

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

with AHS Host Matt Mattus

November 1–12, 2026





Dear Friends,

I am delighted to invite you to join the American Horticultural Society in November 2026 for an unforgettable journey through the exquisite gardens and vibrant autumn landscapes of Japan. Our 10-night program with AHS Host Matt Mattus 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 capital of Kyoto, 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

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.

AHS Host Matt Mattus

Matt is the Senior Director of Horticulture for the American Horticultural Society. A creative design leader for the past 30 years in the corporate world, Matt is also a renaissance man in the gardening world. Matt's leadership voice in horticulture has inspired plant lovers through his combination of unique talents, which include visual design, photography, and a vast knowledge of horticulture. His enthusiastic curiosity about plants spans the full spectrum, from his lifelong love of rare and collectible botanical treasures to cultivating the most intriguing of vegetables and unusual flowers. When not working in his greenhouse and gardens, Matt is a passionate traveler. He can be found exploring plants in their native habitats, botanizing from the Himalayas to Japan and the Alps. His journeys and plant discoveries are well-known to those who follow him through his books, writing, or on social media.



Itinerary

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1

Departures

Depart the United States on independent flights for Tokyo.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2

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 Chinzanso Tokyo**, renowned throughout Tokyo for its magnificent 17-acre garden. The remainder of the evening is at leisure to relax and enjoy the hotel's amenities after a long flight.

Hotel Chinzanso Tokyo

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3

Tokyo

Following breakfast at the hotel, meet your fellow travelers and AHS Host Matt Mattus for introductions and an overview talk on Japanese horticulture.

Our exploration of Japanese horticulture begins at **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.



Shunkaen Bonsai Museum (by Ron Frazier)

Following a lunch of Japanese specialties, take a guided stroll through **Rikugien Garden**, considered one of Tokyo's most beautiful landscape gardens, especially in the autumn when it is blanketed in vibrant seasonal hues. Created in the early 18th century, Rikugien features a large central pond surrounded by winding paths and hills covered with ancient trees.

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

Hotel Chinzanso Tokyo (Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4

Tokyo

Spend the morning 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 and meet with one of the exhibition's gardeners.

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.

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

Return to the hotel. Dinner is independent.

Hotel Chinzanso Tokyo (Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch)

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5

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 intricate network of small streams that constantly provides each wasabi plant with clear, flowing water. Enjoy lunch onsite and sample fresh wasabi alongside local specialties. There is also time to peruse the market featuring a wide variety of wasabi-related products, including fresh wasabi, wasabi powder, wasabi-flavored crackers, wasabi chocolates, wasabi beer, and wasabi ice cream.

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 **Shoho Onsen Hotel**, 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 on clear days offer stunning views of the Northern Alps. Be immersed in a quintessential Japanese experience and spend the night in a traditional Japanese-style room characterized by *tatami* mats, *yukata* robes, futon beds, and



Chrysanthemum Festival, Tokyo (by Marufish)



Moss-covered sculpture in the Garden at Nezu Museum (by Shuzo Serikawa)

impeccable service. (Western-style beds are available upon request.) An elaborate traditional Japanese *kaiseki* dinner is served at the inn.

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

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6

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.

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 7

Kanazawa

Begin the day at the renowned **Kenrokuen Garden**, known as one of Japan’s three most beautiful landscape gardens. Kenrokuen embodies the traditional elements of Japanese garden design, incorporating ponds, streams, waterfalls, bridges, teahouses, trees, stones, and flowers. Each November, Kenrokuen’s gardeners and master ropers begin *yukitsuri*, an artistic and functional traditional technique for protecting the branches of pine trees from heavy winter snow using an elaborate system of ropes. Enjoy lunch at a tranquil restaurant adjacent to the garden grounds.

Continue to the elegant **D.T. Suzuki Museum**, commemorating the life and works of one of Japan’s most prominent Buddhist philosophers. The small museum’s design aims to create a peaceful, contemplative space featuring a Vestibule Garden, Roji Garden, and Water Mirror Garden.

Explore 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.

End the day in the **Higashi Chaya District**, another beautifully preserved historical area of Kanazawa. 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)



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



Yukitsuri at Kenrokuen Garden

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8

Kyoto

Check out of the hotel and board Japan's famous Bullet Train (*Shinkansen*) for Kyoto, Japan's most historically significant city with countless temples, gardens, and cultural sites of immeasurable value to Japan's national identity. Enjoy a bento box lunch on board the train.

Upon arrival in Kyoto, visit **Tofukuji Temple**, celebrated for its abundance of maple trees, spectacular displays of autumn colors, and modernist gardens created by Mirei Shigemori (1896-1975). Shigemori's four distinct gardens at the temple blend traditional Zen aesthetics with modern, abstract design, and are designated as a National Site of Scenic Beauty.

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

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)

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9

Kyoto

Enter the sacred temple complex of **Tenryuji Temple**, 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 **Gioji Temple**, a small, thatched-roof temple, renowned for its luxuriant moss garden, a stunning example of the grace and simplicity of Japanese garden design. The moss garden is meticulously maintained by the local monks and different breeds of moss are cultivated and displayed in pots along the garden path.

Later this afternoon, visit an **indigo-dying workshop** that has been in operation for three generations. Participate in a demonstration and learn about the traditional techniques used to create tapestries, clothing, and handicrafts using this highly coveted dye.

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

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

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10

Asamiya Tea Fields & Miho Museum

Drive east of Kyoto to the **Asamiya Tea Fields**, a region that has been cultivating tea for over 1,200 years and is celebrated for producing some of the country's finest green teas. Visit a tea plantation, see the picturesque tea fields covering the hillsides, and meet with a tea farmer who will discuss farming methods, processing and production practices, and the history and culture of green tea. Enjoy a tasting flight of different varieties of green tea.



South Garden at Tofukuji Temple



Gioji Temple in Autumn (by Tetsuhiro Terada)

Continue to the stunning **Miho Museum**, an architectural masterpiece designed by I.M. Pei, blending modern design and natural harmony. Nestled on a scenic mountainside, eighty percent of the museum structure is buried underground to minimize environmental impact and assimilate it into the mountain landscape. Have lunch at the museum and then explore its superb collection of precious objects from the ancient world.

Return to Kyoto for an independent evening.

Roku Kyoto (Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch)

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11

Kyoto

Begin the morning at the tranquil **Shisendo Temple**, the retirement villa of a renowned samurai-turned-scholar and influential figure in Japanese garden design. The temple is known for its distinct *karesansui* (dry landscape garden) and clever use of empty space.

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 the group.

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 12

Departures from Osaka

A group transfer is provided to Osaka Itami Airport (ITM) for return flights to the USA.

(Included meals: Breakfast)



Indigo Cloths, Kyoto (by Donna Cleveland)



Maiko performing a traditional dance (by Takaaki Kawai)



Matsumoto Castle (by Peter Wieser)

HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS



Hotel Chinzanso Tokyo

Situated in its own spacious parkland, the Hotel Chinzanso Tokyo is one of the city's most revered luxury hotels. In addition to its elegant rooms and impeccable service, the hotel is celebrated for its expansive traditional Japanese garden, with meticulously maintained paths, a three-story pagoda from the 9th century, and a sacred tree said to be 500 years old. With a wide range of dining options and an exceptional spa, the Hotel Chinzanso Tokyo is truly an urban oasis in the heart of Tokyo.



Shoho Onsen Hotel

Set in the hills above Matsumoto city, the Shoho Onsen Hotel 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..... \$15,895
Single Supplement \$2,995

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 necessary to be in good physical condition and prepared to walk for a minimum of two miles each day, including some walking over uneven ground, up relatively steep inclines, and up and down stone steps without handrails (particularly in gardens).

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 13, 2026, 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 13, 2026: full refund minus the \$1,000 per person registration and planning fee. Written cancellation received by ISDI between July 14 and September 25, 2026: full refund minus \$7,950 per person cancellation fee (includes the registration and planning fee). Written cancellation received by ISDI on or after September 26, 2026: 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. ISDI will send all documents pertaining to the tour by email unless specifically requested otherwise.

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 <https://my.travelinsure.com/ahs/>. Information is also available at this link regarding optional flight and travel arrangement services.

TOUR PRICE INCLUSIONS:

3 nights at the Hotel Chinzanso Tokyo, 1 night at the Shoho Onsen Hotel 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 Chinzanso Tokyo on 11/2/26, and 1 group transfer upon departure from the Roku Kyoto to Osaka Itami Airport (ITM) on 11/12/26; travel from Kanazawa to Kyoto on 11/8/26 by combination of Bullet Train and Limited Express Train; 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 between 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.



AMERICAN
HORTICULTURAL
SOCIETY

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Registration Form

TO REGISTER BY PHONE, CALL:

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

or

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

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 have a roommate who is registering separately. I plan to share a room with _____.

We prefer separate beds.

Single Occupancy (\$2,995 single supplement)

I would like a roommate but will pay the single supplement if one cannot be found.

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.

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.