

Japan's Autumn Majesty: Gardens, Colors, & Cultural Treasures

with AHS Hosts Holly and Osamu Shimizu

November 2–13, 2025





Dear Friends,

I am delighted to invite you to join the American Horticultural Society in November 2025 for an unforgettable journey through the exquisite gardens and vibrant autumn landscapes of Japan. Our 10-night program, carefully curated in close collaboration with AHS Hosts Holly and Osamu Shimizu, is filled with special experiences that reflect the depth and beauty of the Japanese aesthetic.

Our focus will of course be Japan's esteemed gardens, where autumn colors will be on full display with stunning shades of yellow, gold, and red. We will participate in Japan's time-honored tradition of *momoji-gari*, translated as "red leaf hunting," with excursions into the mountains, countryside, temples, shrines, and city gardens to appreciate Japan's spectacular autumn foliage.

Beyond the gardens, we will immerse ourselves in Japan's rich artistic and cultural heritage with specially arranged activities and events including a traditional tea ceremony, a visit to an indigo-dyeing workshop, guided Zen meditation at a sacred temple, a flower-arranging workshop with an *ikebana* master, and a performance by a *maiko* (apprentice geisha). We are also particularly excited to include two agricultural visits—a wasabi farm and a tea plantation—demonstrating traditional methods of cultivation.

We begin in dynamic Tokyo, where our timing allows us to visit the annual Chrysanthemum Exhibition, as well as an exceptional bonsai collection. We then venture into the mountainous Nagano Prefecture and spend a night in a traditional Japanese inn where we can take a dip in its indoor or outdoor onsen hot spring baths. We continue through a picturesque village of traditional farmhouses in the Japanese countryside, arriving in the charming city of Kanazawa, home to some of the country's best-preserved Edo-era samurai and tea house districts. The itinerary culminates in Japan's ancient capitals of Kyoto and Nara, both home to an extraordinary array of stunning temples, shrines, gardens, and cultural landmarks.

Throughout the trip, we will enjoy luxury accommodations at high-end hotels recognized for their service, beauty, and comfort, as well as delectable regional cuisine showcasing the rich variety of Japan's culinary traditions.

I hope you will join us for this extraordinary autumn journey to Japan. Space is limited and our travel programs often sell out, so we recommend making your reservation early.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Laporte
President & CEO

AHS Hosts Holly and Osamu Shimizu

Holly and Osamu Shimizu are a renowned horticultural couple whose shared passion for gardening has inspired and beautified landscapes worldwide.

Holly, a member of the American Horticultural Society Board of Directors and retired Executive Director of the United States Botanic Garden, is a globally acclaimed horticulturist. Recognized for her ten-year tenure as a host on the popular Victory Garden television show on PBS, she has worked in gardens throughout the world and has garnered numerous accolades, including The Scott Medal & Award from The Scott Arboretum of Swarthmore College, the Thomas Roland Medal for outstanding contributions to horticultural education from the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, and the Professional Award for an Outstanding Public Garden Director from the American Horticultural Society. Holly's dedication to nurturing an appreciation for plants is reflected in her writings for numerous publications and her role as an international flower show judge.

Osamu grew up in Japan where he studied and worked in both historic and contemporary Japanese gardens. He worked in Europe for over ten years helping with garden designs, mapping, and garden improvements. In 1982 he started his own garden design/build company, Shimizu Landscape Design. His portfolio showcases an array of gardens, with a significant emphasis on Japanese aesthetics and a fusion of eastern and western influences.



When you travel with the AHS, you make a difference.

Designed for garden enthusiasts who love to explore horticultural wonders around the world, AHS Travel offers exceptional programs that include many exclusive experiences and unique insights. Your participation in an AHS Travel program supports the AHS's nonprofit work to increase knowledge among gardeners, inspire passion for plants and the natural world, and encourage responsible stewardship of the earth.

Itinerary

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 2

Departures

Depart the United States on independent flights for Tokyo.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 3

Arrival in Tokyo

Arrive at Tokyo's Haneda International Airport (HND) and meet your tour director and local Japanese guide who will accompany you for the duration of the tour. Transfer by private motorcoach to the **Hotel New Otani Tokyo**, renowned throughout Tokyo for its magnificent 10-acre garden. The remainder of the evening is at leisure to relax and enjoy the hotel's amenities after a long flight.

Hotel New Otani Tokyo

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 4

Tokyo

Following breakfast at the hotel, meet your fellow travelers and AHS Hosts Holly and Osamu Shimizu for introductions and an overview talk on Japanese horticulture.

Our exploration of Tokyo begins at the annual **Chrysanthemum Exhibition** held at Shinjuku Gyoen, one of Tokyo's most attractive public parks. Known as *kiku* in Japanese, the chrysanthemum is a symbol of autumn and holds significant cultural importance in Japan, often associated with the Japanese royal family and the country's National Seal. Stroll through the variety of colorful displays of chrysanthemum flower beds.

Following a lunch of Japanese specialties, tour the exquisite **Nezu Museum**, which synthesizes traditional art, modern architecture, and a Japanese landscape garden into one harmonious complex.

Then pass through the massive wooden *torii* gate of **Meiji-jingu Shrine** and learn about the elegant customs and rituals of Japan's Shinto religion.

Return to the hotel for time to refresh. This evening, we gather for a festive welcome dinner at a top Tokyo restaurant.

Hotel New Otani Tokyo (Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 5

Tokyo

Spend the morning at the **Shunkaen Bonsai Museum**, founded by world-renowned bonsai master Kunio Kobayashi. The museum is nestled in a residential neighborhood and exhibits Mr. Kobayashi's personal collection of hundreds of bonsai. Learn about the history and technique of bonsai and the key aspects of appreciating this ancient art form.



Chrysanthemum Festival, Tokyo
(by Marufish)



Shunkaen Bonsai Museum
(by Ron Frazier)

Enjoy a delectable lunch at a local restaurant. Then explore the **East Gardens at the Imperial Palace**. Covering over 52 acres, these meticulously landscaped gardens are part of the larger Imperial Palace complex and provide a peaceful retreat from the bustling city as well as a glimpse into the country's imperial past. The foliage in the gardens in the autumn features vibrant shades of red, orange, and yellow—the Japanese maple trees, in particular, are known for their stunning autumn colors.

This afternoon, delve into Japan's rich culture and artistic accomplishments with a guided tour of the exceptional **Tokyo National Museum** and the adjacent Horyuji Treasure House, repositories for Japan's most important art treasures.

Return to the hotel. Dinner is independent.

Hotel New Otani Tokyo (Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch)

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 6

Nagano

Depart the hotel by coach and travel north into Nagano Prefecture, home to some of Japan's most picturesque scenery. Visit **Daio Wasabi Farm**, known for producing very high-quality wasabi utilizing the natural flow of spring water from the Japanese Alps. Learn about the traditional method of cultivation and see the meticulously maintained network of small streams that constantly provides each wasabi plant with clear, flowing water. The market features a wide variety of wasabi-related products, including fresh wasabi, wasabi paste, wasabi flavored crackers, wasabi juice, wasabi beer, and wasabi ice cream.

For lunch, the owners of a local soba noodle restaurant will teach us how to make Japan's famous buckwheat **soba noodles**. Dine on the hand-made noodles, accompanied by a selection of fresh local specialties.

Upon arrival in Matsumoto, tour **Matsumoto Castle**, one of the most complete and beautiful among Japan's few remaining original castles that have survived centuries of fires, earthquakes, and war.

This evening, check into the **Utsukushigahara Onsen Shoho**, a traditional-style Japanese inn with a variety of indoor and open-air *onsen* hot spring baths. All rooms overlook the center of Matsumoto city and Matsumoto Castle and on clear days offer stunning views of the Northern Alps. Be immersed in a truly quintessential Japanese experience and spend the night in a traditional Japanese-style room characterized by *tatami* mats, *yukata* robes, and impeccable service. Western-style beds are available upon request. An elaborate traditional Japanese *kaiseki* dinner is served at the inn.

Utsukushigahara Onsen Shoho (Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 7

From Nagano to Kanazawa

After breakfast at the hotel, depart the hotel by motorcoach for Kanazawa, the capital of Ishikawa Prefecture in central Japan. En route, stop for lunch in the charming historic town of Takayama.



Thousand-Armed Bodhisattva Kannon, 14th Century, at Tokyo National Museum, Collection Reference C-306



Matsumoto Castle (by Peter Wieser)

Continue to **Shirakawa-go Gassho-Zukuri Village**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Explore the picturesque landscape and the well-preserved “gassho” farmhouses, named for their steeped thatched roofs that resemble hands in prayer, some of which are more than 250 years old.

Arrive in Kanazawa and check in to the **Hotel Nikko Kanazawa**, one of the city’s top luxury hotels. Enjoy dinner at a local restaurant.

Hotel Nikko Kanazawa (Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8

Kanazawa

Begin the day in Kanazawa’s well-preserved **Nagamachi District**, where middle to high-ranking samurais lived during the Edo period (1603-1867). Visit the **Nomura Samurai House & Garden**, which belonged to a wealthy samurai family, and see heirloom antiques and artifacts, including a samurai suit of armor and beautifully painted *fusuma* screen doors. Also enjoy the exquisite gardens surrounding the house.

Continue to the renowned **Kenroku-en Garden**, known as one of Japan’s three most beautiful landscape gardens. Kenroku-en embodies the traditional elements of Japanese garden design, incorporating ponds, streams, waterfalls, bridges, teahouses, trees, stones, and flowers.

Following lunch at a local restaurant, tour the **Higashi Chaya District**, another beautifully preserved historical area of Kanazawa, a popular entertainment district where geisha entertained wealthy nobility and rich merchants. See the traditional buildings and tea houses erected during the Edo period that still stand today. Many of these buildings function as cafes, restaurants, sweet shops, and craft shops, although some are still *geiko* teahouses. Enjoy free time for shopping before returning to the hotel.

The evening and dinner are independent.

Hotel Nikko Kanazawa (Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch)

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9

Kyoto

Check out of the hotel and depart by motorcoach for Kyoto, Japan’s most historically significant city with countless temples, gardens, and cultural sites of immeasurable value to Japan’s national identity.

Upon arrival in Kyoto, have lunch at a local restaurant. Then visit **Daitokuji Temple**, a serene complex of nearly two dozen sub-temples and Zen gardens, exemplifying Zen architecture and culture. The temple is associated with tea master Sen no Rikyū, who developed what we now consider to be the Japanese tea ceremony. A private traditional **tea ceremony** will be performed for our group.

Check into the **Roku Kyoto**, a tranquil luxury retreat nestled in the foothills on the outskirts of Kyoto. Enjoy dinner this evening at the hotel.

Roku Kyoto (Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)



Higashi Chaya District, Kanazawa
(by ginomempin)



Kenrokuen in Autumn, Kanazawa
(by Jason)

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 10

Kyoto

Enter the sacred temple complex of **Tenryujii**, centered around an exquisite traditional landscaped garden designed to reflect the changing seasons. The scenery of two nearby hills form part of the garden's composition, a technique known as *shakkei*. Be immersed in the temple's serenity: a monk leads a guided Zen meditation, and a vegetarian Buddhist lunch will be served.

Then visit **Okochi-Sanso Villa**, the former estate of a famous early 20th-century Japanese actor. The building is considered one of the finest examples of traditional Japanese residential architecture, and the expansive garden is among the best in Kyoto.

Later this afternoon, visit an **indigo-dyeing workshop** that has been in operation for three generations and learn about the traditional techniques used to create this highly coveted dye. See a variety of products including indigo tapestries, clothing, and handicrafts.

Following some free time, gather for dinner at a local restaurant.

Roku Kyoto (Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 11

Wazuka and Nara

Drive to **Wazuka**, a town in southern Kyoto Prefecture famous for its 800-year history of making high-quality green tea. Visit a **tea plantation**, see the picturesque tea fields, and enjoy a tasting flight of different varieties of green tea.

Following lunch at a local restaurant, continue to **Nara**, the capital of Japan from 710 to 794. Visit the remarkable **Todaiji Temple**, housing the largest seated bronze Buddha in the world, casted in the year 752. The surrounding grounds are home to dozens of free-roaming deer, protected as National Treasures and regarded as messengers of the deities.

Also see **Kasuga Grand Shrine**, one of Japan's most photographed Shinto sites. Situated in a wooded area, the approach to the shrine boasts an astonishing 3,000 stone and bronze lanterns, creating an atmosphere of harmony and tranquility.

Return to Kyoto for an independent evening.

Roku Kyoto (Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch)

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12

Kyoto

Begin the morning at **Tofukuji Temple Hojo Garden**, designated as a National Site of Scenic Beauty and celebrated as one of the most stunning displays of autumn colors in Kyoto. The Hojo consists of four gardens, one at each cardinal direction, including a classic Zen dry landscape garden and gardens of moss and azalea scrubs pruned into a checker pattern.



Indigo Cloths, Kyoto
(by Donna Cleveland)



Tea fields at Wazuka Tea Farm
(by Bret Lama)

Enter **Sanjusangendo**, a 13th-century temple housing a breathtaking display of 1,000 life-size, gold leaf-covered bodhisattva statues and 30 intricately carved guardian deities, each designated a National Treasure.

Following lunch, try your hand at a quintessential Japanese art form, *ikebana*, the art of flower arranging. Participate in a workshop led by an *ikebana* master.

Gather this evening for a celebratory farewell dinner at one of Kyoto's outstanding traditional restaurants, with an authentic performance by a *maiko* (apprentice geisha).

Roku Kyoto (Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch)

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13

Departures from Osaka

Group transfer to Osaka International Airport (ITM) for return flights to the USA.

(Included meals: Breakfast)



Ikebana Instructor



Shirakawa-go Gassho-Zukuri Village
(by Ellen Chan)

HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS



Hotel New Otani Tokyo

With a reputation as one of Tokyo's premier international hotels, the Hotel New Otani is widely acclaimed for its impeccable service and the beautiful 10-acre garden that surrounds the hotel grounds with ancient stone lanterns, koi ponds, a waterfall, and a myriad of flowers and rich foliage. With a wide range of dining options, an onsite spa and salon, and an ideal location in central Tokyo, the Hotel New Otani is the perfect combination of convenience and refined luxury.



Utsukushigahara Onsen Shoho

Set in the hills above Matsumoto city, the Utsukushigahara Onsen Shoho is a traditional-style Japanese inn featuring a variety of hot springs baths, including open-air scenic view baths, indoor baths, and footbaths. Both Japanese-style and Western-style guestrooms are available, and all rooms command stunning views of the magnificent Northern Alps and the townscape of Matsumoto. Dinner at the hotel is a highlight, featuring elaborate *kaiseki*-style dishes using local ingredients, served by attentive *kimono*-clad staff.



Hotel Nikko Kanazawa

Hotel Nikko Kanazawa is a luxury high-rise hotel. With all guest rooms on or above the 17th floor, the Hotel Nikko proudly owns the best panoramic views of the city and the surrounding countryside. The decor is reflective of Kanazawa's rich history of *shokunin* (artisan) mastery and craftsmanship—elements of lacquerware and gold leaf adorn the walls, giving a local flavor to this modern hotel. A variety of cuisine can be enjoyed across the eight restaurants and bars, including at the 30th-floor sky lounge.



Roku Kyoto, LXR Hotels & Resorts

On the northern edge of Kyoto, nestled in the mountain foothills, sits the Roku Kyoto, a naturally secluded luxury retreat. More resort than city hotel, the Roku Kyoto showcases a year-round outdoor thermal pool, wellness spa, delectable dining options, and a contemporary Japanese design and ambiance ideal for unwinding and basking in nature after a full day of touring Kyoto. A series of gardens and outdoor corridors spread throughout the Zenlike resort grounds.



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Trip Information

AHS TRAVEL

This custom AHS Travel program has been created uniquely for AHS members and is offered in collaboration with International Seminar Design, Inc.

TOUR COST:

Land Package..... \$15,495

Single Supplement \$2,395

Land Package is per person, based on double occupancy and a minimum of 15 paying participants.

Rooms at all hotels are standard category. Upgraded rooms are available upon request at an additional cost.

AHS TRAVEL ACTIVITY LEVEL DESCRIPTION: AHS Travel programs are designed to offer immersive experiences and often involve long days filled with exploration and extensive walking on uneven terrain. To participate in a program, it is recommended to be in good physical condition and prepared to walk for a minimum of two miles each day.

DEPOSIT & FINAL PAYMENT: A deposit of \$2,000 per registrant is required to reserve space on the tour, of which \$1,000 is nonrefundable for ISDI's registration and planning fee unless the tour is cancelled due to low enrollment. This deposit may be paid by check or by Visa, MasterCard, or American Express. Final balance will be invoiced and is due on July 7, 2025, and must be paid by check or wire/ACH transfer to International Seminar Design, Inc. Registrations are accepted after this date on a space-available basis.

FLIGHTS: Airfare is not included in the tour price. Participants are responsible for their own air arrangements. Please do not purchase airline tickets until the operation of the tour is confirmed by ISDI.

CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS: Cancellation by participant must be made in writing to ISDI and is effective only upon acknowledged receipt by ISDI. There is a non-refundable registration and planning fee of \$1,000 per person regardless of cancellation date. Written cancellation received by ISDI on or before July 7, 2025: full refund minus the \$1,000 per person registration and planning fee. Written cancellation received by ISDI between July 8 and September 18, 2025: full refund minus \$7,750 per person cancellation fee (includes the registration and planning fee). Written cancellation received by ISDI on or after September 19, 2025: no refund. Tour registration is non-transferable. In the case of cancellation, substitutions are not allowed. After the tour has commenced, no refunds will be issued for any reason including, but not limited to, unused portions of tour. If the tour is cancelled by ISDI or the American Horticultural Society due to low enrollment, active registrants will receive a full refund of all tour payments.

TERMS & CONDITIONS: Upon receipt of registration, ISDI will send registrant a Participant Tour Agreement detailing the full terms and conditions for this tour. This document must be signed and returned to ISDI before participant's registration is considered complete and any arrangements can be confirmed.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Travel Insurance is not included in the tour cost, but participants are strongly encouraged to purchase a travel protection plan in conjunction with this tour, including coverage of trip cancellation, trip interruption, emergency evacuation/repatriation, medical expenses, lost or damaged baggage, and other expenses and/or losses incurred due to unexpected situations. Should a participant cancel at any time after registering for the tour, ISDI must strictly abide by the cancellation policy outlined herein. Travel insurance information will be provided upon receipt of your registration. One travel insurance provider to consider is USI Affinity Travel Insurance Services. For more information on the plan for AHS travelers, visit www.ahsgardening.org/travel. Information is also available at this link regarding optional flight and travel arrangement services.

TOUR PRICE INCLUSIONS:

3 nights at the Hotel New Otani Tokyo, 1 night at the Utsukushigahara Onsen Shoho in Matsumoto, 2 nights at the Hotel Nikko Kanazawa, 4 nights at the Roku Kyoto; breakfast daily at the hotels, 9 lunches, 6 dinners (water, soft drinks, coffee, tea included with all meals; 2 glasses of wine or beer included with dinners); ground transportation by private motor coach, including 1 group transfer upon arrival from Tokyo-Haneda International Airport (HND) to the Hotel New Otani Tokyo on 11/3/25, and 1 group transfer upon departure from the Roku Kyoto to Osaka's Itami International Airport (ITM) on 11/13/25; entrance fees to sites per itinerary; services of an ISDI Tour Manager; expert local guide; personal listening devices for duration of the tour; handling of 2 pieces of luggage per person at hotels; gratuities for guides, drivers, and restaurant staff at included group meals; bottled water on motor coach; service charges and taxes.

TOUR PRICE EXCLUSIONS: Airline tickets, airline taxes and surcharges, and baggage fees; airport portorage; individual airport transfers for those not using the scheduled group transfers; meals other than those specified in the itinerary; gratuities for hotel housekeeping; personal items such as telephone calls, room service, valet service, à-la-carte orders, specialty wines and liquors, laundry charges, travel extensions, or tour deviations; travel insurance; any other items not specifically included in the itinerary.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT AHS TRAVEL PROGRAMS:

Please contact travel@ahsgardening.org or 703-768-8801.

Information is also available at www.ahsgardening.org/travel.



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Registration Form

Name - Participant 1

Name - Participant 2

Address

City

State

Zip

Home Phone

Cell Phone

E-mail Address - Participant 1

E-mail Address - Participant 2

ROOMING OPTIONS: (please select)

- Double Occupancy; I will share a room with _____
 - We prefer separate beds
- Single Occupancy (\$2,395 single supplement)
 - I would like a roommate but will pay the single supplement if one cannot be found

TOUR DOCUMENTS:

ISDI will send all documents pertaining to the tour by email to the email address listed above.

- If you wish to receive hardcopy versions of the tour documents by post as well, please check this circle. Paper documents will not be sent to your home address unless this circle is checked.

DEPOSIT (\$2,000 per person):

_____ # of persons _____ Amount Enclosed

- Visa MasterCard American Express Check (make check payable to International Seminar Design, Inc.)

Card Number

Exp. (mm/yy)

Name as it appears on card

CVV Security Code

By registering and paying the deposit for this tour, registrant acknowledges that he/she has carefully read and understands all information contained in the tour brochure, recognizes and accepts any risks therein, and agrees to be bound by the terms and conditions outlined above.

COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS FORM TO:

International Seminar Design, Inc.
5614 Connecticut Ave NW, #295
Washington, DC 20015
or by email at info@isditravel.com

TO REGISTER BY PHONE, CALL:

International Seminar Design, Inc. at 202-244-1448 ext. 1

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT AHS TRAVEL PROGRAMS:

Please contact travel@ahsgardening.org or 703-768-8801.
Information is also available at www.ahsgardening.org/travel.