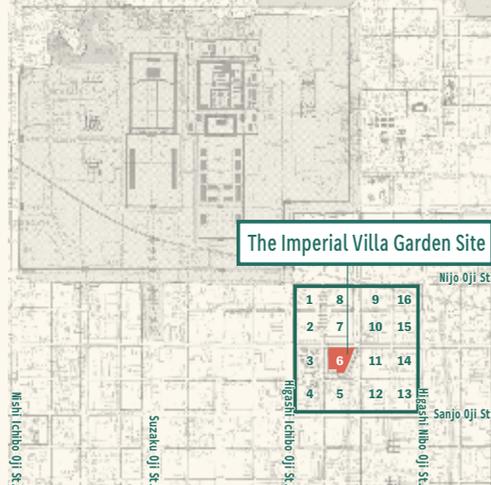
Special Historic Site & Special Place of Scenic Beauty

# The Imperial Villa Garden Site of the Ancient Nara Capital





Birds-eye view of the Imperial Villa Garden Site



The Jobo city structure of the Heijokyo Capital and the Imperial Villa Garden

## The Imperial Villa Garden Site of the Ancient Nara Capital

The Imperial Villa Garden Site of the Ancient Nara Capital displays the relics of a garden discovered during the excavation research in 1975. This garden with a pond dates from the Nara period (710-794). Since the garden is thought to have functioned as a villa of the Heijo Palace or a residence for imperial members, it was given the name Imperial Villa Garden Site of the Ancient Nara Capital.

The garden displays extremely rare and valuable historical relics as it retains its original structure from the Nara period from which we can discover the original design and the techniques used. Due to its cultural value, the garden was designated as a National Special Historic Site in 1978. Later, in 1992, the garden was also designated as a Special Place of Scenic Beauty. Researchers concluded that the garden was created in the mid-Nara period (around 750) and remained until the early Heian period (794-1185). The present garden site was restored in the style of the Mid-Nara period. The pond area is exhibited in its actual original form resulting from the excavation.

## Structure of the Heijokyo Capital and the Garden

The city of the Heijokyo Capital followed a grid pattern in which large roads and streets crossed at right angles at many locations. Each block separated by the roads and streets was called “Jo,” “Bo,” or “Tsubo.” The garden was well-designed within a one “Tsubo” section and skillfully utilized the entire site for all its buildings and walls.

In the center of the garden was an S-shaped curving pond with cobblestones placed at the bottom. Buildings and walls were constructed on the west side of the pond. Looking out at the pond from the building, the eastern mountains, such as Mt. Kasuga and Mt. Mikasa, appeared as the perfect distant backdrop.

Considering the location as well as the fact that many wood strips and roof tiles were excavated, proving that the garden had strong connection with the palace, this garden was apparently used for official government banquets. For example, aristocrats enjoyed elegant poetry reading parties and held banquets for invited overseas guests.



### Stone arrangement

Five rocks are allocated along the shoreline of the pond and four rocks along the outer line of the pebble shore. There are three more rocks placed in the pond which are used to signify islands.



### Plants

Analytics of the deposited soil have revealed that irises were grown in the wooden water basin as well as that plum trees were placed around the pond.



### A Reconstructed building

This is the main building from which people enjoyed observing the pond view. The building was carefully restored by examining existing Nara period architecture and other references.



### Exposing Exhibited Rocks

The rocks placed in the pond were an important design accent. The exposed rocks exhibited here are the actual originals from the Nara period unearthed during the excavation.

## About the Relics of the Garden

At the center of the garden is a pond with rocks. The bottom of the pond was paved with clay and flat stones of 20-30 cm in diameter were layered on it. Cobblestones were placed neatly along the waterline to mark the pond's outline. Another outer line was drawn with stones thereby producing a moderate inclination. The pond was shallow, only 20-30 cm in depth, and was fed by a slow-moving stream. There are different theories as to what the S-shape of the pond represents. Some say it symbolizes a dragon while others say it follows the shape of the Yoshino River flowing around the Miyataki area in Yoshino Town, Nara.

Large rocks are distributed where the pond curves sharply. Three large rocks are also situated in the pond as design accents to signify islands. There are two large wooden water basins set on the bottom where water plants grew.

It seemed the pond was fed with water from the adjacent Komo-gawa River which ran in the area from north to south, or from a well located to the northwest of the pond. The water first collected in a smaller pond to the north surrounded by rocks before slowly flowing into

the main pond.

The remains of the buildings and walls discovered around the pond were backfilled for preservation purposes and restored buildings or flat displays depict its original appearance.



Imaginary picture of the restored garden

## Preservation and Restoration Project

The restoration project began in 2007 and took 14 years to complete. About 30 years had passed since the beginning of the restoration and the entire garden structure, such as restored buildings, walls and walking paths, had begun to deteriorate. The rocks in the pond were particularly damaged. This is the sole example in Japan where the entire structure of excavated ancient garden is exposed and exhibited as well as being the very first full-scale restoration project of its kind.



Examining the cause of damage before planning the restoration process



Taking the rocks out carefully with an old tool called Sanmata



The rocks are reinforced with a chemical substance, then damages and cracks are repaired.



Models of the rocks are used to consider how to return them to their original location.



Returning the rocks to their correct location following the precise survey data.