

Edo-Tokyo

City of water & culture

Ueno, Hongo, Korakuen

Shinobazu Pond
Sanshiro Pond, the University of Tokyo
Kingyozaka
Well at Former Residence of Ichiyo Higuchi
Koishikawa-Korakuen Gardens

Old Tokyo Walking Guide No.3 English



Trace Edo & Tokyo's culture through its water

A city of water formed by topography and canals

Tokyo's predecessor Edo was a city of water. It was defined by its topography and waterways, and filled with gardens built to resemble famous scenic spots. Before railroads, water transport played a central role in the city's economy, and waterside spaces were essential to life, industry, and recreation in pre-modern Tokyo. Go in search of this heritage that has shaped the city from Edo until the modern day.

Follow gardens and literature as your guide

Edo was filled with the estates of feudal lords, many of which included strolling gardens centered on ponds. These ponds made use of natural rivers and water, and were decorated with islands or hills that recalled the scenery of Kyoto and China and reflected the feudal lords' aesthetic tastes and rich imaginations. Later, Meiji novelists Natsume Soseki and Ogai Mori interwove their fictitious tales with the real-world settings of the ponds at Shinobazu in Ueno and the old Kaga Domain residence. Let these gardens and literature guide us on a journey through the past and present of Edo and Tokyo.



Above: Shinobadzu(Pond) Uyeno Tokio by Kimbei, Kusakabe(1880-1890),New York Public Library
Cover image: "One Hundred Famous Views of Edo: Ueno Kiyomizu-do, Shinobazu Pond," Utagawa Hiroshige, 1856. Kiyomizu Kannon-do in Ueno was built to resemble the scenery of Kyoto. The crimson hall surrounded by cherry blossoms stands in front of crowds by Shinobazu Pond, one of Edo's major attractions.

City of water route through Ueno, Hongo, and Korakuen

A two-hour walk through the city of water

The area of Ueno, Hongo and Korakuen is richly defined by its topography and waterways, including the ponds at Shinobazu in Ueno and in former feudal estates that have endured from Edo into the present. Sanshiro Pond (Spot 2) and the Koishikawa-Korakuen Gardens (Spot 5) remain from the former estates of the Kaga and Mito domains. The area was also home to many late-19th and early-20th century scholars, who traversed the area's hills and alleyways, living and working next to now-buried streams. With the theme of water, take a journey through this area of Edo gardens and residential spaces.

City of water route

Distance: around 3.5 km

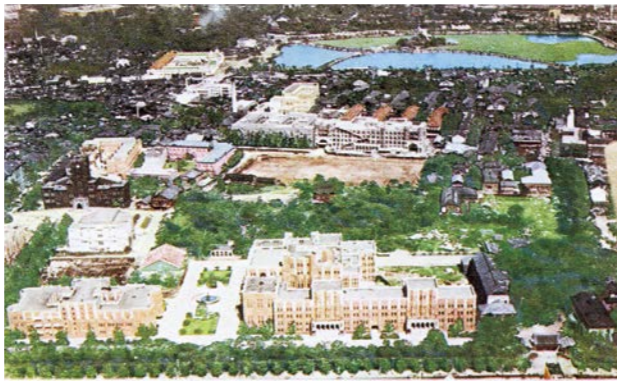
Time needed: 2 hrs

Access to Shinobazu Pond

5-10 minute walk from Ueno Station on the JR Lines and Tokyo Metro Ginza and Hibiya Lines, or Yushima Station on the Tokyo Metro Chiyoda Line

Access to Koishikawa-Korakuen Gardens

Toei Oedo Line, JR Chuo and Sobu Lines, Tokyo Metro Tozai, Yurakucho and Namboku Lines at Iidabashi Station
Tokyo Metro Marunouchi and Namboku Lines at Korakuen Station



Postcard depicting Shinobazu Pond and the University of Tokyo from above, 1929. Collection of Jōji Hayashi. Sanshiro Pond can be seen in the front, Shinobazu Pond in the back.



Bunkyo Ichiyo Memorial (Photo courtesy of Bunkyo Ward)

Major festivals

Please check the Internet for specific dates.

May 5

Kingyozaka

Goldfish Festival

Goldfish enthusiasts take part in an exhibition, while visitors can enjoy goldfish catching, lectures, painting workshops and other events.

Saturday and Sunday in mid-May University of Tokyo Hongo campus

May Festival (Gogatsusai)

The May Festival is the University of Tokyo's main student-run festival, dating back to 1923. Students plan academic and cultural activities held around the campus.

September

Shinobazuinoike Bentendo

Minarukane Festival

Once per year, the temple's main deity is displayed. It is said that wrapping money in paper on this lucky day will lead to wealth.

November 23

Hōshinji Temple

Bunkyo Ichiyo Memorial

Ichiyo Higuchi spent around ten years living in Bunkyo Ward. On the anniversary of her death on November 23, this temple holds a service and readings of her works.

Mid-November to early December

Koishikawa-Korakuen Gardens

Enjoy autumn leaves

Japanese maples, wax trees, zelkova, and ginkgo turn a rich variety of autumn colors. Particularly beautiful is the area around the Tsuten-kyo Bridge.

Edo-Tokyo

City of water & culture

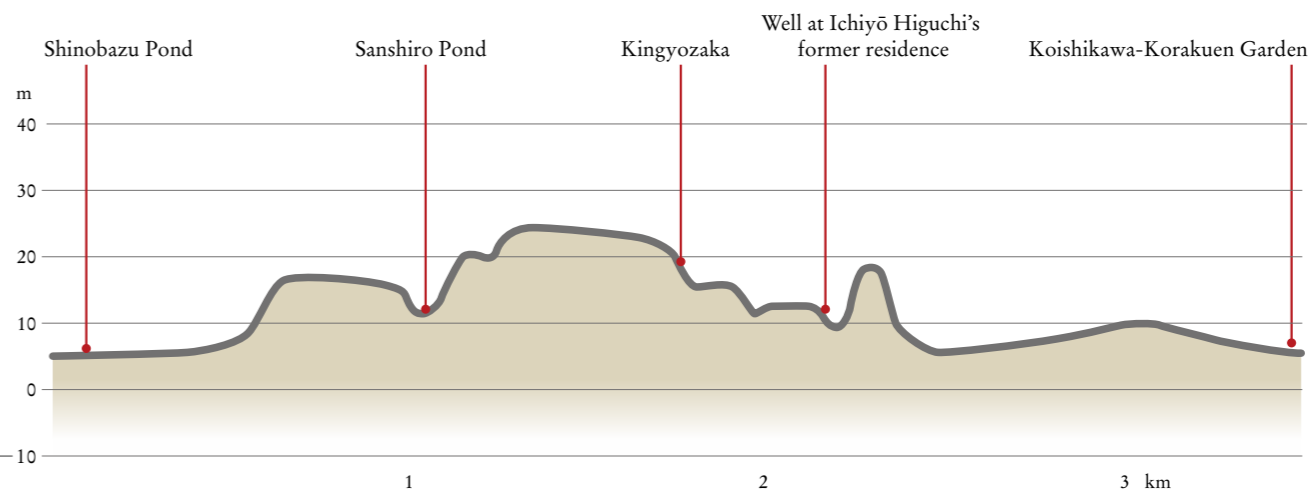
Map

Ueno, Hongo & Korakuen



Varied topography created a town of gardens and scholars

This area is criss-crossed by hills and valleys, each shaping the flow of water. The Aisome River that flowed into the northwest side of Shinobazu Pond, the Koishi River, and other small streams were buried, while the Kanda aqueduct that once provided drinking water to Edo was abolished. Now, only faint noises from manholes and other traces of these flows remain, but this route offers hints of how closely water was connected to the gardens and living spaces of Edo and early Tokyo.



Locations introduced in this guide

Shinobazu Pond

Address...3 Uenokoan Ikenohata, Taito-ku, Tokyo 110-00071
Phone...03-3828-5644
Admission...Free
Hours...5:00-23:00 (Bentendo 9:00-17:00)

Sanshiro Pond, the University of Tokyo

Address...7-3-1 Hongo, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 113-8654
Admission...Free
Hours...7:00-18:00

Kingyozaka

Address...5-3-15 Hongo, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 113-0033
Phone...03-3815-7088
Open...11:30-21:30 (until 20:00 on weekends & holidays)
Closed Monday, 3rd Tuesday (open in case of holidays, closed the following day), 12/30-1/4
WEB...http://www.kingyozaka.com

Well at Ichiyō Higuchi's former residence

Address...4-32 Hongo, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 113-0033
Phone...03-5803-1174 (Bunkyo Ward office)
WEB...http://www.city.bunkyo.lg.jp/bunka/kanko/spot/ato/ichiyo.html

Koishikawa-Korakuen Gardens

Address...1 Koraku, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 112-0004
Phone...03-3811-3015
Admission...¥300
Open...9:00-17:00 (entry until 16:30)
WEB...https://www.tokyo-park.or.jp/park/format/index030.html

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Explore Old Tokyo

The Tokyo Cultural Heritage Alliance (TCHA) brings together business, academic, and government bodies to promote the rich and varied cultural heritage located in north-central Tokyo (“Old Tokyo”) and bring new cultural vitality to the area (launched in April 2015). This pamphlet was produced as part of a series to introduce visitors to a unique route that ties together the area’s varied cultural heritage.

“Old Tokyo” Walking Guide #3: Edo-Tokyo, City of water & culture: Ueno, Hongo and Korakuen

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“Old Tokyo” Walking Guide
#1: Yushima area walking map Explore the spiritual culture of Old Tokyo/Published 1 April 2017
#2: Edo-Tokyo’s Information Crossroads “Greater Akiba” Akihabara, Kanda, and Jimbocho/Published July 25, 2018

See, listen, and imagine

Water in Tokyo’s gardens and literature

Edo-Tokyo was shaped by its hills and waterways, around which feudal estates, living areas, and the worlds of literature flourished. Explore history along this route of water.

1

Once upon a time, Edo was a city of water!

► Central to the city’s evolution

Tokyo’s predecessor Edo was built at the edge of the Musashi Plain, overlooking Edo Bay, and grew as a waterborne city of canals. The rich heritage of commerce, industry and recreation that once enlivened the city’s waterways was gradually lost as many of the ponds were filled in and canals buried to accommodate urban growth.

This walking route follows traces of water from Ueno through Hongo and Korakuen. Along the way, use your eyes, ears, and imagination to appreciate how water shaped the creation of gardens, and how Meiji writers intertwined



Looking down upon Benten Island in Shinobazu Pond today from the stairs near Kiyomizu Kannon-do.

their literature and living environment to mix the everyday and the unusual.

2

Edo’s gardens were party venues

► Gardens centered on ponds

We will pass by three ponds: Shinobazu Pond in Ueno Park, the “Sanshiro Pond” on the University of Tokyo campus, and the Daisensui Pond in Koishikawa-Korakuen Gardens. Shinobazu Pond is the largest pond in Tokyo. The University of Tokyo campus and Korakuen were formerly the estates of the powerful Kaga and Mito Domains. These gardens reflected the tastes of their lords, arranging natural and artificial features around central ponds.

► Re-creating the scenery of Kyoto and China

The three ponds each have a different water source, but all were constructed around the same time in the early 17th century, and employ design concepts that draw on the scenery of Kyoto and China. Today, Shinobazu Pond is not often thought of as a garden, but recent historical research and excavations suggest that the Komagome residence of the Mito Domain (now the University of Tokyo’s Asano and Yayoi campuses) was oriented to take in the vista of Shinobazu Pond at the foot of Ueno’s hill. Gardens were not simply private spaces for the lords and retainers, but were also used as places to receive the Shogun and entertain members of other families, functioning as both public and political spaces within Edo.

► Origins in “sankin-kotai” system

There were once more than 600 feudal lords’ residences in



“Oedo Chōkanzu” (Bird’s eye view of Edo, in the Tokyo Metropolitan Central Library Special Collection). This view of Edo from above clearly shows the city’s waterways and coastline. The Sumida River flows along the bottom, while the Kanda River flows from the direction of Mt. Fuji. Shinobazu Pond is on the right edge.



This image depicts a group of Choshū Domain samurai entering Edo at Takanawa, making clear the scale of the processions that carried feudal lords to and from Edo. Tokyo Bay can be seen in the distance.



“Edo Kiriezu, Hongo Ezu” (Map of Hongo, Edo). Shinobazu Pond can be seen in the front center. Above, the Kaga and Mito residences (now the University of Tokyo campus) stand next to each other, and in the top left the Mito residence in Koishikawa (now Korakuen Gardens) can be seen.

Edo, and several hundred gardens. Why were these estates and gardens originally built, often at great expense of money and time, employing specialists and bringing unusual stones and plants from far away? The answer lies in the “sankin kotai” system of alternate attendance. Under this system, lords of feudal domains were required to live in Edo every other year, and were provided sites to construct estates in the city. These estates became home to gardens that made use of the natural landscape and were often larger than the standard in Kyoto. Lords spared no expense or energy in their creation, contributing to cultural development not only in the visual arts, but also tea ceremony, Noh theater, poetry, and research of horticulture, medicine, and history. Gardens were also sites for recreation including duck hunting, horse riding, and archery.

3

Meiji literature set by the waterside

► Reborn as “Sanshiro Pond”

Most of the Edo gardens declined after the Meiji Period began in 1868. Perhaps their fall into disrepair added to their mysterious allure, and gardens feature appealingly in Meiji literature. Most famously, the pond on the grounds of the old Kaga Domain estate features in Natsume Soseki’s novel Sanshiro, and came to be known as “Sanshiro Pond.” The novel’s protagonist, Sanshiro Ogawa, is a student at the Imperial University and first meets the heroine Mineko Satomi at the pond, a place where literature and reality, and the spaces of Edo, Meiji, and the present day intersect.

► A wellspring of stories

The Hongo area was once home not only to Natsume Soseki, but many other prominent authors. The female

Natsume Soseki (1867-1916) was a major literary figure in the Meiji and Taisho periods. He lived at times in both Sendagi and Nishikata, and the area is depicted not only in Sanshiro, but also in the novels *I am a Cat*, *And Then*, and *Kokoro*.

novelist Ichiyo Higuchi, who now adorns the ¥5,000 bill, once lived without luxury near Kikuzaka hill as she wrote numerous works that would have broad impact on society. Outside her former residence, the well she once used still remains as a reminder of water’s connection to daily life.

4

Vanishing waterways, enduring landmarks

► Streams disappear

As Tokyo urbanized, most big ponds in the city center were filled in, and waterways were buried beneath roads. The Aisome River, which once flowed from the north of Shinobazu Pond and was the setting where Sanshiro and Mineko often walked, was buried after 1921. The stream that once flowed down the slope of Kikuzaka can also been seen on early 20th-century maps, but it and other waterways eventually vanished underground.

► Shinobazu Pond and Kingyozaka endure

In 1945, there was a proposal to fill in Shinobazu Pond and

Selling goldfish to children after WWII. Vendors would carry fish in tubs as they walked the neighborhood. A sign for Hōmeikan can be seen in the background.(Photo courtesy of Kingyozaka)

construct a baseball field, but the local community opposed the plan and the area remained a relaxing oasis within the city. Next to Kikuzaka slope, a small goldfish shop has tapped the cool groundwater to raise its fish since the 17th century. It has endured the repeated disasters that struck the city, and today also runs a cafe. If you listen carefully as you walk down Kikuzaka slope, you can hear the flow of a hidden stream under your feet.

5

Gardens change hands as Tokyo modernizes

► Ponds retain their charm through the centuries

Let’s return again to the gardens of feudal estates. The residence of the Kaga Domain in Hongo and the Mito Domain’s Koishikawa-Korakuen Gardens have changed hands through the years. After the Meiji Restoration, the Kaga residence eventually became the University of Tokyo’s Hongo Campus. The Sanshiro Pond and Akamon (Red Gate) are reminders of its origins. The Korakuen Gardens were transferred to the Imperial Army before coming under the control of the Tokyo government in 1936. It is now open to the public as one of the city’s Metropolitan Gardens. These ponds and gardens have preserved their original beauty as they endured through Tokyo’s urbanization.

The dense greenery to the right (west) of Tokyo Dome is Koishikawa-Korakuen.

Spot

1

Edo's famed scenic spot,
Tokyo's largest natural pond

Shinobazu Pond

Address...3 Ueno Koen Ikenohata, Taito-ku, Tokyo 110-0007
Phone...03-3828-5644

Our route begins at Shinobazu Pond in Ueno Park, Tokyo's largest natural pond. In prehistoric times this area was part of the ocean, which left behind the pond when sea levels receded. In 1625, Kaneiji Temple was founded on the hill of present-day Ueno Park, positioned similar to Mt. Hiei outside of Kyoto to protect the city from bad energy. Tenkai, a monk advisor to the Tokugawa Shoguns, also made Shinobazu Pond to resemble Lake Biwa outside Kyoto, constructing Bentendo on a central island in the image of Chikubu Island. Since the Edo Period, it has been a favored spot for cherry blossom viewing and waterside relaxation, attracting the attention of many painters and woodblock artists. After the Meiji Restoration, it was used as a site for exhibitions and recreation. Today it is divided between the lotus pond to the south, the boat pond to the west, and a small pond within the premises of the Ueno Zoo.

Spot

Shinobazu Bentendo

The monk Tenkai erected Bentendo in the image of Chikubu Island in Lake Biwa. The temple was originally accessed by boat before a bridge was constructed. The god Benzaiten is worshipped as a protector of music and the arts and is one of the seven lucky gods enshrined in the area. The building burned down in the war and was rebuilt in 1958.



Shinobazu Bentendo. Photography by Toshiyuki Udagawa



Photography by Toshiyuki Udagawa

Spot

Boat dock

The pond can be enjoyed in rowboats, cycleboats, and swan boats.



Relax on the water in a swan boat.

1922 postcard depicts one of the many exhibitions held around the pond in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. From the collection of Hayashi Jōji.



Spot

Summer lotus viewing

Shinobazu Pond's lotuses date back to the Edo Period.

Reading poems about the lotuses was an important event in Edo and Meiji poetry circles. Numerous famed poets gathered here to hold sessions together. The best time to see the lotuses is between mid-July and mid-August. Visit in the morning to see the flowers before they close..



The lotuses of Shinobazu Pond bloom in early summer. Photography by Toshiyuki Udagawa

Spot

2

A secluded remnant of Edo hidden in
Japan's top university

Sanshiro Pond

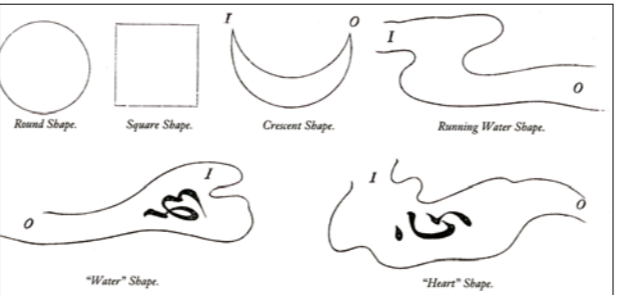
(Ikutokuen Shinji-ike)

Address...7-3-1 Hongo, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 113-8654, inside the University of Tokyo campus

In 1617, the head of the Maeda family of the Kaga Domain received one of the largest plots in Edo as reward for his assistance to the Shogun in a decisive battle. In 1629, the third head of the Maeda family constructed an elaborate hall, teahouse, and a garden “for cultivating virtue,” on the occasion of a visit from the Shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu and members of his family. The artificial mountain, icehouse, and teahouse that were characteristic of strolling gardens were eventually lost, but the pond has remained and is now commonly known as Sanshiro Pond due to its appearance as the place where the protagonist and heroine meet in



The Kaga Domain estate as depicted in “Edo Byobu,” 17th century, in the collection of the National Museum of Japanese History. Rocks, teahouses, and varied landscaping can be seen.



Pond categories in Josiah Condor's Landscape Gardening in Japan, 1893. Ponds that resemble the kanji character for heart (心) are referred to as heart-shaped ponds. There are numerous such ponds in Japan, most famously at the Saihōji Temple and Katsura Imperial Villa in Kyoto.



Natsume Soseki's 1908 novel *Sanshiro*. Wandering the steep paths along its banks feels like being deep in nature—don't forget to watch your step!

Spot

Statue of Arata Hamao



Arata Hamao served twice as president of the University of Tokyo, determining many details of the campus plan, such as the axis of Yasuda Hall, the ginkgo trees, and the Main Gate. This statue was made by Shinji Hori.

Spot

Red Gate (Akamon)

Another symbol dating from the Kaga Domain residence. This gate was given to the Maeda family when the 13th family head, Nariyasu, married the daughter of the 11th Shogun in 1827.

Spot

Archery field (Ikutokudo)

The building, designed by university president and architect Yōzō Uchida was finished in 1935. It now overlooks Sanshiro Pond.

Archery practice is held at the field next to Sanshiro Pond.



Akamon is a symbol of the University of Tokyo.

Spot

3

Selling goldfish for
350 years

Kingyozaka

Address...5-3-15 Hongo, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 113-0033
Phone...03-3815-7088

Founded between 1661-1673, Kingyozaka is one of the oldest goldfish sellers left in Tokyo. A stream once flowed along this slope, past a pond of more than 2,000 square meters. The shop began raising goldfish in the pond, some of which were sold to the Kaga residence. At the start of spring, some 50,000 goldfish of more than 40 types swim in the ponds. In 2000, the 7th proprietor Tomoko Yoshida opened a restaurant and cafe on the site, where visitors can enjoy coffee, tea, curry, and other meals while admiring the goldfish.



Goldfish have long provided people with relaxation.

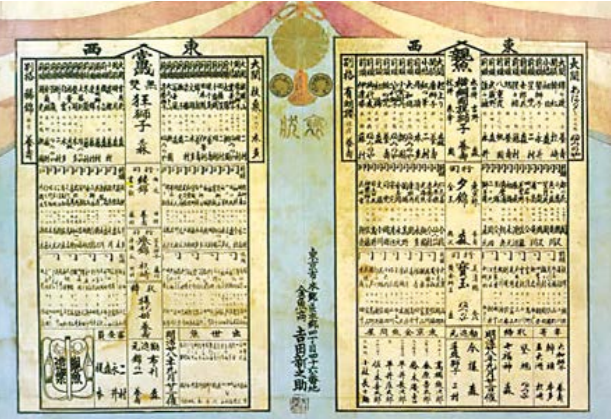


Kingyozaka is just north of Kikuzaka Street. Ichiyo Higuchi is said to have come to see the fish.

Spot

Meiji Period goldfish ranking (banzuke)

This ranking sheet dates from a goldfish show held by the fourth proprietor in 1889. It was narrowly saved from the flames of the Tokyo air raids in 1945, and is now on display in the cafe.



Similar to sumo wrestling, goldfish were ranked based on color, charm, pattern, and swimming appearance. (Photo courtesy of Kingyozaka)

Spot

Goldfish abound in the cafe and restaurant

Goldfish motifs adorn tableware, windows, and other parts of the space. Many of the decorations were collected by the seventh and current proprietor Tomoko Yoshida. Some goldfish-themed goods such as fans and wind chimes are also available for sale.



Goldfish decorations and goods please the eyes.

Spot

Goldfish fishing

Kingyozaka is one of the few places in central Tokyo where you can enjoy catching goldfish in one of the outdoor ponds.

During the 1960s, women from the city's geisha districts often came to buy goldfish. (Photo courtesy of Kingyozaka)



